



Questionnaire to Governments

on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)

For preparation of regional review and appraisals in the context of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2010

I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations regional commissions will carry out a review and appraisal of progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), in preparation for the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2010. The regional commissions will collaborate with the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in this process.

The review and appraisal of progress will cover the five-year period between the responses submitted by Member States to the questionnaire in 2004 and the end of 2009. It will identify achievements, gaps and challenges and provide an indication of areas where actions and initiatives are most urgent to further implementation.

In preparing the review and appraisal of progress, the regional commissions will utilize the responses of Member States to this questionnaire. In addition, a variety of sources of information and statistics will be drawn upon, including reports submitted by States parties under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; information generated in the context of the Commission on the Status of Women; regional action plans and national reports to regional bodies; as well as and the outcomes of expert group meetings and other activities at regional level. Other sources of information include Common Country Assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, (CCA/UNDAFs), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, (PRSPs), national Human Development Reports and national Millennium Development Goal (MDG) reports.

II. THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire consists of four parts. Member States are requesting to provide information on efforts made and progress achieved since the most recent review and appraisal in 2005.

In **Part One**, reporting States are invited to highlight **major overall achievements and obstacles** encountered in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Responses in Part One of the questionnaire should be no longer than three pages.

In **Part Two** of the questionnaire, reporting states are encouraged to provide specific examples of achievements, including policy development, legislative change, advocacy, awareness-raising, capacity-development and programmes and projects which they have undertaken on implementation in the **critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action** (except for critical area H which is covered in Part Three), as well as areas requiring further initiative and action identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Obstacles and remaining gaps and challenges in relation to the critical areas of concern should also be identified and a summary of lessons learned provided. Response to Part Two of the questionnaire should be no longer than 10 pages.

Part Three focuses on **institutional development** or those structures and measures countries have put in place to support promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. It covers the critical area of concern H in the Platform for Action: Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, and chapters V on Institutional Arrangements and VI on Financial Arrangements, as well as actions identified in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Information on national machineries, capacity-building programmes for line ministries, resource allocation, statistics and indicators, monitoring and accountability mechanisms and partnerships should be described in this section. Responses to Part Three of the questionnaire should be four pages in length.

In **Part Four** respondents are invited to provide information on the **remaining key challenges and constraints** in the reporting States, as well as any **plans for future actions and initiatives** to address these and to ensure full implementation of the Platform for Action in each of the critical areas of concern. Reporting States are encouraged, in particular, to indicate any **new commitments** they will make to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly at national level over the next five years. Responses to Part Four of the questionnaire should be no longer than three pages.

The annex provides some examples of issues which could be covered under each part of the questionnaire. These examples are provided as guidance only. Reporting States are not required to cover all these issues but should focus on issues which are most relevant in their national contexts. Additional issues not included in the annex can also be raised in the responses.

III. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The information being sought through the questionnaire is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Emphasis is placed on implementation, and reporting States are urged, as far as possible, to provide concrete information on impacts of initiatives and activities described. Activities and outputs and actions should be differentiated from achievements and impacts on the situation of women and on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Reporting States are encouraged to provide quantitative

data, disaggregated by sex and age, or to indicate where such data has already been submitted in other contexts. Countries wishing to provide information on indicators used at the national level to monitor activities for gender equality and empowerment of women may do so. Reporting States are also urged to provide information on the specific time periods for initiatives and actions taken.

For guidance, a list of reports submitted by Member States to the United Nations Secretariat prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), and the ten-year review and appraisal in the Commission on the Status of Women (2005), as well as the most recent reports submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, can be found on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw>).

IV. SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

Responses to this questionnaire should be sent in both hard copy and electronic format in one of the six official United Nations languages, no later than 31 March 2009 to the relevant regional commissions:

Economic Commission for Africa

African Centre for Women,
P.O. Box 3001 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Contact: Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Officer in Charge
African Centre for Gender and Social Development
Fax: (251-1) 5 51-2785
E.mail: truzvidz@uneca.org

Comment [UN1]: Change requested by ESCWA to 30 April. However ECE needs it to be 31 March. I don't think we can have two different dates. I suggest that ESCWA separately lets the national machineries know that the deadline is extended a month for them.

Economic Commission for Europe

Palais des Nations 1211, Geneva, Switzerland
Contact: Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, Senior Social Affairs Officer
Office of the Executive Secretary
Fax: (41-22) 917-0036
E.mail: Ewa.Zimny@unece.org

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Women and Development Unit
Casilla 179-D, Santiago, Chile
Contact: Sonia Montano Director a.i.
Division for Gender Affairs
Fax: (56-2) 208-0252
E.mail: sonia.montano@cepal.org and ximena.sanchez@cepal.org

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Gender Equality and Empowerment Section
Social Development Division,
UN Building Rajdamnern Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Contact: Beverly Jones
Fax: (66-2) 288-1030/1000
E.mail: gad@un.org

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

P.O. Box 11-8575, Beirut, Lebanon

Contact: Miranda Hawa, Officer in Charge

Centre for Women

Fax: (961-1) 98-1510

E.mail: hawam@un.org

ANNEX: GUIDANCE ON ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED IN RESPONSES

The examples below are provided as guidance only. Reporting States are not required to cover these issues but should focus on issues which are most relevant in their national contexts. Additional issues not included in the annex can also be raised in the responses.

Comment [UN2]: Inserted by ECLAC

Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (3 pages)

Please note that the response to Part One of the questionnaire should contain highlights of achievements and challenges. The issues raised in this part can be discussed in more detail in responses to other parts of the questionnaire. For example, issues related to globalization would be discussed in more details under Part Two of the questionnaire and issues on gender-responsive budgeting would be discussed under Part Three.

Guiding questions: The response could, for example, address the following issues and questions:

a) Has a national policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women been adopted and at what level? Was a strategy or plan of action developed to support the implementation of the policy? What mechanisms were established for monitoring and how are different actors held accountable for its implementation? Is there a national coordination mechanism at the highest level to ensure that the policy is implemented in all sector areas?

A National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF) has been adopted since 2008. The NGPF is an overarching framework that calls upon sectoral Ministries to design there-from their respective gender policies and action plans with gender sensitive performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation. The NGPF stipulates that gender disaggregated data and creation of a related information system are essential for monitoring and evaluation. Such a system would need to generate information about why progress has not been achieved and what factors led to or blocked any progress.

Gender-sensitive indicators thus have been developed which explicitly provide quantitative and qualitative information about results concerning the evolution of gender issues. Background analysis of the situation will also be 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. With regard to accountability for results, the NGPF stipulates that "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. These allocations need to be therefore monitored for equity.

The active participation of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, which is the Lead Agency, acts as a *national coordination mechanism* in the reform of the Government for programme based budgeting in 2008, and provides a key entry point for gender responsive budgeting by engendering the outputs and performance indicators of sector Ministries and their respective sector strategies. In this context, the Lead Agency has been working with eight (8) Pilot Ministries namely to engender their PBB exercise. As at date, programmes of those Ministries namely Civil Service and Administrative Reforms; Finance and Economic Development; Youth and Sports; Education, Culture and Human Resource; Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions; and Agro-industry, Food Production and Security have been engendered. This process will be replicated in other Ministries in due course

The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare has also provided technical assistance to three Ministries namely Youth and Sports Education, and Labour to devise their gender sectoral policies. The same process will be extended to four(4) additional Ministries listed above.

Moreover, the Gender Focal Point (GFP) Mechanism has been revived in 2005 and capacity building of 40 GFPs and other stakeholders including Civil Society on gender mainstreaming, the use of gender sensitive indicators and gender impact assessments has been carried out.

The Ministry is also setting up an online Gender Information System (GIS) that will enable GFPs to input sex disaggregated data to monitor gender responsiveness of their policies and programmes.

b) What impact does the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, have on the promotion of gender equality? How is implementation of the Convention progressing?

CEDAW has been instrumental and has formed the basis of the enactment of legislation and formulation of policies geared towards women's empowerment and promotion of gender equality, for instance, the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 2002 is in line with the provisions of CEDAW, and the same principles have been incorporated in the Equal Opportunity Act 2008.

The concluding remarks of the CEDAW Committee have been widely disseminated amongst stakeholders that would guide them in policy formulation.

At the level of the Ministry and Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare remedial actions have been undertaken to address concerns raised by the CEDAW Committee. These include, *inter-alia*, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaigns on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Removal of gender Stereotyping and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaigns on Gender Based Violence .

c) What are the main legislative and policy-making achievements in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment over the past decade? Please provide details

The main legislative achievements in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment over the past decade are as follows:-t

(i) Protection from Domestic Violence Act (1997)

In May 1997, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act was enacted and proclaimed in March 1998. This Act has been a major step in reaffirming the rights of women and it provides for the issue of protection orders, occupancy orders and tenancy orders and offers a wide definition of domestic violence which include physical, emotional, sexual violence and even threatened violence. The objective is to protect spouses and children from violence at home. Mauritius is one of the few countries in the region to have introduced a comprehensive law to combat domestic violence.

Amendment to Protection from Domestic Violence Act (2004)

In 2004, certain amendments were brought to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act (PDVA), 1997. These amendments aim at:

- covering cases of domestic violence committed by any person living under the same roof;
- increasing the time limit before a notice is served from 7 days to 14 days; and
- increasing the penalty applicable in case of offences; and providing for counseling.

Further Amendments to Protection from Domestic Violence Act (2007)

In line with Government Programme 2005-2010 which highlights the need to strengthen the enforcement mechanism of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, further amendments were brought to the Act. The Protection from Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2007 which was passed in the National Assembly on 04 December 2007 aims at bringing the following amendments:-

- an increase in the penalty for the offence of willfully failing to comply with any order made under the Act;
- in exceptional cases to order a person who has willfully failed to comply with an order made under the Act, to attend counseling sessions instead of being sentenced; and
- An ancillary order is being introduced under clause 5 to enable an aggrieved spouse and any child of the parties to whom a Protection Order has been granted to apply for alimony.

(ii) Sex Discrimination Act (2002)

The “**Sex Discrimination Act**” was enacted in 2002 and it aims at protecting women from discrimination on the basis of their gender.

According to **Section 4(1)** of the Act,

“...A person discriminates against another person if the first-mentioned person makes, on any of the grounds specified in subsection (2), any distinction, exclusion or preference, the intent of the effect of which is to nullify or impair equality of opportunity or treatment or employment.”

Subsection (2) of the said Section of the Act details the grounds referred to in subsection (1), consisting of

- Sex, marital status, pregnancy or family responsibility; or
- A characteristic that generally appertains, or is imputed, to a person of the same sex or marital status as that other person, or to a person who is pregnant or has family responsibility.

Under **Section 4(3)** of the Sex Discrimination Act (2002),

“Any act or omission or any practice or policy that directly or indirectly results in discrimination against a person on a ground referred to in subsection (2), is an act of discrimination regardless of whether the person is responsible for the act or omission or the practice or policy, intended to discriminate and shall constitute an offence.”

The definition covers practices which although not intending to discriminate, are discriminatory in effect and not reasonable or justifiable.

(iii) HIV and AIDS Act (2006)

An HIV and AIDS Act (2006) has been enacted with a view to providing for measures for the control and prevention of the propagation of HIV and AIDS by way of:

- (a) making available HIV testing facilities;
- (b) the registration of those facilities;
- (c) the testing of donated blood;
- (d) the counselling of persons affected with HIV or AIDS; and
- (e) the regulation of surgical and dental procedures;
- (f) a system of syringe and needle exchange.

It also provides for the punishment of any person who knowingly or recklessly places other persons at risk of being infected with HIV or who is in possession of syringe, needle or other article with intent to infect other persons with the virus.

Equal Opportunity Act (2008)

An Equal Opportunities Act was passed in November 2008, incorporating all the different grounds of discrimination covered under sections 3 and 16 of the Constitution as well as age, pregnancy, mental and physical disability and sexual orientation in areas dealing with employment, education, the provision of accommodation, goods, services and other facilities, sports, the disposal of immovable property, admission to private clubs and premises open to members of the public. The Act also provides for the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission and an Equal Opportunities Tribunal.

d) To what extent have gender perspectives and the concerns of women been taken into account in preparation of budgets at national, regional and local levels? Has this resulted in increased resources for gender equality? Describe efforts to increase and track budgetary allocations related to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. Have gender-responsive budgeting procedures been introduced and to what effect?

To advance the universal goals for Equality, Development and Peace, the Government has redoubled its efforts to implement its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. With respect to that, the Government is focussing on supporting gender sensitive institutional change and in line with that, the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare has been fully involved in the new reforms brought by the Government last year which are mainly geared towards Programme Based Budgeting (PBB) and Performance Management System (PMS).

Though our budgets have been highly gender sensitive and women are encouraged to fully participate in the social and economic developments, however, due to the present tight economic situation, budgetary allocations of the Gender Unit of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare has seen a gradual decrease from 2004 to 2008.

In spite of that, various other programmes have been initiated by the Government with respect to the promotion of women's empowerment. The Government had introduced a special Programme known as "Empowerment Programme" which was meant for the promotion of entrepreneurship amongst vulnerable groups. It also catered for other areas of support, including land for social housing for disadvantaged groups, workfare programmes through a set of training and re-skilling schemes offered with the aim that

retrenched EPZ female workers and unemployed women eventually find alternate means of livelihoods and become economically independent through setting up of small/medium entrepreneurship activities.

In this year's budget, the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) has been introduced by Government to address the gender gap in favour of women. It caters for the reskilling of those retrenched women to equip them with the relevant skills required so that they are re-integrated into the mainstream of society and also fully involved in the economic process of the country.

The Ministry further receives funding from donor organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Concurrently, the Government also receives fundings from other international organisations such as the European Union (EU), the US Embassy and UNAIDS to carry out programmes related to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

e) To what extent are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) utilized as the national framework for development? What attention is given to Goal 3 on gender equality? Is national-level data available to effectively monitor the achievement of the targets under MDG3? Are gender perspectives and the concerns of women considered in all other MDG goals?

The MDGs are fully utilised for the development of policies and programmes for the promotion of gender equality in a bid to sensitise Ministries and Departments on the importance of sex dis-aggregated data. This Ministry had conducted capacity building programme on African Gender Development Index for the benefit of the Gender Focal points (GFPs) as well as officers of the Central Statistical Office (CSO). To that effect, gender gaps identified can be redressed by relevant institutions.

In regard to other MDGs, Mauritius is fully committed to mainstreaming gender in the implementation thereof.

f) Provide information on major government policy discussions and/or parliamentary debates where gender perspectives and the concerns of women have been taken systematically into account and resulted in policy and/or programmatic changes. What recent major reforms have taken place in the country where these perspectives were taken into account? What major problems are being debated in the country where the perspective of women and gender equality are considered as an integral part of the overall debate?

Gender perspectives and the concerns of women have been taken systematically into account and resulted in policy and/or programmatic changes, such as the Programme Based Budgeting (PBB) and the Performance Management System (PMS) and in light of the changing policy environment and the far reaching policy and institutional reforms, the National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF) has been adopted

The NGPF 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 policy framework has provided the following-

- the guiding principles of the policy;
- the broad operational strategies; and
- 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-

- the State;
- within organisations;
- among the private sector;
- the media;
- political parties; and
- 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 is owned and used by all stakeholders with a view to furthering the gender agenda at the national level, using a multi-pronged and holistic approach.

Moreover, in November 2008 an Equal Opportunities Act was passed, incorporating all the different grounds of discrimination covered under sections 3 and 16 of the Constitution as well as age, pregnancy,

mental and physical disability and sexual orientation in areas dealing with employment, education, the provision of accommodation, goods, services and other facilities, sports, the disposal of immovable property, admission to private clubs and premises open to members of the public. The Act also provides for the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission and an Equal Opportunities Tribunal.

g) In countries emerging from armed conflict, to what extent were women involved, and gender perspectives and women's concerns included, in peace negotiations and in planning of reconstruction efforts?

Armed conflict is not an issue in Mauritius

h) How has globalization (for example, the use of ICT, market liberalization, changes in trading patterns, etc) affected the empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of gender equality? What efforts are being made to reduce potential risks and to build on opportunities for women?

One of the major effects of globalisation has been the dismantling of the Multi-Fibre Agreement which has led to closure of many EPZ factories in Mauritius and subsequently, resulting in the laying off of female retrenched workers. Feminisation of labour which was considered to bring about a significant economic boost in 1980's, has experience a considerable backdrop today.

In that respect, the Government has come up with targeted programme, like, the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) which has been initiated with a budgetary provision of **Rs 5 billion (US\$200m)** for the Financial Year 2008-2009 to support retrenched female workers who have lost their jobs and have limited skills. A Specialised Sub-Committee for Unemployed Women has been set up under the Programme which mainly caters for providing capacity building for employability to these retrenched workers through re-skilling in order to equip them with the required talent so that they are re inserted into the process of development and/or accordingly get engaged into alternate productive activities and find means of livelihoods.

i) In which sector areas have specific policies, strategies and/or action plans for promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment been developed and implemented? To what extent are gender perspectives and the concerns of women routinely taken into account in legislation, policy making and programme development in other sectors, so that inequalities and gaps are identified and addressed?

A National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF) has been approved and adopted since 2008. The NGPF is an overarching framework that calls upon sectoral Ministries to design there-from their respective gender policies and action plans with gender sensitive performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

It is therefore, expected that all Ministries will ensure that gender concerns are taken into account within their respective policies and programmes.

j) What types of significant partnerships have been established with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups, as well as the private sector and other stakeholders, in support of different aspects of national efforts on gender equality and empowerment of women – through for example, advocacy, participation in planning, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes and service delivery?

The Government has adopted a twin track approach in promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. It has forged and accordingly strengthened partnership with the NGOs and civil society groups in the promotion of the cause. These partners are regularly called upon to actively participate in the planning and implementation process of policies and programmes with their consultations. Pragmatic measures are also taken on their part to complement the Government actions geared towards the cause, and one concrete example is the setting up of Participatory Advisory Committees (PACs) by the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare. Since November 2007, the Ministry with the support of the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) has set up PACs in each Women Centre and Empowerment Centre with the aim of empowering women and putting them at the **Heart of Community Development**. The PAC provides a platform to forge partnership with all key stakeholders including NGOs and identify priority areas of intervention to be addressed in a concerted manner.

PACs also act as an interface between the National Gender Machinery (NGM) and the community by adopting a bottom-up approach to national development whereby strategic and practical needs of the community are taken into consideration. The PAC is essentially a grassroots' community-led developmental approach in response to the needs of the community whereby the Community is seen as an equal partner in taking decisions and gearing actions to shape their socio-economic development and also determining the values that guide and sustain such development to equally enjoy its benefits. An Action

Plan (2009-2010) in the different areas of development prioritized by PAC has been elaborated and is being implemented accordingly.

Since July 2003, the Ministry has also put in place an appropriate mechanism, the Family Welfare and Protection Unit (FWPU), to implement policies and programmes in favour of families and to enforce the PDVA.

The Unit operates through a network of six regional offices known as Family Support Bureaux, which provide family, psychological counselling and legal advice services as well as assistance to adults and children victims of domestic violence and abuse, in a holistic manner.

Close collaboration has also been established with the Police Department in regard to law enforcement through the setting up of six(6) regional Police Family Protection Units. The Ministry of Health also collaborates at the level of two(2) hospitals where victims of domestic violence admitted to hospitals are referred to the Ministry for follow up either for protection orders and/or counseling.

In November 2007, the FWPU has launched a National Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence which is being implemented by various stakeholders including NGOs and civil society.

The Government has also forged partnership with NGOs/civil society groups like, Women In Network (WIN), Media Watch Organisation(MWO), Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association(MFPWA) amongst others to complement its actions. The details are as follows:-

- a. WIN which is a civil society organisation, set up since 2007 and is actively engaged in advocacy programmes related to leadership, women in politics and other women's empowerment issues.
- b. MWO is another partner with which the Ministry works in close collaboration on issues such as Gender Based Violence, addressing stereotypes in media and other related issues.
- c. MFPWA is also a partner of this Ministry, which gear its action mainly towards implementing programmes related to Sexual and Reproductive Health issues.
- d. National Women's Council is an executing arm of the Ministry in regards to the implementation of policies and programmes in favour of women.

k) What efforts have been made to actively engage men and boys in the promotion of gender equality, including for example in eliminating violence against women and combating HIV/AIDS? What successes have been achieved and what constraints have been identified?

In view of changing strong patriarchy attitudes and stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society, the Ministry is implementing since 2003, the **Men as Partners Project**, which is a gender sensitive project aiming at promoting responsibility and participation of men in the family.

The project has been extended to some **14** regions and more than **10,000** persons have benefitted there from.

The project comprises 4 components:-

- Medical Session
- Educational Session
- Individual Counselling
- Entertain to Educate

Objectives

- To organise monthly educational sessions on gender, women development and family welfare for the male folk so as to increase their knowledge and provide information that will enable them to participate positively in family affairs and enhance partnership building at home, at worksite and the community.
- To organise monthly mixed educational sessions on problems affecting family welfare and the role of women in the family and the society at large.
- To organise fortnightly indoor games to entertain the male folk, and provide concurrently individual counselling and informal educational sessions to males.
- To organise individual and group counselling sessions for the couple on gender sensitive family issues so as to improve psycho social environment.
- To provide special medical sessions for the male folk so as to enable them to disclose their health problems in confidentiality and provide treatment to improve their health conditions and also get informed about women's health condition.

The Ministry also conducts IEC programmes in Social Welfare Centres, Community Centres and Youth Centres for the benefit of men and boys on gender issues, including HIV and AIDS.

Under the UNFPA project which aims at strengthening the Sexual and Reproductive Health amongst the underserved, the Ministry of Youth and Sports implements Family Life Education (FLE) programmes for youth which also includes the component of AIDS.

The Family Welfare and Protection Unit of the Ministry has set up 5 Zero Tolerance Clubs in different regions to sensitise men and boys on Gender Based Violence and involve them in activities to address the issue.

l) What is the impact of climate change and food and energy crises on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women? What steps are being taken to reduce the potential risks for and impact on women and to engage women effectively in prevention and mitigation processes? Have social protection measures been put in place to reduce the impact on women and have measures been adopted to support women farmers?

Fully conscious that, climate change and food and energy crises can have gender related impact, the Government has set up in 2008 a Food Security Fund to cater for programmes pertaining to these issues. The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare is a member of the said Committee and its involvement is focussed on preventive and informative measures to sensitise women on the wise consumerism. The Home Economics Section of the National Gender Machinery is presently encouraging women to initiate kitchen gardening projects for their daily livelihood.

m) What is the impact of the financial crisis on the promotion of gender equality? What measures have been taken to reduce the negative impact on women's access to resources, income and social protection? To what extent have measures to revive growth mobilized women's economic potential?

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has recently developed the concept of Programme Based Budgeting (PBB) which mainly highlights the budgetary allocation as per the programmes supported by performance indicators. The PBB is also based upon result and their accountability.

With the fiscal policies, the Government is thus, emphasising on the support to female retrenched workers who have limited skills, and catering for their reskilling in order to equip them with the required talent so that they are re inserted into the process of development. Thus retrenched EPZ female workers and unemployed women eventually find alternate means of livelihoods and become economically independent through setting up of small/medium enterprises.

Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (10 pages)

Please organize the response to this part of the questionnaire according to the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (except for critical area H which is covered in Part Three of the questionnaire).

Guiding questions: The response within each critical area of concern could address, but does not need to be limited to, the issues outlined below:

A. Examples of successful policies, legislative change and programmes and projects

a) *In relation to the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action and other key issues, what successful actions (such as legal measures, policy reforms, media campaigns, and pilot programmes or projects) have been taken by the Government or other actors (NGOs, civil society, the private sector) to achieve these objectives. Please provide concrete examples.*

Refer to Annex 1

b) *To what extent have specific commitments on the critical areas of concern – for example in terms of resource allocation, legislative change and policy and programme development - made by the Government at the Fourth World Conference on Women or in other contexts, been met?*

Refer to Annex 1

B. Examples of obstacles encountered and remaining gaps and challenges

c) **Describe the obstacles, gaps and challenges encountered in implementation of the critical areas of concern and other key issues identified.**

Refer to Annex 1

C. Lessons learned

d) *Provide information on the main lessons learned in implementation in relation to each of the critical areas of concern and other key issues identified.*

Refer to Annex 1

e) *Provide concrete examples of successful interventions and explain why these were judged to be successful? Describe any effort to replicate these efforts.*

Refer to Annex 1

Part Three: Institutional development (4 Pages)

Guiding questions: The response could address, but does not need to be limited to, the issues outlined below:

a) What national mechanisms exist for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women – for example, ministry, national commission, parliamentary committee or commission? What mandates and resources does each body have and have these increased in the review period? How do these bodies work together? Describe the location of the national mechanisms and the access to decision-making processes. What networks have been established and how effective are these networks? What resources do the national mechanisms have in terms of staff and financial support? What percentage of financial resources comes from international or bilateral donors or other external sources?

The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare was created in 1982. The creation of the Ministry is a testimony of the Government's commitment to place women's development high on its agenda, as a key route to growth and development. It is a key Ministry as it caters for women who represent more than 50% of the population. Its main objective is to frame and execute policies and programmes geared towards upgrading the status of women, children and family units, safeguarding their rights, protecting them against all kinds of abuse and discrimination and ensuring their economic development and welfare within the civil society. It also creates the right conditions and propitious environment for the harmonious development of individual woman, man and the child and to ensure that women enjoy equal opportunities and equal rights within society.

In order to promote the development and advancement of women, the Gender Unit has been set up to serve as a focal point for women's issues and functions through a network of 15 Women Centres/Empowerment Centres and 1200 Women's Associations throughout the island. In line with the Constitution of Mauritius, Human Rights Instruments and Conventions that the Republic of Mauritius is party to at the global and regional levels, the Gender Unit serves as an institutional and coordinating mechanism to the National Gender Machinery for monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies. In order to respond to changing gender relations and socio economic conditions, programmes and projects of the Gender Unit are further guided by the National Gender Policy Framework (2008).

The Gender Unit has adopted a two-pronged approach to development, namely through:-

(i) outreach activities undertaken at grass-root level through the 15 Women Centres, the National Women's Council, the National Women Entrepreneur Council, the National Women Development Centre

and some 1200 Women's Associations with respect to capacity building, service delivery and sensitisation campaigns for the empowerment of women ; and

(ii) gender mainstreaming at policy, programming and output level with Ministries/Departments and other stakeholders in line with the National Gender Policy Framework.

The mission of the Gender Unit is to be an active Coordinating body of the National Gender Machinery for policy making and monitoring of gender mainstreaming, and to be a modern service provider for the enhancement of the status of women and promotion of gender equality.

National Women's Council

The National Women's Council (NWC) which is a parastatal body operating under the aegis of the Ministry was set up by an Act of Parliament in November 1985. The National Women's Council (NWC) ensures that Government policy and action meets the needs of women at grass-root level. The National Women's Council plays a vital role in encouraging women to participate in activities and projects that would empower themselves to contribute to the development of Mauritius. The Council continues to empower women in leadership and negotiating skills and in the creation of Credit Unions and Co-operatives.

National Women Entrepreneur Council (NWECC)

The National Women Entrepreneur Council, another parastatal body operating under the aegis of the Ministry, was set up in 1999 to promote women entrepreneurship. Its main objective is to increase the technical, organizational and management capacity of women in the entrepreneurship sector hence enabling them to improve their economic livelihood with the collaboration of different stakeholders.

Family Welfare & Protection Unit

In line with one of the UN recommendations that States should set up appropriate mechanisms to implement policies and programmes in favour of families, a Family Welfare & Protection Unit has been set up at the Ministry since July 2003.

The Objectives of Family Welfare & Protection Unit:

- To implement appropriate policies and strategies to promote family welfare;
- To adopt relevant strategies and implement actions to combat domestic violence;

The Unit has a network of six (6) Regional Offices known as Family Support Bureaux (FSBx) which offer integrated services to all members of the family in terms of:

- Counseling Services by Family Counselling Officers and Psychologists;
- Assisting victims of domestic violence by Family Welfare & Protection Officers; and
- Assisting children victims of abuse by Family Welfare & Protection Officers (Child Development Unit).

The decentralised services at the Family Support Bureaux are offered in a holistic manner, whereby staff of the Family Welfare and Protection Unit and Child Development Unit work within the same premises with a view to minimising further trauma to victims of violence.

The Family Welfare & Protection Unit has strengthened and consolidated its network and existing mechanisms towards the promotion of family welfare and protection from domestic violence. Innovative programmes, projects and policies are being devised for implementation.

b) Have focal points for gender equality and empowerment of women been established within line ministries, and in which ministries? What support is provided from within the ministries? What support (training, advice etc.) is provided by the national machinery? How effective are these focal points?

- The Ministry of Women's Rights as a Lead Agency has been fully involved in the institutionalisation of the Gender Focal Point (GFP) Mechanism in 2001 and revival of the mechanism in 2005 under the UNDP supported project "Capacity Building for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women". 40 GFPs have been nominated from sectoral Ministries and departments from the administrative and technical cadre, and are not below the rank of Assistant Secretaries.
- Capacity Building of GFPs in Gender Mainstreaming Strategies (gender analysis, gender impact assessment, African Gender and Development Index AGDI) have also been undertaken by them, and outputs from the Following capacity building programmes are as follows:
 - a. 40 GFPs have been trained on general gender terminologies in 2005; gender analysis, gender mainstreaming strategies, gender impact assessment, designing gender sensitive indicators and utilization of the AGDI in 2006; and on sectoral gender budgeting in 2008.
- The Ministry has also set an online Gender Information System (GIS) that will be operational shortly with the objective to monitoring government programmes and outputs through gender sensitive performance indicators, and provide online gender related materials.

The Lead Agency is now envisaging to set up a Steering Committee to monitor outputs of the Pilot Ministries with regard to their gender sensitivity and implementation of their sectoral gender policies. The Steering Committee will comprise sectoral Ministries and stakeholders of the National Gender Machinery, including the Central Statistics Office. The monitoring process will be as follows:

- (i) **Gender Focal Points** will play an active role in monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming into their policies and programmes and also form a peer review mechanism. Similarly, GFPs will further be trained on gender responsive budgeting so that they act as watchdog to their sectoral Ministries to monitor implementation of gender mainstreaming in their policies and programmes.
- (ii) Monitoring of gender sensitive allocation of resources and outputs will be done through the **PBB** reform and key performance indicators.

- (iii) Data obtained from the GIS would also prove useful to monitor the status of gender equality at national level.

c) What monitoring mechanisms have been established to measure progress in implementation – in relation to national policies, strategies and action plans as well as international commitments? How is accountability for promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women established across all ministries? How is coordination achieved? What role does the highest level of Government play?

The NGM as the lead agency carries out regular consultations with key stakeholders on issues pertaining to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. These are done prior to submission of regional and international reports. The Ministry will, henceforth, maximise on GIS to monitor the status of gender equality at national level.

d) What levels of capacity for promoting gender mainstreaming have been achieved? Through which mechanisms? What are the remaining challenges in the area of capacity building?

Actions undertaken to strengthen the NGM in Mauritius and the extent to which these have been achieved include, *inter alia*:

- Institutionalisation of the Gender Focal Point (GFP) Mechanism in 2001 and revival of the mechanism in 2005 under the UNDP supported project "Capacity Building for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women". 40 GFPs have been nominated from sectoral Ministries and departments from the administrative and technical cadre and are not below the rank of Assistant Secretaries. Terms of Reference for GFPs have been institutionalised. Annex 4 refers
- Capacity Building of GFPs in Gender Mainstreaming Strategies (gender analysis, gender impact assessment, African Gender and Development Index AGDI). Outputs from the following capacity building programmes are as follows: 40 GFPs have been trained on general gender terminologies in 2005; gender analysis, gender mainstreaming strategies, gender impact assessment, designing gender sensitive indicators and utilization of the AGDI in 2006; and on sectoral gender budgeting in 2008.
- Collaborating with other Stakeholders on gender issues, for e.g. public service announcements were produced and broadcasted in 2007 over the radio on the prevention of gender based violence and on women's human rights, in collaboration with the Mauritius College of the Air.
- Production of information brochures on gender terminologies, analysis of the Time Use Survey, international human rights instruments.

- Setting up of an online Gender Information System that will be operational shortly, to monitor government programmes and outputs through gender sensitive performance indicators, and provide online gender related materials.

The major challenges remain the way that the gender sectoral policies are implemented in collaboration with partners and the way accountability are ensured through monitoring, evaluation and reporting process, and also the ownership of the sectoral policies by various stakeholders

e) Has a core set of indicators been established and where is responsibility for monitoring located? What gaps and challenges remain in relation to data and statistics? In which areas is lack of sex-disaggregation still a problem? In which areas do new types of data need to be collected? To what extent are the national statistical office and the statistical units in line ministries aware, committed and capable of providing the required data? In which sectors, and to what extent, is sex-disaggregated data being used effectively to inform policy-making and planning?

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) is responsible for collecting and compilation of sex-disaggregated data. The Statisticians from the CSO are posted in the Ministries/Departments and these officers are called upon to collect data in their respective line Ministries. During the training conducted by the Ministry with the GFPs, it was found that there was lack of sex-disaggregated data which often limits the formulation of appropriate policies pertaining to women's empowerment. To that effect, the National Gender Machinery (NGM) has been sensitising pilot Ministries on the needs to address these shortcomings. The GFPs and the personnel of Central Statistical Unit of various Ministries are being encouraged to collect sex-disaggregated data, whilst recognising that this exercise will be time consuming and the NGM is convinced that the compilation of sex-disaggregated data thus be done in a holistic manner.

The GIS which will be operational shortly will also contribute significantly to that effect. In addition to that the NGM regularly publishes a magazine by the name of "Statistics in Mauritius-A Gender Approach" highlighting the sex-disaggregated data in various sectors which is widely disseminated to all Ministries and Departments

f) Provide information on the roles of different stakeholders. For example, what role does Parliament play in the promotion and monitoring of gender equality and women's empowerment? How could this role be strengthened? Describe the role of NGOs in planning and implementing the follow-up activities. Do NGOs participate formally in the mechanisms established to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women and support reporting on and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)?

Government of Mauritius is fully committed to the promotion of gender equality, and the enactment of the Equal Opportunity Act is the testimony of the political will towards the equal rights and opportunities irrespective of gender. Parliamentarians have been very supportive to the enactment of gender sensitive legislation.

The setting up of a Gender Parliamentary Caucus could be one of the strategies to strengthen the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment issues.

The National Women's Council and other women's organisations are fully involved in the implementation of projects and programmes related to women, namely activities related to their health, poverty alleviation programmes amongst others.

In regards to the participation of NGOs on reporting of the Fourth World Conference on Women, they are not formally involved into the process; however, are free to submit shadow report since Mauritius is signatory to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

Part Four: Remaining challenges and actions to address them (3 pages)

Provide information on areas requiring future action.

*a) List any further actions and initiatives which the Government intends to take to fully implement the Platform for Action and outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly beyond 2010. The way Forward/ **How to Monitor and Coordinate for Gender Equality***

The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare is proposing to continue the process of engendering sector policies of all Ministries and Departments as recommended in the NGPF, and also try to reach out the private sector which is a real challenge to ensure gender equality.

It will further set up a Steering Committee to monitor outputs of the Pilot Ministries with regard to their gender sensitivity and implementation of their sectoral gender policies. The Steering Committee will comprise sectoral Ministries and stakeholders of the National Gender Machinery, including the Central Statistics Office. The monitoring process will be as follows:-

- (iv) **Gender Focal Points** will play an active role in monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming into their policies and programmes and also form a peer review mechanism. Similarly, GFPs will also be trained on gender responsive budgeting so that they act as watchdog

to their sectoral Ministries to monitor implementation of gender mainstreaming in their policies and programmes.

- (v) Monitoring of gender sensitive allocation of resources and outputs will be done through the **PBB** reform and key performance indicators.
- (vi) Data obtained from the **GIS** would also prove useful to monitor the status of gender equality at national level.

The above-mentioned monitoring and Evaluation process will support results-based management, strengthen accountability, promote transparency, and improve reporting.

Describe the priority areas that have been identified for improving implementation in the next five years.

The areas of concern to which the Government of Mauritius has committed itself at Beijing are as follows:-

- mainstream gender in Government's policies and programmes;
- women and health;
- Gender Based Violence;
- Women and education; and.
- Girl child

These are being taken care in a very systematic manner and regular monitoring are being carried out to ensure that gender gaps do not prevails in the required sectors

The NGM is sustaining its actions on the commitments taken at Beijing and the others areas on which it will focus are as follows:-

- Addressing gender implication of globalisation and economic crisis;
- Promotion of ICT;
- Addressing the issue of ageing population;
- Addressing the feminisation of HIV/AIDS and poverty; and
- Re-invigorating the women's movement in Mauritius

b) Give examples of measures (with targets and timeframes) which will be taken in each of these areas.

The NGM will provide assistance to relevant Ministries and Departments to formulate their gender policies such that the issues listed above are included to ensure a gender inclusive development

c) Outline explicit new commitments that will be made to accelerate implementation?

At this stage, the NGM can only envisage to initiate discussions with relevant Ministries through the setting up of a Steering Committee on Gender and Development

ANNEX 1

GENDER ISSUES

Conscious of the need to focus attention on the role of women in the development process, the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection produced a White Paper on Women in Development in 1995 which had set the guidelines to a course of action that would ensure equity and

full participation of women in all fields of development and in the different spheres of activity for the last decade and beyond the year 2000.

A gender approach to development was the basis of the White Paper. It adopted a transformative approach, which aimed at changing and enhancing the status of women in society.

Pursuant to its commitments at Beijing to foster gender equality, the Ministry has initiated a series of actions, namely:-

- The Sex Discrimination Act was passed in 2002 and a Sex Discrimination Division was set up subsequently at the Human Rights Commission to look into reported cases of complaints of discrimination against women.

- A ‘Capacity Building for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women’ Project funded by the UNDP is being implemented which aims at enhancing capacity of in-country gender analysis, policy making and monitoring to ensure gender mainstreaming.
- The main activities conducted under this project include, *inter-alia*, the following:
 - revival of the Gender Focal Point(GFP) Mechanism in 2005 and capacity building of 40 GFPs and other stakeholders including Civil Society on gender mainstreaming, the use of gender sensitive indicators and gender impact assessments from 2005 to date .
 - production and wide distribution of the following information brochures on gender terminologies:-
 - (i) A Gender Information brochure entitled ‘Did You Say Gender’ on gender terminologies;
 - (ii) An information brochure on international women’s rights instruments, entitled ‘From Commitment to Action’;
 - (iii) A publication on the findings on the in-depth analysis of the Time Use Survey.

 - setting up of an online Gender Information System (GIS) which will be operational shortly will enable GFPs to input sex disaggregated data to monitor gender responsiveness of their policies and programmes;
 - participating in the reform of the Government towards programme based budgeting in 2008, therefore providing a key entry point for gender responsive budgeting by engendering the outputs and performance indicators of sector Ministries and their respective sector strategies. In this

context, the Lead Agency has been working with various Ministries to engender their PBB exercise;

- An in-depth analysis of the Time Use Survey (TUS), an international human rights instruments. The findings of the study have confirmed the gender pay gap, the lower status of women in the employment sector, women's unaccounted contribution to the economy as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the glass-ceiling effects and the persistent sex distribution of household tasks in Mauritius;
- revisiting the 2005 National Gender Policy in 2008 into an overarching framework that calls upon sectoral Ministries to design there-from their respective gender policies and action plans with gender sensitive performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation. The **National Gender Policy Framework** (NGPF) provides the broad institutional & operational guidelines for the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies. It also stipulates that gender disaggregated data and creation of a related information system are essential for monitoring and evaluation. Such a system would need to generate information about why progress has not been achieved and what factors led to or blocked any progress. Gender-sensitive indicators thus have been developed which explicitly provide quantitative and qualitative information about results concerning the evolution of gender issues. Background analysis of the situation will also be 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. With regard to accountability for results, the NGPF stipulates that "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. These allocations need to be therefore monitored for equity.
- As from July 2008, the Women's Unit of the Lead Agency has been restyled into a Gender Unit (GU). In line with this change in appellation, activities of the GU have shifted from women's traditional empowerment activities to gender mainstreaming to achieve gender equality and equity.

Challenges

This Ministry as the lead agency has assisted the Pilot Ministries (Youth, Labour, Education, MWR, Finance) to design their respective sectoral gender policies. The major challenge forward remains the formulation and the ownership of these respective gender policies.

Moreover, the Ministry has to to embark on a national awareness campaign so that all relevant information pertaining to gender trickles down to the grassroots.

WOMEN AND HEALTH

To ensure that women enjoy the highest standard of physical and mental health, the Government has continued to provide free health services from more than **200** service points around the island. Services relating to Sexual and Reproductive Health are provided by the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations. Recognizing the need to increase access of women to Sexual Reproductive Health Services and Information, to protect them against Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) and HIV/AIDS, to promote Safe Motherhood and increase male involvement and participation in the process of women empowerment, the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare has adopted and initiated innovative approaches to ensure that women's health

and well-being are fully entertained. These include the “Men as Partners” project, Pre-marital Counselling as well as the Marriage Enrichment Programmes. It is also sustaining the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and lately, it has focussed on programmes related to cervical screening which was carried out in collaboration with the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association.

With respect to the feminization of AIDS, the Ministry is also a key partner in the fight against the HIV and AIDS and is working jointly with the AIDS Secretariat of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to curb down the increasing trend of the pandemic. The National Women’s Council operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare has conducted various capacity building/ training programmes with its personnel to in turn sensitize women at the level of Women’s Associations on the issue and on the risks associated with the disease.

Challenge

In view of the ageing population, the tendency of female related diseases is increasing significantly and therefore, the Government will be called upon to invest adequately into that sector.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Government of Mauritius pledged at the Beijing Conference to enact a Domestic Violence Act which is now a reality and today with the enforcement of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act (PDVA), more and more women are breaking their silence of the issue and willing to report such cases of violence. Women are also more aware of the legal protection. In addition to that, other legal provisions have been made in the Mauritian Constitution to guarantee equality and protection of basic human rights.

Legislation

Gender-based violence has been given special attention in Mauritius. Since statistics reveal that women are the major victims of violence, the Protection from Domestic Violence (PDVA) was enacted in 1997 and subsequently amended in 2004 with the view to protecting other members of the family under the same roof.

In line with the Government Programme for the Year 2005-2010 to strengthen the enforcement mechanism of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, further amendments were brought to the Act in 2007 and approved by the National Assembly. The aim is to provide harsher penalties to perpetrators and reinforce the institutional mechanism to better support victims. The Ministry is now finalising matters with a view to proceeding with the proclamation of the Protection from Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act 2007.

Institutional Mechanism

In line with that an appropriate mechanism to implement policies and programmes in favour of families and to enforce the PDVA, the Family Welfare Unit was set up at the level of this Ministry since July 2003.

Services

The Unit operates through a network of six regional offices known as Family Support Bureaux, which provide family, psychological counselling and legal advice services as well as assistance to adults and children victims of domestic violence and abuse in a holistic manner. One shelter is operational by the Ministry to provide temporary protection to victims of violence over a period of 15 days pending alternative arrangements for a place of abode while other NGOs also offer temporary shelter facilities to victims of violence.

Close collaboration has also been established with the Police Department in regard to law enforcement through the setting up of 6 regional Police Family Protection Units. The Ministry of Health also collaborates at the level of 2 hospitals where victims of domestic violence victims admitted to hospitals are referred to the Ministry for follow up either for protection orders and/or counseling services.

The Ministry also assists victims of domestic violence by providing services of barristers as and when required at Court Level; as well as financial assistance when victims leave the shelter. The Ministry further refers victims to the Ministry of Social Security for social aid in cases where the victim has been abandoned by her spouse and is faced with financial constraint.

National Action Plan to combat Domestic Violence

A National Action Plan to combat domestic violence has been launched in November 2007. The Plan contains five strategic objectives:-

- (i) improving legislation on domestic violence and strengthening of the justice system and the agencies response;
- (ii) appropriate, accessible, timely, coordinated multi-agency responses and support to all victims and children who need it;
- (iii) sensitize and change attitudes to prevent domestic violence from happening in the first place;
- (iv) promote responsible reporting, advocacy, sensitization and promotion of a forum by media specialists to encourage the comments at large to discuss domestic violence;
- (v) Undertake research and studies on domestic violence, strengthen capacity building and set up appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the National Action Plan to combat domestic violence for the promotion of family welfare.

A series of projects have also been initiated by this Ministry to address the problem of domestic violence through sustained awareness campaign. This has resulted in an increase of reported cases of domestic violence. Besides, talks and seminars, various projects have been initiated since 2002, namely the Anger Management Programme, Men as Partners Project (MAP), Marriage Enrichment Programme, Premarital Counselling Programme and the Setting up a Zero Tolerance Clubs.

Challenges

There is a lack of data collection as data available through the MWRCDFW and the Police Family Protection Unit are often not collected in a systematic way. The quality of the data is poor, inconsistent over time and not entirely representative. Double counting is a common problem, whereby women seeking repeated services from the same agency are counted more than once. These problems are largely the result of inadequate training, lack of resources and poor coordination among agencies. The challenge is to harmonize data collection so that the extent of domestic violence can be gauged.

Services and prevention efforts to address domestic violence require a sustained funding stream and the main sources of funding is the State. State funding for such initiatives are often inadequate and funding from donors is often project-driven and sometimes not sustained. There is, thus, the need to network with funding agencies such as UNIFEM for support to combat domestic violence.

Another challenge concerns an appropriate perpetrators' therapy programme geared towards long term solutions of gender-based violence.

THE GIRL CHILD

Convention on the Rights of the Child – Child Development Unit (CDU)

In 1990, Mauritius became signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which stipulates that Governments must strike for a society fit for children and in this endeavour; the Ministry's policies actions have been geared towards ensuring that the best interests of the child are safeguarded. Thus, in 1995 in addition to the responsibility of women affairs, Government mandated the Ministry to cater for the protection, welfare and development of children and four years later, the Child Protection Act was enacted.

Institutional Mechanism

The Ministry has the mandate to cater for the protection, welfare and development of children – hence in 1995 the setting up of the CDU.

Consequently, the CDU was set up to be the executive arm of the Ministry to intervene in cases of child abuse and neglect. The Unit is responsible for the enforcement of legislation pertaining to children and for the implementation of policies and programmes pertaining to the survival, development, protection and participation of children. This Unit works closely with other agencies such as the Police Department and provides a 24-hour service through hot lines in six regional centres i.e, Family Support Bureaux:

A psychological counselling to children at risk/in distress, as well as to their parents are given and families are disposed with free legal assistance whenever required.

The main areas of intervention have included legislation, infrastructural mechanism; capacity building for parents, child care givers, and other stakeholders, IEC programs and developmental activities as well as projects/programs for children.

Legislation

The enactment of Child Protection Act (CPA) in 1994 has been a major instrument in establishing the guiding principles and procedures for the protection of children. Further, the Amendment to the CPA in **December 2005** has enlarged the scope of operation with respect to cases of abandonment, abduction and trafficking of children

and provide for harsher punishment for those who contravene the law. Regulations have been made under the Child Protection Act 1994 to provide for the implementation of specific projects and programmes:

- The Institution for Welfare and Protection of Children Regulations 2000 makes provision for the regulation of the Early Childhood Development Sector (3 months to 3 years) including the provision for the registration of Day Care Centres (DCC) with the Ministry and for the monitoring of their services/activities.
- The Child Protection Act (Foster Care) Regulations 2002 were made to enable children victims of abuse/neglect/abandonment to be placed with registered foster families and to monitor process of registration of foster parents and placement of children therewith.
- In accordance with the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction Act 2000, the Ministry acts as Central Authority with respect to this issue. Our main role is to secure the prompt return of children wrongfully retained in another State and to ensure that the rights of custody and of access under the law of one contracting State are effectively respected.
- The Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003 was enacted to ensure that the rights, needs and interest of children are given full consideration by public bodies, private authorities and individuals.
- The Ministry has brought amendments to the CPA in Dec 2008 with a view to implementing the Child Mentoring Programme. Registered child mentors would act as role models and provide individual guidance and care in the living environment of children in difficult circumstances.

Various Projects/Programmes are implemented at the level of CDU

- Protocol of Collaboration
- Tardy Declaration
- Early Childhood Development (ECD)
- Outreach Programmes
- Community Child Protection Programme (CCPP)
- Protocol of collaboration to victims of sexual assaults

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Mauritius committed itself to the formulation of policies to encourage girls to take up non traditional subjects including Science and Technology; as well choosing careers which have been hitherto considered as male domains.

Since 1976 the Government of Mauritius has introduced free education at primary and secondary level. The enrolment of both boys and girls has increased steadily over the past years. As at 2008, enrolment of girls at primary level was 65,879 as compared to boys which stood at **58,128**. Enrolment in secondary schools was **48%** for boys and **52%** for girls. At the tertiary level, **3861** males were enrolled at the University of Mauritius as compared to **4607** females.

Mauritius has undertaken to provide educational facilities to students (boys and girls) till they reach the maturity age to enter the world of work. The pre-vocational sector caters for around **8011** students ejected out of the system after the primary cycle. The Pre-Vocational Scheme makes provision for Certificate of Primary Education drop outs to ensure equity in educational services in the State and Private Sectors.

The Industrial and Vocational Training Board (IVTB) was set up in 1989 and is responsible for the planning, designing, monitoring implementation and evaluation of training programmes at national level. Training is imparted by both IVTB owned and registered private institutions which offer in house training as well as apprenticeship and on the job training in about 18 different sectors. The IVTB offers a variety of technical and vocational courses. The number of girls attended the IVTB courses in 2007 stood at **1898** as compared to **6623** boys

A Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has also been set up to foster and plan the development of post secondary education and training. Since its creation, the TEC has also taken initiatives to promote research in tertiary institutions.

In line with its policy to encourage both boys and girls to opt for Science and Technology, the Government of Mauritius is providing laboratory facilities and computers to primary and secondary schools. Government also provides scholarships equally to males and females and financial assistance to needy students for the purchase of books and payment of examination fees.

Training

The Government of Mauritius, through the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, and the Industrial and Vocational Training Board (IVTB) are providing various training programmes for empowering women and girls at all levels. A variety of courses including dress-making, home-economics, handicraft, adult literacy and Information Technology are offered by the Ministry for the period **2003 to 2007**, **60,000** women have benefited from the various training programmes.

The National Women's Council which operates under the aegis of the Ministry has widened the scope of operation of its Units, namely, the **Adult Literacy Unit** and the **Dressmaking and Related Craft Unit**, to apply a more holistic and coherent approach to implement activities and projects with a view to addressing women's issues by:

- facilitating their involvement in economic activities;
- promoting self development and employability through literacy;
- strengthening capabilities through training in capacity building; &
- facilitating women's access to information.

Challenges

The challenge is that of upgrading and/or re-skilling of redundant women of the EPZ sector to ensure that they have access to alternate jobs or the possibility of starting a micro enterprise.

Other pertinent challenges in regard to our education system are that of formalizing continuous development programmes in both public and private sectors to give women the opportunity to occupy higher levels of responsibility. Open learning, distance learning as well as selected training programmes could be an integral part of all tertiary education programmes to allow women to adjust work and family responsibilities with learning.