



United Nations Nations Unies

**United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
United Nations Development Programme**

**Expert Group Meeting on “The impact of the implementation
of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the
achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”**

United Nations Office at Geneva

11-13 November 2009

CASE STUDY: GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING IN MAURITIUS

Presentation by United Nations Country Team

Magda Verdickt *

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Division for the Advancement of Women
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations, New York
Fax: (212) 963-3463
daw@un.org
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw>

** The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.*

ENGLISH only

I am indeed pleased to be at this meeting of the expert group to examine and share with you the support extended by the UNDP Country Office to the lead agency of the national gender equality machinery in the Republic of Mauritius in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. In particular, I will be presenting what has been referred to as 'best practice' in the field of gender-responsive budgeting.

Introduction

Collaboration between Mauritius and the United Nations System dates back to 1969, with the opening of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The UNDP is committed to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, with gender equality as a cross cutting issue. Activities of the UNDP are also in line with the Gender Equality Strategy (2008-2011) of Mauritius.

The UNDP has a proven track record of sustaining implementation of activities undertaken by the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare (MWRCDFW), the lead agency on women's empowerment and gender equality. The UNDP has been supporting the lead agency since 1995 with the shift from a women-specific approach to a gender-and-development approach, through various capacity building programmes on women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming, and has been pivotal in training of officers in gender-responsive budgeting

The socio-economic situation of Mauritius, and the socio-economic and political status of women

Since its independence in 1968, Mauritius has adopted a rights-based approach to development. In line with the UN Decade for Women Plan of Action (1976-1985), the Government of Mauritius was one of the first to set up an institutional mechanism for the advancement of the rights of women - the Ministry for Women's Affairs in 1976 - in the wake of International Women's Year 1975. Since then, Mauritius has achieved significant progress in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Since 1990, Mauritius has experienced accelerated economic growth, with annual growth rates averaging 5%. Combined with a significant reduction in the population growth rate, Mauritius has moved from being a low-income country with an economy based on sugar as a single revenue earner, to being a middle-income country with a diversified economic base and a per capita income of US\$12,100 (2008, purchasing power parity) and a GNI per capita of US\$ 6,401.04 (Doing Business Report 2010).

With the advent of globalisation and trade liberalisation, key economic sectors, previously protected under preferential arrangements, have witnessed major economic challenges due to the

changing global environment - the reform of the EU sugar regime, the dismantling of the Multi-Fibre Agreement in January 2005, and the increase in energy/oil prices.

The sugar industry now represents only 3% of GDP and 6% of foreign exchange earnings, but remains one of the main employers and represents 80% of land utilised. Tourism is the predominant sector accounting for close to 10% of GDP, 7% of employment and 29% of exports of goods and services. Textiles contribute 5% to GDP, employ 11% of the workforce and account for 19% of foreign exchange earnings.

In 2007, the Human Development Index (HDI) for Mauritius was 0.804, which ranks the country 65th out of 177 countries, placing Mauritius as a high human development country. Mauritius ranked 51st in the Gender Empowerment Measure, with a value of 0.562. The estimated ratio of female to male earned income was 0.41. In 2008, the HDI ranking for Mauritius was 74 with a GEM ranking of 76, and a value of 0.509. The estimated ratio of female to male earned income was 0.42.

Six external factors marked the economic scenario in the year 2008. These include: the surging oil prices, the soaring food prices, the global food crunch, a cut of 36% in the price of sugar, a sub-prime mortgage crisis and a world economic recession. However, market reforms and injections of stimulus packages and additional stimulus packages have enabled Mauritius to build resilience against the first-round effects of the global crisis. Reforms that were already launched in 2005 have revitalised economic growth; lowered unemployment to 8% as compared to 8.2% during the same period in 2008-the lowest in five years; increased FDI inflows by almost 3 times; increased private investment to 20% of GDP; reduction in the overall fiscal deficit to 3.4% of GDP in 2007/2008 from a peak of 5.4% in 2005/2006; and a decrease in the public sector debt from about 69% in 2005/2006 to 62% of GDP in 2007/2008.

With regard to the resident population, women constitute around 51% of the total population, with a feminization of the elderly population. The adolescent fertility rate in 2003 was 35.8 %, and 35.4% in 2007; maternal mortality rate was 0.21% in 2003 and increased to 0.36% in 2007; statistics reveal that girls are faring better at primary education, as compared to boys; the number of women at parliamentary level saw a leap from previously 5,7% to 17,1 % at the latest election in 2005.

Successive governments have lobbied for economic and social success through equity, ethics and social justice regardless of gender, creed, ethnic origin or class. In this context, a number of measures have been undertaken to safeguard the rights of citizens and promote and protect women's and children's rights, thereby contributing to their social, political and economical empowerment. These include, inter alia:

- Amending Section 16 of the Mauritian Constitution to prohibit discrimination on the ground of sex;
- Enactment of legislation in support of women, such as the Protection from Domestic Violence Act 1997 (amended 2004);
- Enactment of a Sex Discrimination Act (2002) and setting up of a Sex Discrimination Division within the Human Rights Commission;
- Enactment of an Equal Opportunities Act (2008).

At the international and regional levels, Mauritius adheres to a number of human rights instruments and standards on women's empowerment and gender equality. These include inter alia:

- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), acceded on 9 July 1984
- the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, ratified on 31 October 2008
- the Beijing Platform for Action adopted in September 1995
- the Millennium Development Goals signed in September 2000
- the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2005-2015) adopted in 2005
- the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa, signed on 21 January 2005.

Implementing gender-responsive budgeting

The following section summarizes the different processes and phases that created a conducive environment, leading to the successful implementation of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in the country.

It is important to highlight that a GRB initiative does not aim to produce a separate budget for women. Instead it aims to analyze any form of public expenditure, or method of raising public money, from a gender perspective, identifying the implications and impacts for women and girls, as compared to men and boys.

The history of GRB in Mauritius dates back to February 2000, when Government participated in a sub-regional workshop organized with the support of the UNDP, comprising of representatives from the Governments of Comoros, Madagascar and Seychelles.

Consequently in 2001, a two-day National Consultative Workshop on "Engendering the Budget" was organised by the MWRCDFW in collaboration with UNDP. The outcome of the workshop was the establishment of a temporary consultative group, and the development of a preliminary

ENGLISH only

outline for a three-year Action Plan on GRB. Same was used as a basis and a starting point for the work of a High-Level Committee (HLC) on GRB at the national level. The Committee comprised representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance, the MWRCDFW, the Ministry of Economic Development, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs, the University of Mauritius, the Central Statistical Office, the Association of "Entrepreneurs Ocean Indien" and the UNDP.

In 2002 the then Minister of Finance participated at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in London, UK and agreed to make progress on GRB within the budget setting processes for review at the Ministerial meeting in 2005. In 2003, the High-Level Committee prepared and proposed an Action Plan on GRB to the MWRCDFW. This was brought to Cabinet and approved. The process was kept in abeyance until 2005, with the implementation by the MWRCDFW of a UNDP supported project entitled "Capacity Building for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women".

Subsequently, on the recommendation of the HLC, an in-depth analysis of the 2003 Time Use Survey as part of the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey was carried out in November 2005 and its findings disseminated.

Concurrently, the lead agency, i.e. the MWRCDFW, formed a strategic partnership in 2007 with the Ministries of Finance and Economic Empowerment (MoFEE) and the Civil Service and Administrative reforms to align the revised national gender policy with the current reforms of the Government towards Programme Based Budgeting (PBB) and Performance Management Systems (PMS).

A high-level symposium was organised by the lead agency, with the support of the UNDP, and facilitated by an international consultant on gender equality, with a view to sensitising administrative and technical heads of all Ministries and departments on gender issues and gender mainstreaming and their relevance to the present conjuncture. Additionally, the Minister of Women's Rights held consultative sessions with the Minister of Finance with a view to establishing a partnership to implement gender-responsive budgeting through the newly launched Programme Based Budgets of pilot Ministries.

With the support of the UNDP, sensitisation on gender issues and consultative sessions were also held with representatives of the media and civil society organisations to seek their inputs on a revised national gender policy framework. Same was also circulated to sectoral Ministries through the gender focal point mechanism for views/comments in November 2007. The

ENGLISH only

National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF) was consequently adopted in parliament in February 2008 and launched on the occasion of International Women's Day 2008. There was no opposition to the document. Effectively, the strategy to embark on a partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment (MoFEE) and to have obtained the commitment of the Minister of Finance had been pivotal. Accordingly, with the support of the MoFEE, the budget call circular 2008/09 reflected gender perspectives along with the newly published PBB Training Manual of 2008. The training manual provided guidelines on how to effectively mainstream gender perspectives into the respective PBBs of sectoral Ministries.

The National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF) has been designed as an overarching framework that provides the guiding principles, broad operational strategies and institutional arrangements for achieving gender equality at the national level. The NGPF calls upon a strategic partnership between the government, media, private institutions and civil society organisations to achieve gender equality and equity in a holistic manner.

Importantly, the NGPF further seeks implementation in line with the current reforms of the Government towards performance management and programme based budgeting. In this context, and as part of the strategic budgeting initiatives, key entry points for mainstreaming gender perspectives in the programme based budgeting (PBB) exercise have been identified with pilot Ministries. These include *inter alia* providing technical assistance to pilot Ministries to formulate their respective gender policies and sector strategies in line with the NGPF and PBB.

Technical expertise was provided by the UNDP to assist pilot Ministries in internalising the process of aligning budgets to sectoral strategies within the context of the NGPF and international commitments made towards a human rights based and gender-sensitive approach to development.

To date, the following four pilot Ministries have formulated their sectoral gender policies with the technical assistance of the UNDP and the MWRCDFW. These include the Ministries of Education, Culture and Human Resources, Youth and Sports, Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, and the MWRCDFW which is the lead agency of the national gender equality machinery.

Mauritius is poised to be one of the pioneering countries in the African region to implement principles of gender-responsive budgeting, following a strategic partnership between the lead agency and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment. To that effect, international and national technical expertise has been provided by the UNDP from January – July 2009 to

ENGLISH only

pilot Ministries to assist in the reflection of gender perspectives in their respective non financial Programme Based Budgeting (PBB) exercise for the financial year 2010/2011 and to build their capacity on gender-responsive budgeting.

Given the success of the first pilot phase, four additional Ministries were identified to formulate their sectoral gender policies. These include the Ministries of Finance and Economic Empowerment; Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions; Agro-Industry, Food Production and Security; and Civil Service and Administrative Reforms. Pilot programmes under the PBB where gender perspectives have been reflected are as follows:

Ministry	Programme	Title
Civil Service and Administrative Reforms	303	Human Resource Development and Capacity Building
Finance and Economic Empowerment	363	Socio Economic Empowerment and Widening the Circle of Opportunities
Education, Culture and Human Resources	422 & 423	Pre-primary and Primary Education
Youth and Sports	68202	Sports for All
Labour, IR and Employment	544	Employment Facilitation
Agro Industry, Food Production	484	Livestock Production and development
Social Security, NS, SCW and RI	50202	Empowerment and Integration of Vulnerable Persons
Ministry of Women's Rights, CDFW	522, 523, 524	Women's Empowerment and Gender Mainstreaming; Child Protection, Welfare and Development and Family Welfare and Protection from Domestic Violence

It is also worthy noting that the policy from 1976 to 2008 has shifted the focus of attention from a WID approach to that of a gender-and-development approach in the context of the reform of

the Government towards Programme Based Budgeting and Performance Management, making gender mainstreaming and equity an explicit goal of sustainable and social development. Consequently in March 2008, the Women's Unit of the MWRCDFW was restyled to a Gender Unit. The Gender Unit of the MWRCDFW serves as an institutional and coordinating mechanism to the national gender equality machinery to monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies for the empowerment of women and promotion of gender equality. It has adopted a two- pronged approach to development, namely through outreach activities undertaken at grass-roots level and gender mainstreaming at policy, programming and output level with Ministries and Departments and other stakeholders, in line with the National Gender Policy Framework and the recent reform towards effective public financial management systems.

In conclusion, allow me to point out the different steps involved in making the case study of Mauritius a best practice. Although it was a long process that started in 2000, it has yielded the expected results through the political and technical commitment of key partners, the strategic entry points that were identified in the context of the reforms of the Government towards PBB and PMS, through continuous capacity building of budget sector teams of pilot Ministries, Gender Focal Points and that of the lead agency coupled with on-going technical advise and backup support to Ministries.