

Occasional paper **No: 82**

MCB Focus

**Mauritius Inc.: Promoting gender equity to sustain a more
inclusive development path**

March 2021



The report was finalised on 31st March 2021, but its dissemination was subsequently deferred in the wake of the national lockdown.

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THE CONTEXT

Empowering women and promoting gender equality are not only fundamental human rights and also forms part of the key United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals for delivering on the promises of inclusive socio-economic development, sustainability and human progress. There has been noteworthy progress during the past decades: more girls are going to school, less girls are forced into early marriage and more women are serving in parliament. Yet, many challenges remain: discriminatory laws and social norms remain pervasive, women continue to be underrepresented at all levels and, as per the UN, 1 in 5 women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 are experiencing physical or sexual violence within a 12-month period. In the labour market, female participation has remained consistently lower than male at the global scale. Moreover, when women do participate, they tend to be stuck in lower-paying jobs. Women are also over-represented in the informal sector of the economy, with unstable earnings and limited social protection. Furthermore, the health and economic downturn engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting women more severely than men and partially re-opening gaps that had already been closed. Against this backdrop, the latest edition of the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report indicated that *"Another generation of women will have to wait for gender parity. As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt, closing the global gender gap has increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years."* According to computations by the McKinsey Global Institute, women – which make up almost two-fifths of the global labour force – have suffered more than half of total job losses since the onset of the crisis, leaving them 1.8 times more vulnerable to the pandemic's impact than their male counterparts as they work predominantly in sectors that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. Furthermore, violence against women and girls has reportedly intensified since the outbreak of the virus. As such, putting women at the heart of the recovery and reform programme is essential in the quest for building back better and driving more sustainable development outcomes for all, alongside supporting a more inclusive and equitable recovery.

POSITIONING OF MAURITIUS

As Mauritius contemplates measures intended to rebuild the nation in the wake of the pandemic and beyond, the country stands to gain from additional policies in favour of a more gender-balanced and inclusive socio-economic development path. In fact, in spite of progress made during the past decades, notably in respect of promoting education of women, the gender gap in Mauritius remains relatively elevated, as gauged by the country's positioning on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index. Particularly, in addition to their low political representation, gaps in economic participation of women remain high. In the same vein, latest official gender statistics indicate that, besides earning less on average, women are more

Box I: Ramifications of the pandemic on progress towards gender equity

Even before the pandemic, progress towards gender equality had been uneven on the global scene...

Wage

Wage gap between women and men in a similar position is **37%**

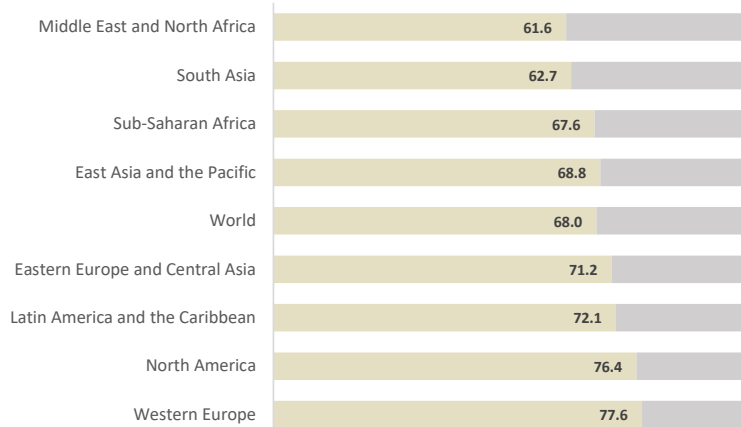
Employment

Only **52.6%** of women participate in the labour market, compared to 80% of men

Regulation

On average, in 2020, women only had **three-fourths** the legal rights of men

Proportion of gender gap closed to date (as per WEF)



Politics

Women occupy **only 26.1%** of parliamentary seats worldwide

Have an account at a financial institution



Only **1 in 3** businesses are owned by women

... with COVID-19 having a disproportionate impact of women's social and economic capabilities

Globally, women lost **64 million jobs**

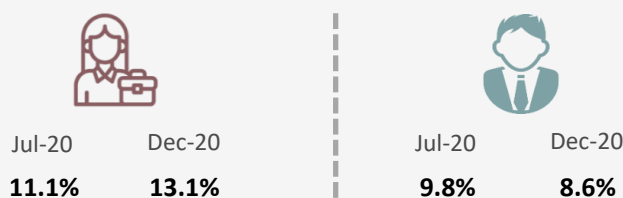
5% drop in female employment vs. **3.9% for male**

It will now take **135.6 years** to close the gender gap worldwide

Overrepresentation of female employment in the **hardest-hit sectors**

On the domestic front, COVID-19 has exacerbated difficulties faced by women in the labour force

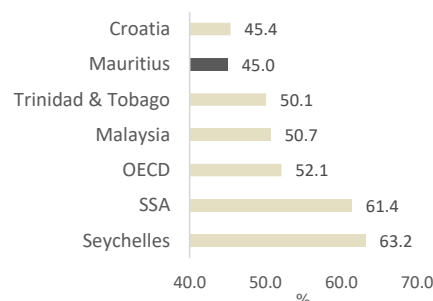
While the pandemic triggered a rise in female unemployment rate ...



...the corresponding rate for male witnessed a decline

Above unemployment figures are based on the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey released by Statistics Mauritius in March 2021

Female participation rate, 2019 (Mauritius vs Peers*)



Labour force participation rate is the proportion of the population aged 15+ that is economically active

Underscores the need for increased women's economic empowerment to promote an inclusive and equitable recovery

* Note :Peer countries selected on the basis of GNI per capita in current USD (using the Atlas method of exchange rates)

Sources: Moody's Investors Service, Statistics Mauritius, World Economic Forum, Statistics Seychelles and World Bank

likely than men to live in poverty, be victims of violence and are underrepresented in senior positions as well as in sports. Moreover, women already in the labour market are more likely than men to be unemployed during crises, as witnessed during the pandemic. In fact, as per the findings of the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey released by Statistics Mauritius in March 2021, the number of unemployed women has increased by about 6,100 from 25,100 in July to 31,200 in December 2020, while the number of unemployed men decreased by 2,400 to 29,800 during the same period. From a broader angle, whilst increasing marginally in recent years, female labour participation remains well below the corresponding rate for male and is low when compared with peer countries, at around 45% of the labour force. The subdued participation of women in the labour force, in turn, tends to expose the country to a paucity of labour resources and a lack of intellectual capital that would, otherwise, have boosted nationwide output by an important margin. In the latter respect, in the context of a study themed ‘Women, Work and Economic Growth: Leveling the playing field’, the IMF estimated real GDP in Mauritius to be around 22 to 27 percent lower over the 2004-13 period compared with a situation in which there were no such gaps in labour force participation and entrepreneurship. From a policy perspective, it is insightful to refer to the World Bank’s recent report on Mauritius and titled ‘Mauritius: Addressing inequality through more equitable labor markets’, in which it stressed that: *“Female participation in the labor force is crucial to the functioning of labor markets for both efficiency and equity reasons. Unleashing additional and valuable human capital resources into the economy contributes to making the economy more productive, thus helping it to attain its full potential.”* This underscores the importance of further boosting female labour participation as a key lever for enhancing the country’s growth potential and mitigating the impact of the projected ageing of our population, as advocated for in several prior editions of MCB Focus published over the last 15 years.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE REPORT

This report assesses the importance of promoting gender equity in Mauritius towards building back better in the wake of the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside supporting the integrated socio-economic progress of the population over the medium and longer term. Specifically after evaluating the significance and economic benefits of boosting female participation, the report lays out the enabling conditions and specific policy priorities that can prove influential in bringing more women in the labour force and achieving a gender lens development path in Mauritius. To underpin suggestions made in this document, the report is guided by specific measures and postures embraced by various countries on the international scale as detailed in the case studies in the Annex section. In the course of its analysis, the report leverages national and international statistical databases to appraise and benchmark women participation in Mauritius, while resorting to empirical references and models. The report is neither prescriptive in its essence nor exhaustive in its contents. While acknowledging policies already being implemented by the Government, the report aims to take part in the thinking for further tapping into the huge potential of women as a game changer for enhancing the country’s prosperity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Promoting female empowerment is key for ensuring social justice and fairness. At the same time, there is ample evidence demonstrating that significant macroeconomic gains can be reaped when women are able to fulfill their full labour market potential. As addressed by the former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon at the commemoration of the 2008 International Women's Day: *"Investing in women is not only the right thing to do. It is the smart thing to do."* This is in line with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which defines women's economic empowerment as *"the transformative process by which women and girls go from having limited power, voice, and choice at home and in the economy to having the skills, resources, and opportunities needed to access and compete equitably in markets and the agency to control and benefit from economic gains."* In this respect, this section summarises the key elements of the literature on the economic benefits of boosting female empowerment and boosting female participation in the labour market.

Key economic benefits of gender equity

Boost to productivity levels

Providing high-quality schooling to girls would contribute to faster growth in total factor productivity as better educated young women join the labour market. The more educated the labour force is, the more capable it is of adapting and pushing the technological frontier, as well as innovating and creating new knowledge. In fact, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has found a strong correlation between a country's competitiveness and how it educates and uses its female talent, stating that empowering women means a more efficient use of a nation's human talent endowment and reducing gender inequality enhances productivity and economic growth. The WEF further noted that based on evidence from macroeconomic, sectoral and firm-level data, women and men complement each other in the production process, creating an additional benefit from increasing women's employment on growth. Moreover, studies have found that lower gender inequality can also enhance market efficiency with the more effective allocation of working women, for instance, to wage employment in the non-agriculture sector and as entrepreneurs (employers/self-employed persons). Similarly, the World Bank indicates that providing more equal access to productive resources to women and men could yield considerable output gains. Also, the OECD argues that greater gender equality can boost economic growth, enhance productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representative.

Support in mitigating the impact of demographics

In today's world where populations are ageing at a fast pace, higher female labour force participation can help in stimulating economic growth and mitigating the impact of a shrinking workforce. For example, in Japan, the IMF has indicated in a study entitled 'Women, work and the economy: Macroeconomic gains from gender equity' that annual potential growth could rise by about ¼ percentage point if female labour participation were to reach the average for the Group of Seven advanced economies, resulting in an estimated 4 percent permanent rise in GDP per capita compared with the Fund's baseline scenario for Japan.

Support to economic diversification

Higher inclusion and empowerment of women can facilitate the diversification of the economic base and help in creating new drivers of growth. In fact, closing the gender gap in labour force participation increases a country's ability to generate and execute new ideas – which are key to ensuring successful diversification. According to a study by the IMF entitled, *Women, Work, and Economic Growth: Leveling the Playing Field*, “gender inequality decreases the variety of goods countries produce and export, particularly for low-income and developing economies. This happens through at least two channels. First, gender gaps in opportunity, such as lower educational enrollment rates for girls than for boys, harm diversification by constraining the potential pool of human capital available in an economy. Second, gender gaps in the labor market impede the development of new ideas by decreasing the efficiency of the labor force.” The study of the Fund provides evidence that gender-friendly policies could help countries diversify their economic base.

Poverty alleviation

In addition to its benefits to the generation of higher level of economic growth, greater gender inclusion assists in reducing poverty levels and alleviating income inequality. As expounded in a recent speech by Gita Gopinath - IMF's Chief Economist - on women's economic empowerment and inclusive global economic growth, “Moving from a situation of perfect gender inequality to perfect gender equality is estimated to be equivalent to lowering income inequality from levels prevailing in Venezuela to those in Sweden”. As such, tapping into women's potential not only infuses growth but also promotes a more even and inclusive growth. In that respect, the United Nations has advocated the importance of macroeconomic policy as an instrument of justice, by promoting inclusive growth and by incentivising higher women's empowerment.

Box II: Empirical evidence on the benefits of greater gender equality

The following is a summary of the views expressed by key international organisations in respect of the significance of reaching or improving gender parity in underscoring socio-economic progress.

IMF

Research by the IMF (2018) estimates that closing the gender gap in employment in countries that have the biggest gaps in participation rates would have added, on average, **35 per cent to GDP** —of which one fifth of the gains come from higher productivity due to gender diversity

World Bank

In a study by the World Bank (2020), the total gain in human capital wealth from gender equality in lifetime labour earnings is estimated at around **USD 172 trillion** in 2017

McKinsey

McKinsey (2020) anticipates that tackling gender inequality would **add, on a cumulative basis, USD 13 trillion to global GDP by 2030**, compared to a gender regressive scenario in which no action is taken

United Nation Development Programme

According to the Africa Human Development Report 2016, gender inequality has cost **sub-Saharan Africa USD 95 billion a year on average** for the period 2010-2014, thereby jeopardising the continent's efforts for inclusive human development and economic growth

International Labour Organisation

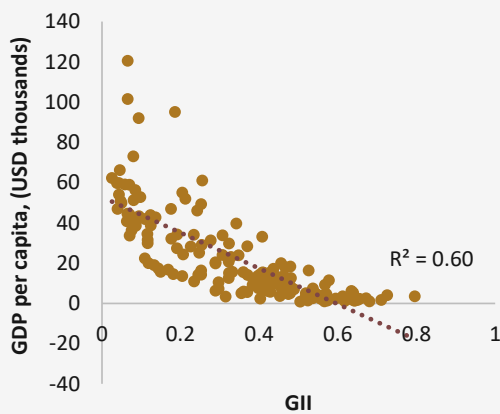
Research by the ILO (2017) concluded that closing the gender gap in participation by 25 per cent by 2025 could **increase global GDP by USD 5.3 trillion**

Sources: United Nations, International Monetary Fund, International Labour Organisation, United Nation Development Programme, McKinsey, World Happiness Report and World Bank

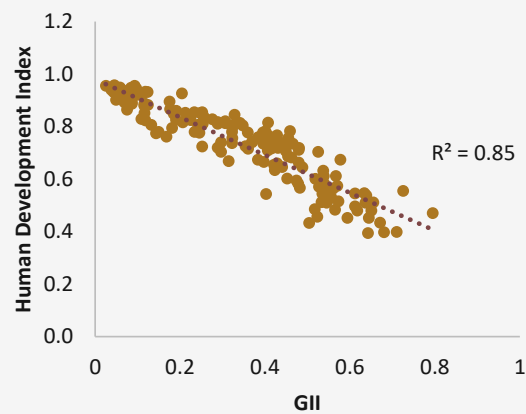
Box II: Empirical evidence on the benefits of greater gender equality (Cont'd)

The Gender Inequality Index (GII), developed by the UNDP, measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development, namely reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. The higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development. The following illustrations depict the correlation between gender inequality and a set of economic and development indicators, with a view to shedding light on the benefits of tackling gender inequality. That said, it is worth noting that in some cases, the empirical literature indicates that the pursuit of economic development and gender equality could, if not properly calibrated, impact on social outcomes, such as contributing to a decline in fertility rates.

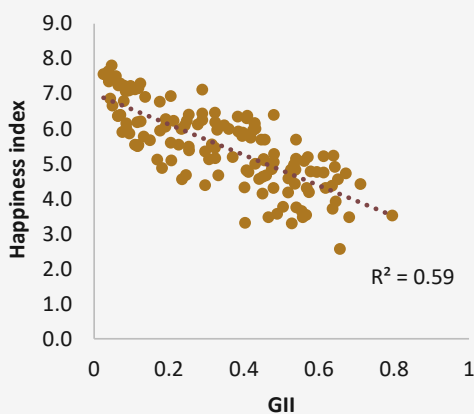
Gender inequality and GDP per capita



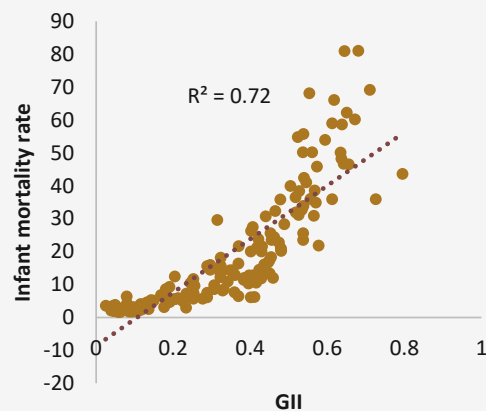
Gender inequality and Human Development Index



Gender inequality and Happiness Index



Gender inequality and infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)



Sources: United Nations, International Monetary Fund, International Labour Organisation, United Nation Development Programme, McKinsey, World Happiness Report and World Bank

Benefit to the economy and credit ratings

As stressed in a recent report by Moody's Investors Service, actions by governments, corporations and other organizations to promote gender equity in employment, income and access to finance will have far-reaching economic and social benefits. Notably, promoting gender equality would entail benefits for the economy and corporate oversight, while increased gender inclusion also correlates with higher credit ratings.

Box III: The impact of increased gender inclusion on credit ratings

Positive spillovers of gender equality on the economy and corporate oversight

Economic Growth



Rising women's employment and income boost output and consumption

Financial Stability



When women have more equal economic access, household finances strengthen

Corporate Governance

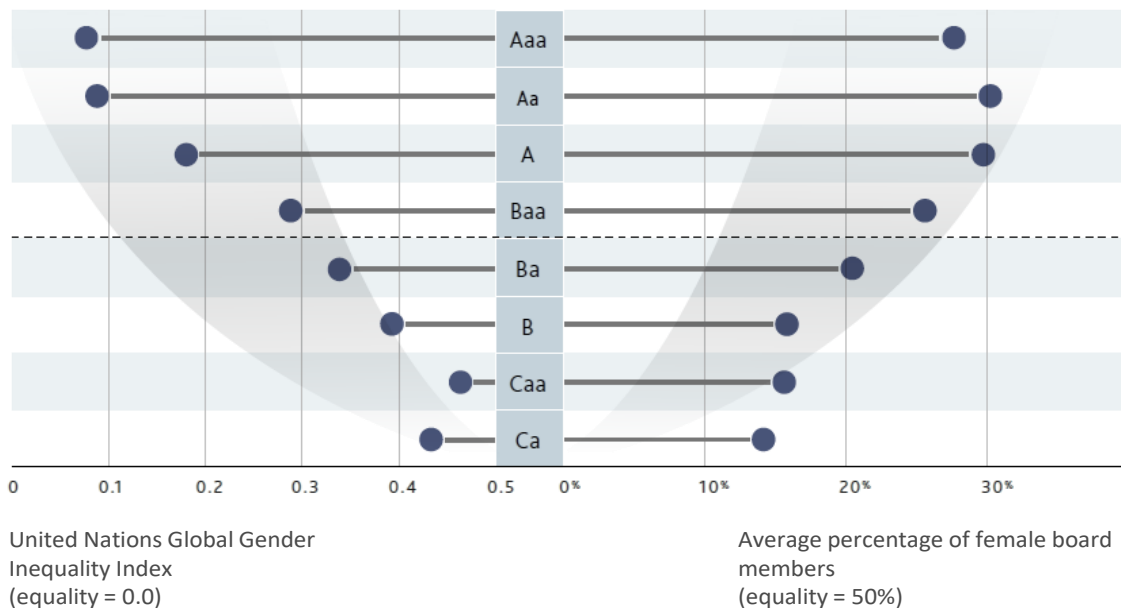


Women on boards can contribute to good corporate governance

Evidence on the correlation between increased gender inclusion and higher ratings

Global Sovereign Ratings

North America and Europe Corporate Ratings



Source: Moody's Investors Service

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

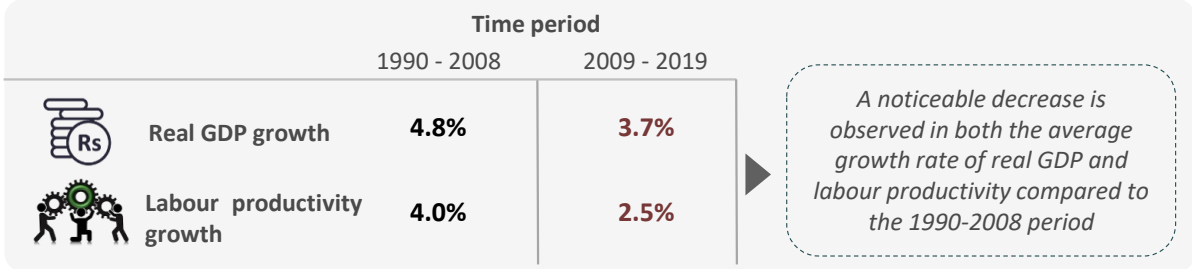
Over the past decades, Mauritius has pursued a noteworthy economic development path and a sustained rise in the population's living standards. Such headway reflects, to a notable extent, the successful structural transformation of our economic base which has been supported by a rise in the participation of women in the labour market. In recent times, however, the Mauritian economy has found it difficult to sustain the momentum of its socioeconomic progress, with real GDP growth averaging 3.7% during the period 2009-2019, compared to an average growth rate of 4.3% registered during the 1999-2008 period. This reflects notably the ramifications of the challenging external environment that have been compounded by the prevalence of structural inefficiencies with a case in point relating to productivity and labour market imperfections. As the situation stands, the evolution of our main macroeconomic indicators warrants close attention, with the domestic economy remaining exposed to key challenges, including the need to recover and bounce back from the adverse effects of the pandemic. Concomitantly, Mauritius is confronting the challenge of an ageing society and shrinking workforce, which threaten to further impede productivity growth by leading to a potential decline in labour input and exacerbating the shortage of skilled workers. A key lever towards the latter ends would be to promote a sustained rise in female labour participation – which has remained well below the corresponding level for male and is low when compared to peer countries.

OUTLINE

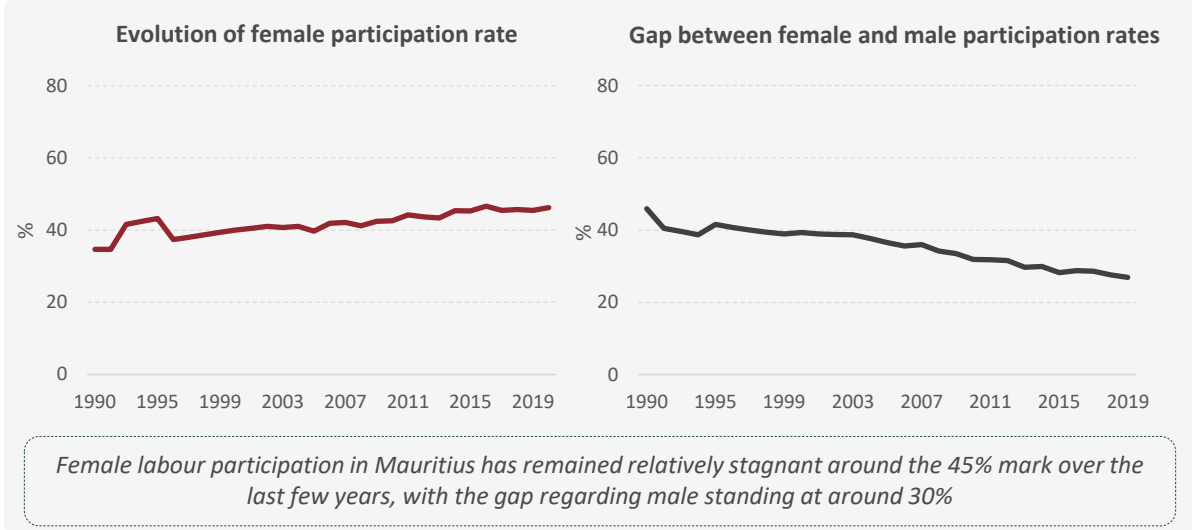
This section begins with a review of trends in female labour force participation in Mauritius relative to male over time, with focus laid on the evolution at industry level, across age groups and educational attainment level, with a view to shedding light on the key factors that have contributed to constraining the participation of women. Moving on, drawing on the methodology and approach leveraged in previous empirical studies, we establish the economic and statistical significance of female labour participation in the country. Thereafter, we investigate the existence of complementarity between men and women in the Mauritian labour force and gauge the potential for productivity and nationwide output gains associated thereto.

Box IV: Mauritian economy – performance and challenges

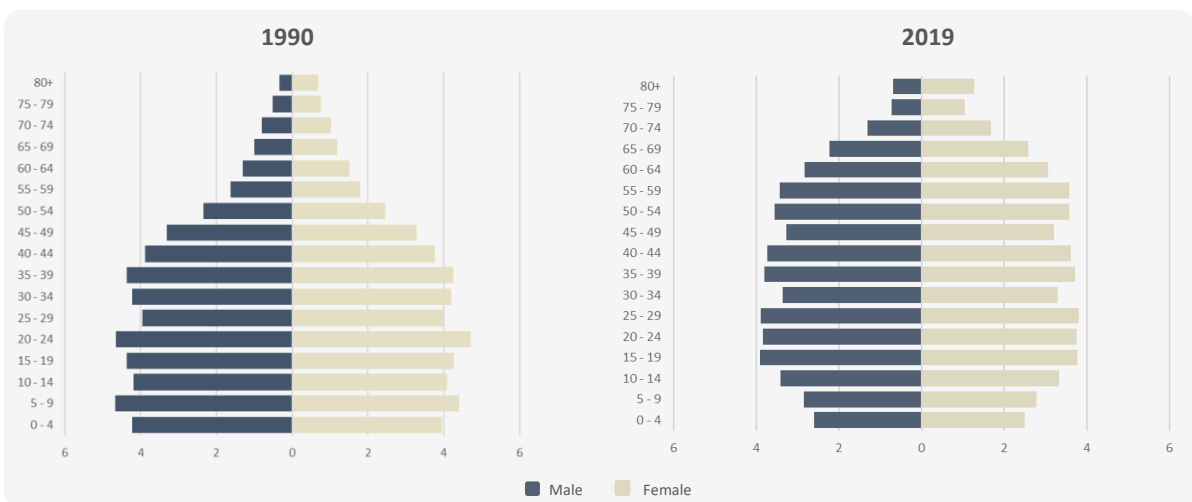
The country's growth and productivity momentum has lost steam in recent times ...



... while the gender gap in labour force participation has stayed relatively elevated



Moving forward, the country is set to face up to the ageing of its population

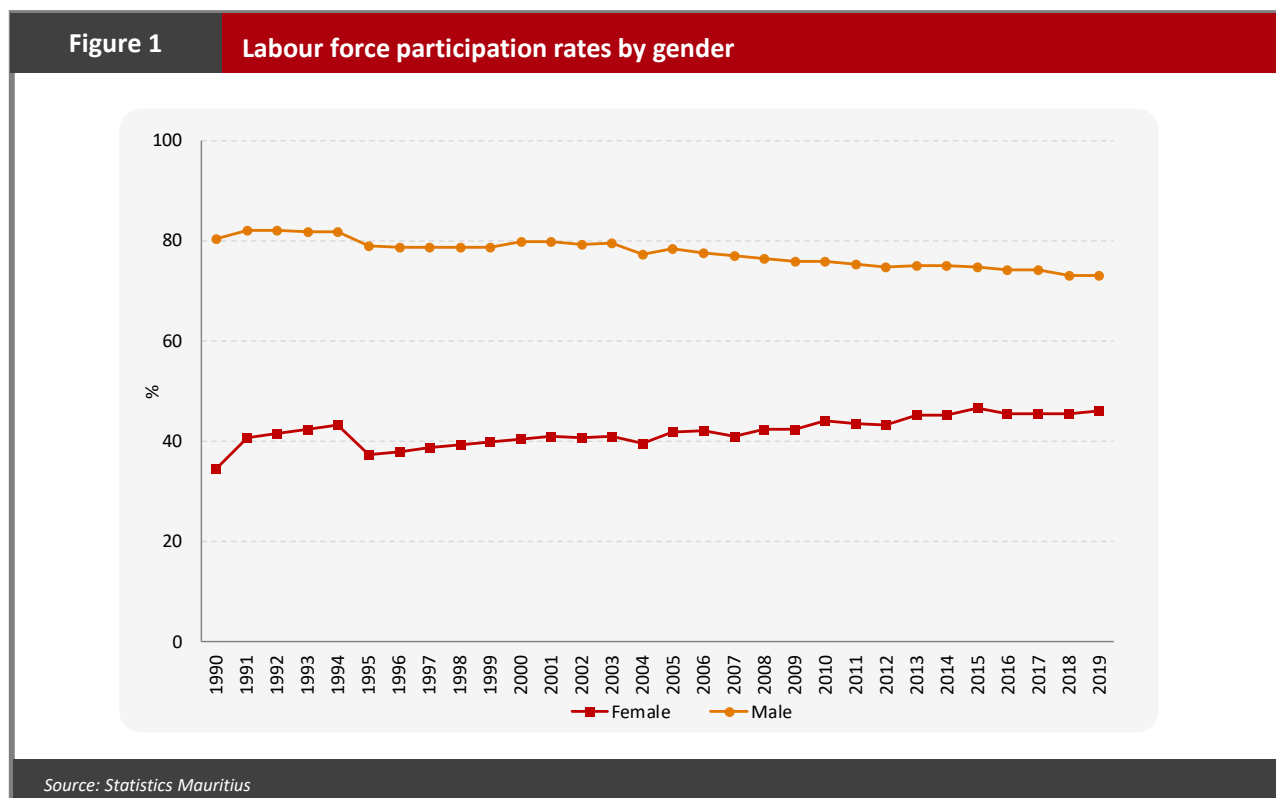


The current dynamics points to the importance of continuously boosting the scale and quality of female participation as a key lever for enhancing the country's growth potential and mitigating the impact of the ageing of the population.

TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Evolution of female labour participation

During the past four decades, Mauritius has made satisfactory progress in boosting the participation of women in the labour force – with the indicator rising from around 30% at the start of the 1980s before reaching a peak a few years later amidst the expansion of the EPZ sector which saw a surge in women employment. That said, female labour force participation rate has plateaued at around 45% in more recent times. Moreover, the gender gap – as gauged by the difference between male and female participation rates – has remained relatively elevated at nearly 30 percentage points on average over the decade ending 2019. Furthermore, women participation in the labour force in Mauritius also lags behind the corresponding level witnessed in upper middle-income countries where the rate is about 55% and the OECD average which is estimated at over 52%, based on the proportion of the population aged 15+ that is economically active. The subdued trends in female activity rate have contributed to holding back the nationwide activity rate in recent years, thus potentially impacting on the country’s productivity and growth dynamics.



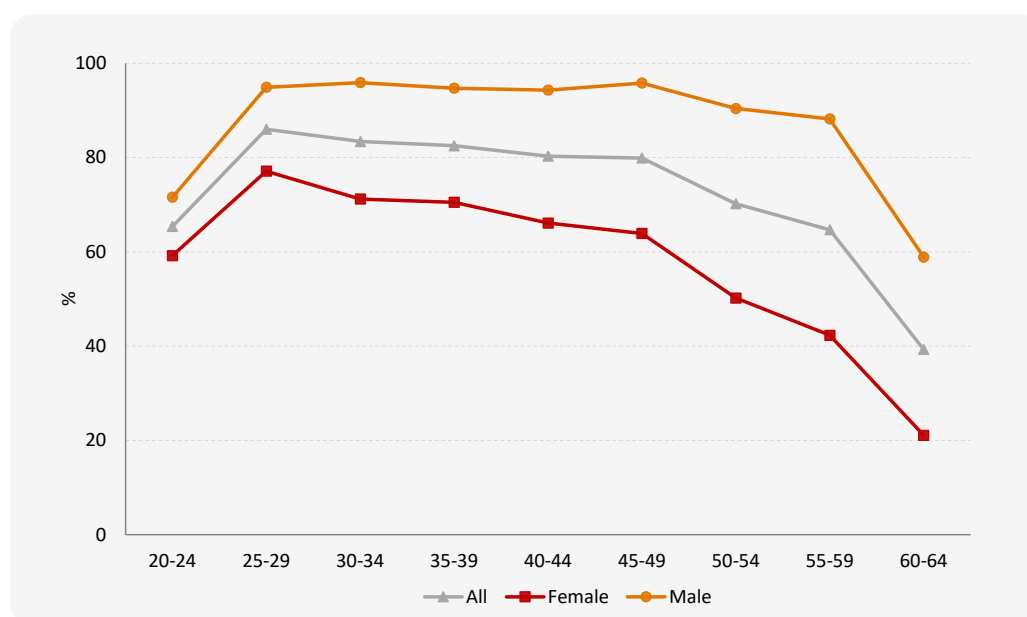
In the sections that follow, the dynamics behind the afore-described trends in female participation are dissected to better understand the main underpinnings thereof so as to help in formulating policies.

Labour force participation by age

At a more disaggregated level, it can be observed that participation rate among young women is significantly higher than the average for women across all ages. Women aged 20 -24 years have an activity rate of 59.2% in 2019 according to official statistics, with the level peaking at 77.1% for those aged between 25 and 29 years. The participation rate then starts falling as the age bracket reaches the 40 years threshold and beyond, with more women potentially opting to leave the labour force to cater for household and family imperatives. This testifies to the need for policies to provide a more conducive support system for encouraging women to remain in the labour force even as they take more personal commitments and responsibilities at home.

Figure 2

Labour force participation rates by gender and by age-group, 2019



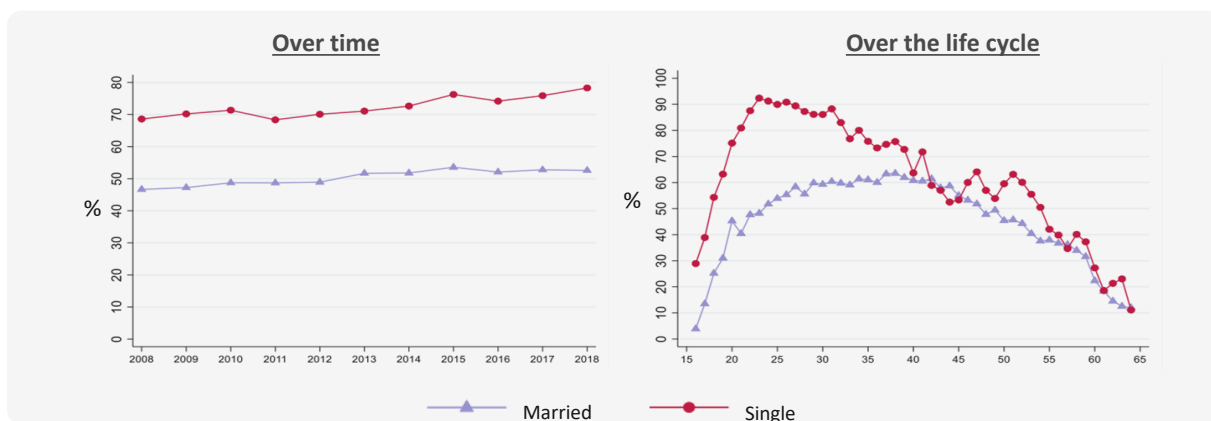
Source: Statistics Mauritius

Female participation by marital status

Another factor potentially impacting female participation rate is marital status. In fact, as per a World Bank report entitled 'Fostering labor force participation among Mauritian women – Quantitative and qualitative evidence', "The share of single women who participate in the labor force is about as high as that of men and estimated at 78.3 percent in 2018. By contrast, married women are significantly less likely to remain in the labor force. According to the World Bank, the gap between married and single women expands early in women's life cycle, reaches a peak at around age 25 and virtually closes after age 55, as Mauritians approach the eligible age for the basic retirement pension. That said, it is worth noting that, in the afore-mentioned

World Bank report, the estimates of labour force participation rates are computed based on the population aged 16-64 years who are not in full-time education. When the latter category is factored in the computation of labour participation rate as per the definition used by Statistics Mauritius, married and single women have broadly similar participation rates with the rate for the single women estimated at around 50% in 2018 for those aged 16-64 years.

Figure 3 Female labour force participation by marital status and life cycle



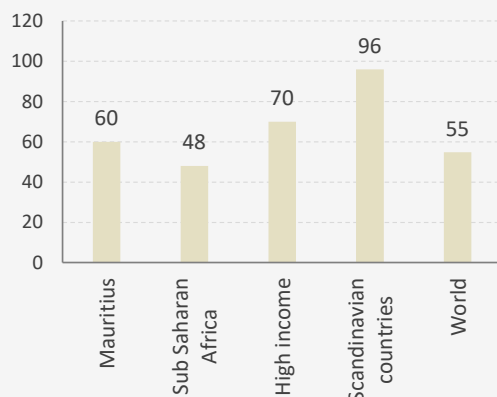
Note: In the above graphs, labour force participation rates are based on the population aged 16-64 years who are not in full time education

Source: World Bank paper, 'Fostering labor force participation among Mauritian women'

Box V: Positioning of Mauritius on the World Bank's Parenthood metrics

As per World Bank's report "Women, Business and the Law 2021" which aims at measuring the laws and regulations that affect women's economic opportunity, Mauritius ranks 33rd out of 190 economies, with a score of 91.9 out of 100. However, one area of improvement the study stressed upon relates to the sub-indicator "Parenthood", which examines laws affecting women's work after having children. Mauritius only scores 60 out of 100, which is higher than the world and regional average but still lower than the average from high income and Scandinavian countries.

World Bank: Parenthood score (out of 100)



Leaves provided for child birth and care (including non-working days)

	Mother	Father	Shared
Mauritius	98	7	0
Sub-Saharan Africa	91	3	0
High income	142	51	104
Scandinavian countries	134	67	152
World	119	18	62

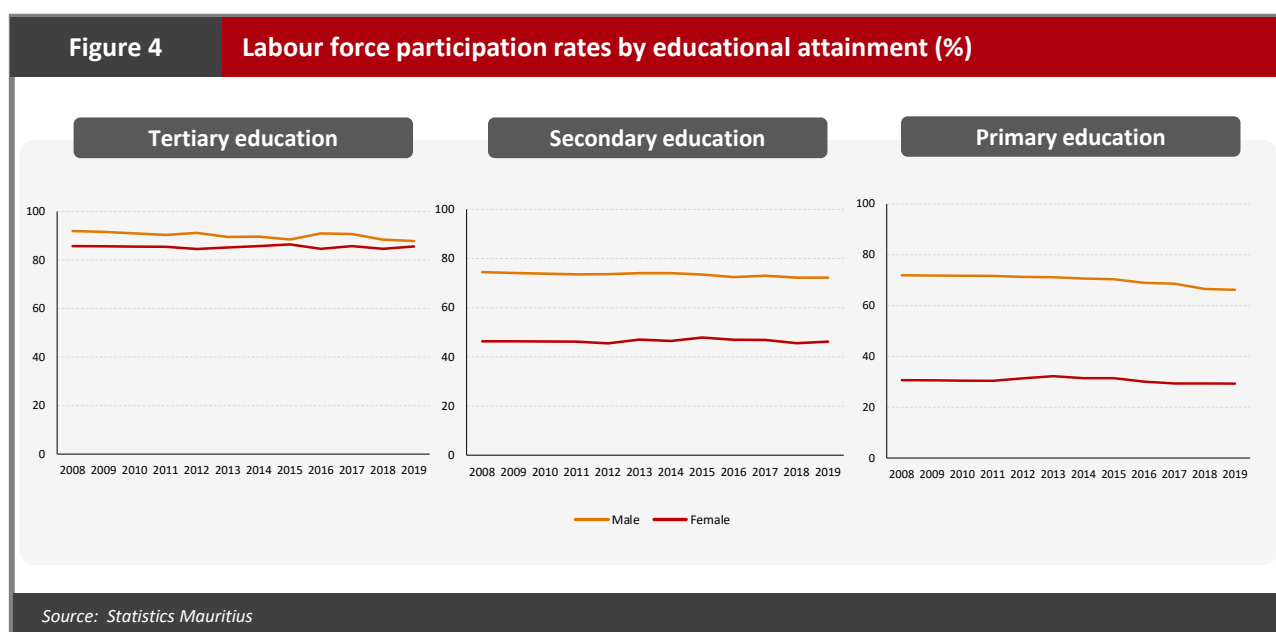
Notes:

- 1) Leaves provided to a mother or father refers to maternity or paternity leaves, as well as, and if applicable, parental leaves given exclusively to each parent. As per World Bank's definition, parental leave refers to leave available to parents—regardless of gender—for the purpose of childcare immediately following maternity and paternity leave or instead of maternity and paternity leave
- 2) Shared number of leaves refers to parental leave that can be shared amongst the parents as they choose
- 3) Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Sweden and Finland

Source: Women, Business and the Law 2021, World Bank

Female activity rate by educational attainment

When assessed across levels of educational attainment, a noticeable observation is that the more educated women are, the more they are able to participate in the labour force. Notably, about 1 in 3 women having only succeeded the primary education level participates in the labour market in Mauritius with the gap in male participation rate being sizeable for that category. The female participation rate turns around 2 in 3 women when the latter have succeeded up to upper secondary education. Moreover, for women with post-secondary and tertiary education, labour force participation is above 80 percent, as high as that of their male counterparts. Overall, this means that further efforts should be devoted to boosting access to education to women and girls towards enhancing their participation in the labour market, while also catering for those with lower education attainment level to make them more employable.



Gender gap

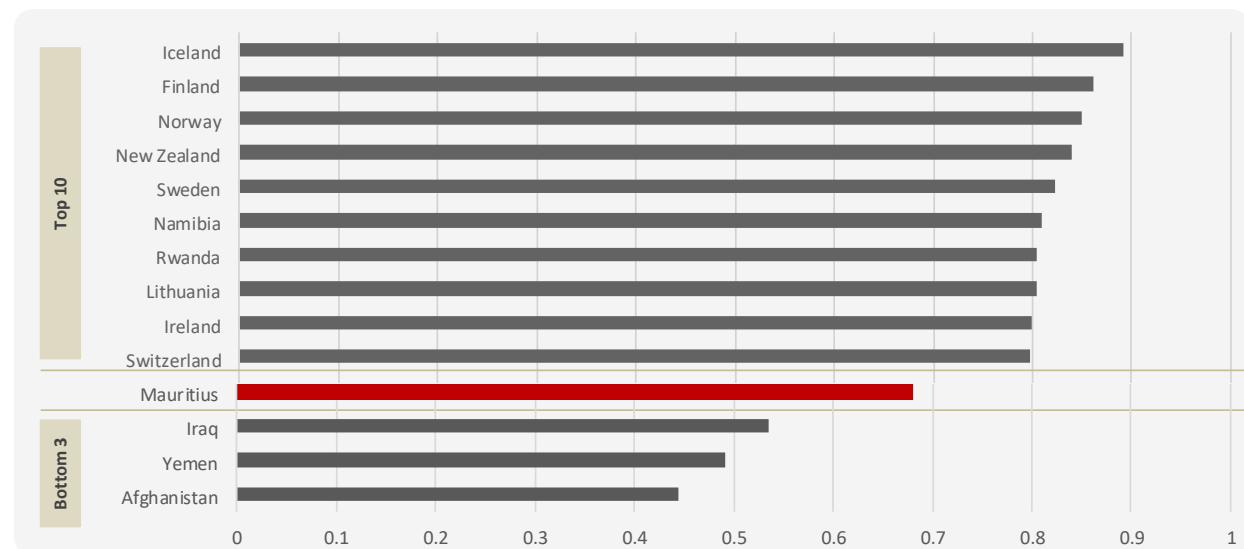
From a holistic perspective, notwithstanding inroads made in boosting access to education to girls, the gender gap has stayed, on average, quite elevated in past years. In fact, as detailed in Box VI, which provides a snapshot of key findings of the latest World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report, further progress is deemed necessary in respect of enhancing the 'political empowerment' and 'economic participation and opportunity' for women – which includes, notably, boosting female participation and promoting wage equality for similar jobs between men and women. On the latter front, as per the World Bank, a Mauritian woman working in the private sector makes on average about USD 0.85 cents to a dollar made by men, albeit representing a relative improvement compared with about USD 0.72 cents 10 years ago.

Box VI: Global Gender Gap Report – Performance of Mauritius

Since 2006 the Global Gender Gap Index, published by the World Economic Forum, has been measuring the extent of gender-based gaps among four key dimensions (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment) and tracking progress towards closing these gaps over time. The findings of the report are intended to serve as a basis for designing effective measures for reducing gender gaps.

As per the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, the average distance completed to parity is at 68% worldwide, a step back compared to 2020 (-0.6 percentage points). Across the four sub-indices, the largest gender disparity is the Political Empowerment gap, with only 22% closed to date, having further widened since the 2020 edition of the report by 2.4 percentage points. Across the 156 countries covered by the index, women represent only 26.1% of some 35,500 parliament seats and just 22.6% of over 3,400 ministers worldwide. The second-largest gap is on Economic Participation and Opportunity; 58% of this gap has been closed so far. Progress towards closing the Educational Attainment and Health and Survival gaps is more advanced: 95% and 96%, respectively, of these gaps have been closed to date.

Global Gender Gap Index 2021: Mauritius vs. selected countries

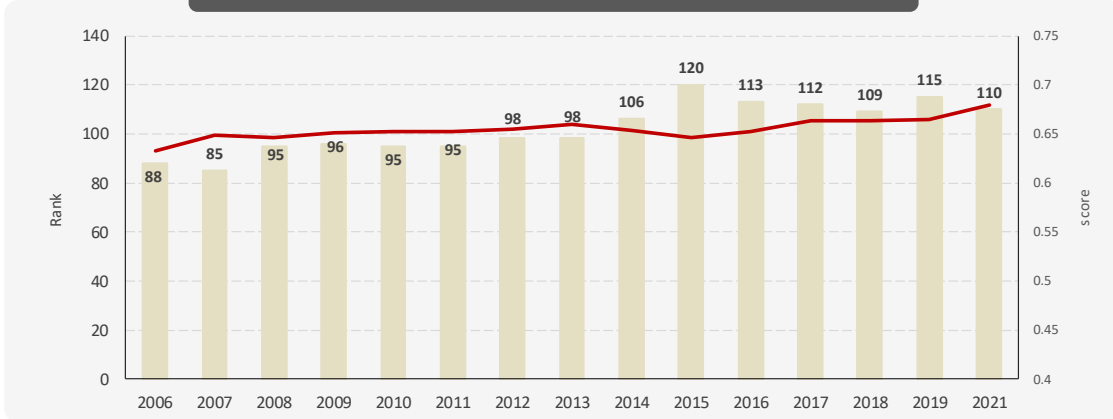


As for Mauritius, it improved its overall ranking by 5 spots to stand at the 110th position amongst 156 countries worldwide in the 2021 Global Gender Gap report compared to 115th in the corresponding report of last year. However, our relatively poor standing on the 'political empowerment' and 'economic participation' sub-indices continue to call for inspection. From a regional perspective, Mauritius ranks 21st in Africa, just behind Ethiopia, Senegal and Togo. Namibia and Rwanda are the two best performers in Sub-Saharan Africa with 80.9% and 80.5% of the gender gap closed to date. In fact, Namibia moved ahead in the rankings this year mainly due to the substantial increase in women in ministerial positions (from 20% to 39.1%) as well as one more year (since 2015) with a woman in the Prime Minister's office. This progress, combined with the fact that 44.2% of parliamentarians are women, places Namibia among the 19 countries in the world with the smallest Political Empowerment gender gap.

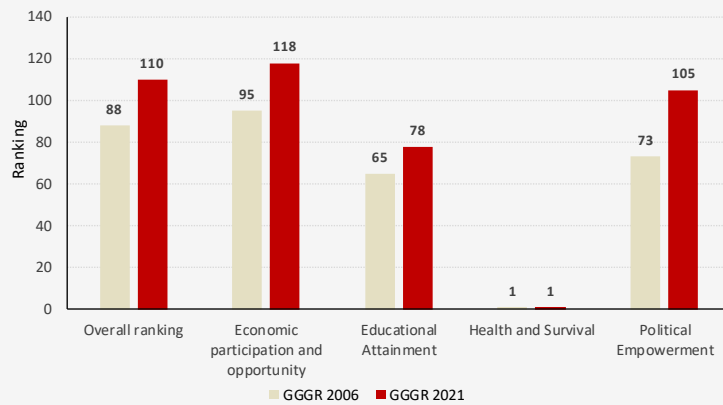
Source: World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2021

Box VI: Global Gender Gap Report – Performance of Mauritius (Cont'd)

Evolution of our Global Gender Gap Index score and ranking

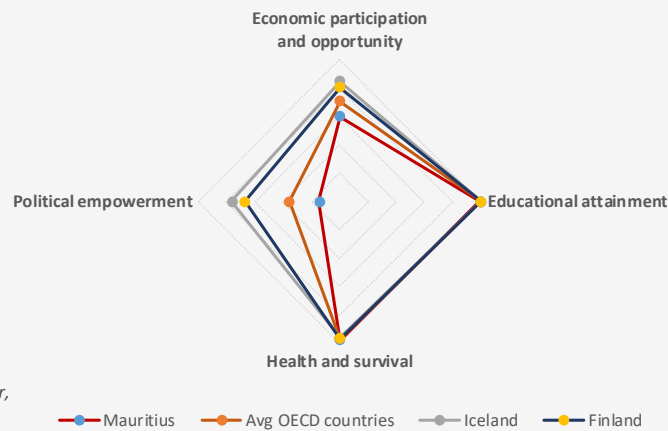


Evolution of our sub ranking: 2006 vs 2021



Radar chart: Mauritius vs. Top 2 performers and global average

Global Gender Gap Index 2021 scores

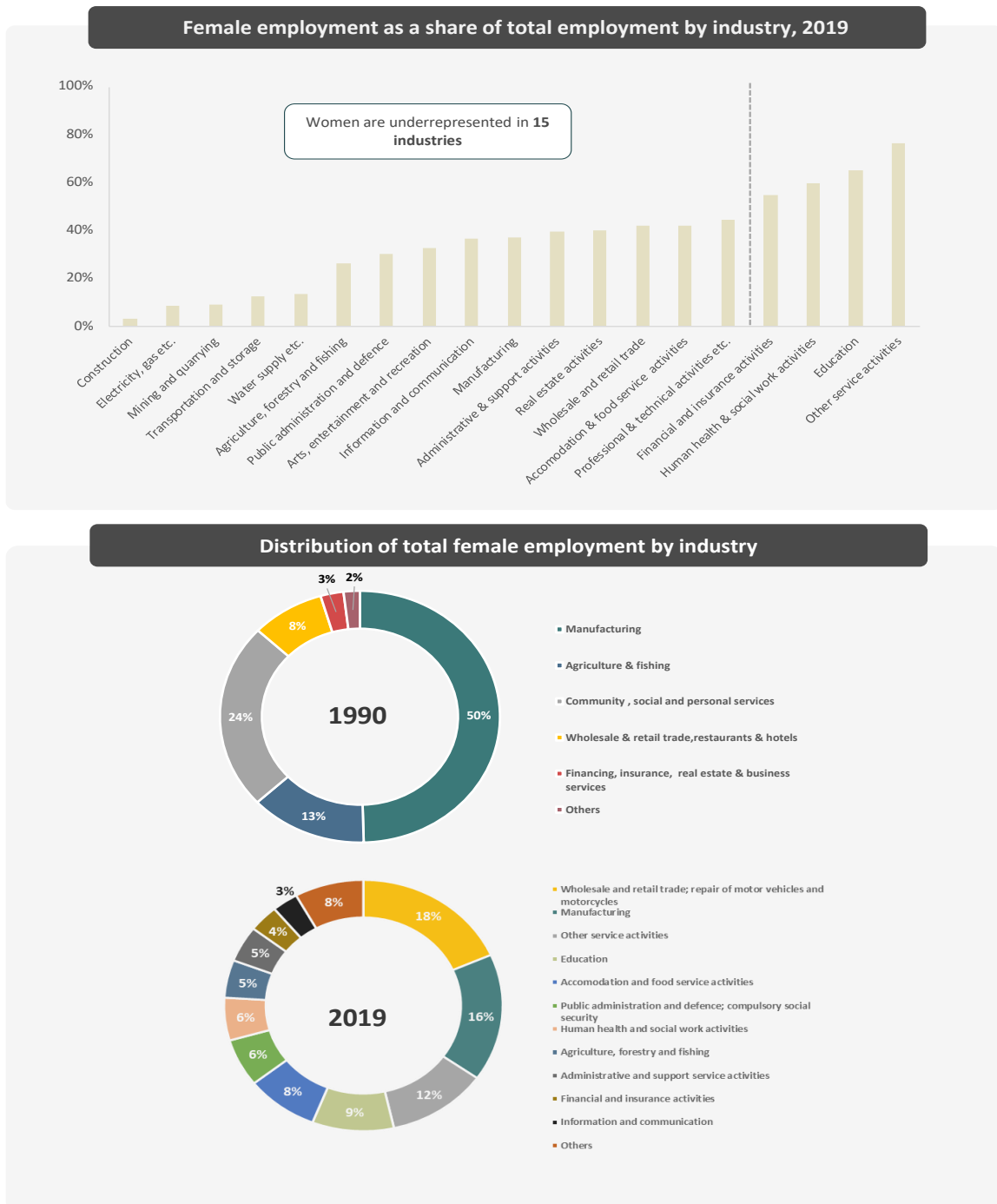


Source: World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2021

Female employment by economic sector

During the 1980s, a large number of women entered the labour force amidst the set up and development of the EPZ sector. Subsequently, as part of the structural transformation of our economic base, women have shifted to the services sector, with today over 70% of wage female workers being employed therein. Within services, women are mainly engaged in trade and public administration as well as hospitality services.

Figure 5 Female employment across sectors



Source: Statistics Mauritius

EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN IN THE MAURITIAN ECONOMY

Background

In this section, an empirical analysis – leveraging econometric and statistical models and techniques – is carried out to assess the significance of female labour participation in Mauritius and investigate the degree of complementarity between men and women in the Mauritian workforce with a view to, subsequently, gauging the potential for socio-economic gains associated to an expansion of the female labour force.

Importance of women in the Mauritian economy

We assessed the contribution of women in Mauritius by way of a Cobb-Douglas production function:

$$Y = A K^{1-\alpha} L^{\alpha}$$

where A is the level of technology/Total Factor Productivity, K stands for capital stock and L for labour supply

L is, then, disaggregated by gender as follows:

$$L = (\delta F^{\rho} + M^{\rho})^{1/\rho}$$

F represents female labour and M is to male labour. With data from Penn World Table for total factor productivity and output and World Bank data for labour supply, we apply the logarithm on the above variables and estimated a linear regression. For the period 1990 to 2019, we find that both men and women contributed positively to output in Mauritius. In particular, a one percent increase in female labour supply results in a 0.931 percent increase in output. In addition, over the period, female labour's contribution to output has been broadly close to that of their male counterparts, which was estimated at 0.929.

Figure 6

Linear regression results based on a Cobb-Douglas Production function

$$\ln Y = \ln TFP + \ln K + \ln F + \ln M$$

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	-13.9174	2.6508	-5.2502	2.0E-05
ln F	0.9311	0.1297	7.1806	1.6E-07
ln M	0.9287	0.2301	4.0357	4.5E-04
ln K	0.0651	0.0151	4.3245	2.1E-04
ln TFP	1.7885	0.1859	9.6217	6.9E-10

Source: MCB Staff estimates

Gender complementarity in production and potential gains for Mauritius

As highlighted in previous sections, in spite of progress over time, the participation of women in the labour force has lingered at around 45% as per official statistics lately. This compares adversely with the rates prevailing in countries at broadly similar stages of economic development as Mauritius. Moreover, the gap relative to male activity rate has stayed sizeable at around 30 percentage points during the past decade.

In this section, we attempt to find out whether, over and above the higher output derived from having more labour resources, there could be additional economic benefits that can be derived from boosting gender diversity — that is, bringing more women — into the labour force. In order to gauge the importance of gender diversity, the concept of elasticity of substitution between women and men is leveraged. This concept, which is widely used by economists, measures the degree of similarity of the factors of production and is defined as the change in the use of female labour (relative to the use of male labour) when the marginal productivity of female labour (relative to the marginal productivity of male labour) increases. As such, when the elasticity of substitution is high (tending to infinity), one worker, either a female or male, can be substituted for another with no impact on output, regardless of how scarce female labour is. Hence, in this case there would be no benefits that can be derived from gender diversity. On the other hand, when the elasticity of substitution is zero, it is impossible to substitute male for female labour or vice-versa as production requires each gender. Intermediate values of elasticity of substitution imply that male and female workers complement each other in the production of final output. For these values, and as per empirical evidence, having more women would first increase economic growth because the number of workers is being increased but as a scarce factor of production, i.e. female labour, becomes more plentiful, this boosts average productivity of all workers.

Figure 7

Elasticity of substitution (ES) between female and male labour

$$ES = 0$$

It is *impossible to substitute* male labour for female labour because each gender is required in production.

Intermediate values of the ES imply that the labour of men and women *complement* each other to produce final output.

$$ES \rightarrow \infty$$

Male and female labour are *indistinguishable* and there are no gains from gender diversity.

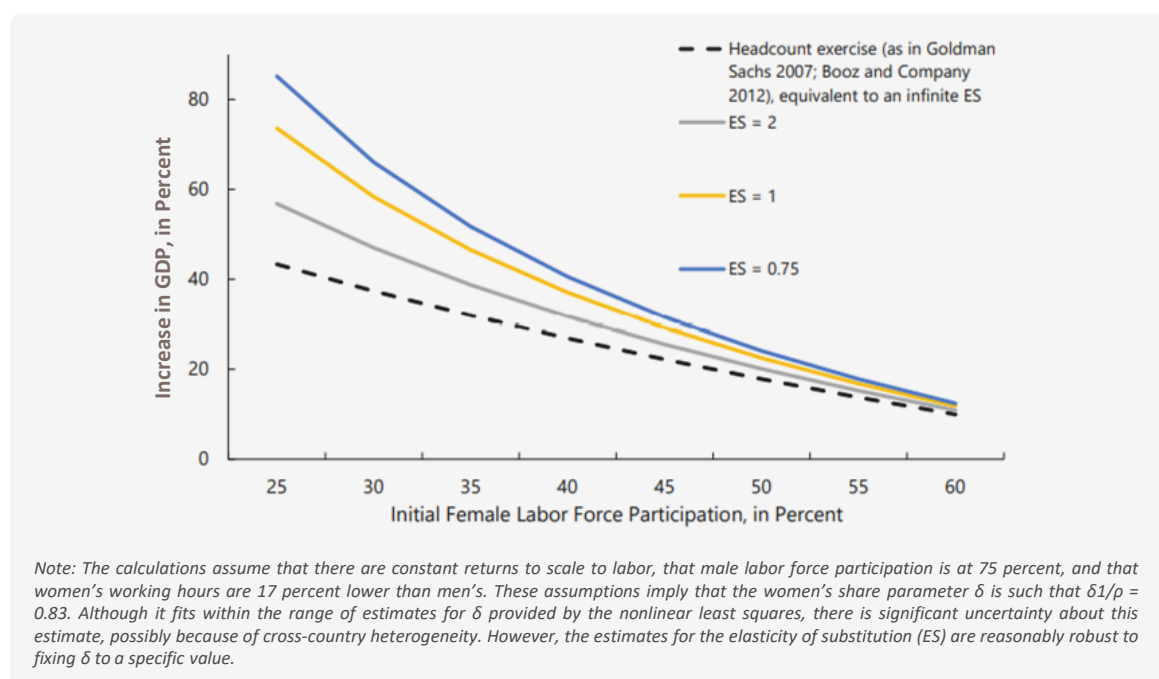
Source: *Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion*, IMF

To estimate the degree of substitution or complementarity between women and men in the labour force in Mauritius, we leverage an empirical model developed by the IMF that is built on a Cobb Douglas production function – as highlighted in a paper entitled ‘Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion: New Mechanisms, New Evidence’ – whereby labour force is disaggregated by gender i.e. female and male labour. In order to perform this analysis, data on female and male labour supply is obtained from Statistics Mauritius while the data on output and capital stock is taken from the Penn World Table. Box VII outlines the different steps in building the various model specifications employed. The findings of the several attempts are summarised as follows:

- In line with the IMF methodology, we first estimate a standard linear regression model, where the link between the theoretical coefficients and the empirical estimates is used to identify the ES as outlined in Box VII. That said, the linear estimation results were not statistically significant, although the coefficients estimated in the model yield the expected signs in line with economic theory.
- We then employed a nonlinear least squares (NLLS) estimation, which yields a direct estimate of the ES from the production function. We find a coefficient for Mauritius close to zero, which is the lower bound of the elasticity of substitution, estimated at about 0.3. This implies that male and female labour have strong complementarities in production and that having both women and men is always optimal.
- In addition to this, and based on empirical assessments undertaken at the international scale, it has been proven that closing the gender gap in labour force participation could increase Gross Domestic Product by a range of 10 to 80 percent, depending on the estimates of elasticity of substitution and the initial level of female labour force participation - as shown in Figure 8. As such, given the inferred ES and the current female participation rate, there are potentially large gains that could be obtained in the case of Mauritius.

Figure 8

GDP gains from closing the gender gap in labour force participation



Source: IMF

- When the same analysis is done for Nordic countries, which are known to have high female labour force participation rate, we find, for example, that Sweden has an estimated elasticity of substitution of 0.8 (close to the blue line in the above figure). However, since Sweden already has a relatively high female labour participation rate of about 61%, potential gains in GDP would be lower than in countries exhibiting lower participation rates. Indeed, when compared to South Africa, which also has an estimated elasticity of substitution of about 0.8, closing the gender gap in participation would yield greater potential economic gains since female labour participation rate stands at about 50%.
- Coming back to Mauritius, the presence of gender complementarity as established in the empirical analysis implies that male workers would also benefit from a boost to female labour participation. This actually reflects the impact of two opposing effects as demonstrated by the empirical evidence; first, a potential increase in male wages resulting from higher productivity levels as a consequence of gender complementarity. The second effect would tend to exert a downward pressure on male wages associated through a reduced capital to labour ratio stemming from the increase in labour supply. However, as per the economic literature, for elasticity of substitution below the threshold of 2.5, as it is the case for Mauritius, the first effect dominates. Thus, higher female participation in Mauritius could potentially lead to an increase real wages for men. There are therefore benefits for both men and women from narrowing gender gaps in labour force participation.

Box VII : Methodology used to estimate the elasticity of substitution

Production function: Output, Y , is produced with a Cobb-Douglas technology in the factors of production—the labor composite input, L (see definition below), and the capital stock, K :

$$Y = A K^{1-\alpha} L^\alpha \quad (1)$$

where A is the level of technology, α is the share of labor in total income, and L is a constant elasticity of substitution composite of female (F) and male (M) labor:

$$L = (\delta F^\rho + M^\rho)^{1/\rho} \quad (2)$$

The elasticity of substitution between male and female workers is $\sigma = 1/(1 - \rho)$, and δ is the share parameter. Noting with lowercases the logarithm of the uppercases variables, growth is obtained by taking the logarithm of equation (1) and taking the difference between t and $t - 1$, using the operator Δ :

$$\Delta y = \Delta a + \alpha \Delta l + (1 - \alpha) \Delta k$$

Similarly, a log-linearization of equation (2) yields $\Delta l = \mu \Delta f + (1 - \mu) \Delta m$, where $\mu = F (\partial L / \partial F) / L = \delta F \rho / L \rho$ is the share of women's labor income in total labor income. A Taylor approximation of μ related to an elasticity of substitution of 1 (that is, for values of ρ close to 0) yields $\mu \approx \delta / (1 + \delta) [1 - \rho \delta \ln(M/F)]$. Given μ , growth can be rewritten as

$$\Delta y = \Delta n + (1 - \alpha) \Delta k + \alpha (\Delta f - \Delta m) (\mu - F/N) + \Delta a \quad (3)$$

where $N = F + M$ and $\Delta n = F/N \Delta f + M/N \Delta m$ are respectively the level and the growth rate in the headcount of the total workforce. The third term in equation (3) shows that when women's employment increases faster than men's ($\Delta f - \Delta m > 0$), total factor productivity, as estimated using growth in the capital stock Δk and growth in total employment Δn , is growing faster than technological progress (Δa) if, and only if, $\mu - F/N > 0$. This condition always holds for $\delta = 1$ and for $r \rightarrow 0$ from above, and numerical calculations show that for $d = \delta 1/\rho = 0.83$ (the ratio of female work hours to male work hours, calculated using the OECD Labour Market Position of Families 2.1 working hours statistics), it holds for $\sigma < 2$.

Estimating the elasticity of substitution (σ): It is possible to estimate σ using nonlinear least squares on the logarithm of equation (1), where L has been replaced using equation (2). One can also estimate σ by ordinary least squares (OLS), by linking the theoretical expression for growth,

$$\Delta y = \alpha (\mu \Delta f + (1 - \mu) \Delta m) + (1 - \alpha) \Delta k + \Delta a \quad (4)$$

to its empirical counterpart,

$$\Delta y_{i,t} = \beta_f \Delta f_{i,t} + \beta_m \Delta m_{i,t} + \beta_k \Delta k_{i,t} + \Gamma Z_i + \epsilon_{i,t}, \quad (5)$$

where $Z_{i,t}$ is a matrix of control variables, and Γ is the vector of coefficients for these variables. Identifying μ and thus σ by comparing equations (4) and (5) is possible thanks to the estimated coefficients β_f and β_m :

$$\beta_f / \beta_m = \mu / (1 - \mu) \Rightarrow 1 - 1/\sigma = \rho = \ln[\beta_f / \beta_m] / \ln[dF/M].$$

Analysis for Mauritius

- The linear estimation method, uses the link between theoretical and empirical estimates to get the elasticity of substitution between female and male labour.
- The nonlinear estimation method uses the Levenberg-Marquardt nonlinear least squares algorithm to yield a direct estimate of the elasticity of substitution from the production function.
- Time series data starting 1983 to latest figures available i.e. 2019
- The model does not capture characteristics that could matter including age, experience, marital status among others.

GENERAL ORIENTATIONS

It is creditable to note that the local authorities have, over time, executed several initiatives towards promoting gender equity as well as safeguarding the welfare and rights of women, including, amongst others: (i) the appointment of a first female minister in 1975, in charge of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Prices and Consumer Protection; (ii) the creation of a full-fledged Ministry of Women's Rights and Family Affairs in 1982; (iii) the ratification of the UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in 1984; (iv) the signing of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development in 1997; (v) the setting up of a National Women Entrepreneur Council in 1999; and more recently: (a) the creation of a Gender Unit under the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare to provide services for the empowerment of women; (b) the introduction of a National Strategy and Action plan on the Elimination of Gender Based violence in the Republic of Mauritius 2020-2024; (c) the passing of the Children's Act 2020; (d) the grant of financial assistance by the Development Bank of Mauritius in the forms of no guarantee loans up to a ceiling of Rs 500 000 at a fixed interest rate of 3% to assist women in starting businesses; and (e) the launch of a Back-to-Work Programme targeting women above 35 years to get a job. Yet, as demonstrated in the previous section, there is the potential for further gains by boosting the country's gender equity agenda. The latter could serve as a foundation for fostering sustained and inclusive socio-economic progress. As per a recent IMF paper, *"Providing women with equal economic opportunities and unleashing the full potential of the female labor force, with significant prospective growth and welfare implications, will require an integrated set of policies to promote and support female employment"*. In that respect, the following section outlines the key moves that Mauritius could embrace to accelerate the progress on gender equity. The formulated policy options are, essentially, based on the orientations which have guided the experience of other nations having already implemented necessary reforms for stimulating women's empowerment and reaped the growth and societal dividends. Evidently, it would be important to properly sift through these initiatives and identify those that are best adapted to our socio-economic imperatives and realities, alongside ensuring pragmatism to preserve the key tenets of our competitive edge, with a prominent example relating to the promotion of a low, predictable and non-distortionary tax regime. Beyond, a summary of key policies put in place by other nations is provided in the Annex. Moreover, a comprehensive overview of internationally-recognised frameworks, principles and practices aimed at mainstreaming and implementing higher level of gender equity is also depicted in the Annex, after leveraging insights from the OECD in the latter respect.

SPECIFIC POLICIES

Place women empowerment at the heart of the policy debate

- Shift social norms about the role of women in work and society
 - Design an action plan against gender stereotypes and for cultural change – spanning training courses to job roles; Introduce educational programmes addressed to both boys and girls from childhood, focused on sharing awareness on unconscious transmission of stereotypes in all fields and enrich the representations of genders through: updating and reviewing of all school texts; developing of civic education courses and role-modeling programmes
 - Launch public-awareness campaigns on the benefits of women being free to pursue careers and of parents sharing childcare. Better informing the population about the individual, family, and communal benefits of female labour-force participation may help facilitate a shift in attitudes
 - Usher a change and create positive gender equal social and cultural norms and removing conscious and unconscious bias in all spaces and places of work; Normalise male child-rearing through modelling by key influencers in society
 - Integrate gender-responsive policies in the recruitment, training, promotion and retention of women in both the public and private sector; Undertake efforts to shift norms and biases on the employment of women in high-paying positions as well as clear promotion pathways
- Promote women’s participation and leadership in all forms of decision-making
 - Promote women’s participation and leadership in all forms of decision-making, including in political office, constitutional bodies, public administration, the judiciary, private sector and in local and global fora on climate action, disaster risk reduction and post-crisis recovery
- Strengthen the case for change at the macroeconomic, company and individual level
 - Encourage female labour-force participation by embedding the case for progress on gender inclusion in national policy communications
 - Communicate the individual and family benefits of workforce parity through awareness campaigns and strengthen the case for gender balance in the organisation by linking it directly with the company’s purpose and productivity
 - Transform the macroeconomic planning and framework through gender equality targeted and public investment, labour market policies and tax policies that generate sufficient resources for women's empowerment related investment

Establish a conducive framework to boost female labour force participation

- Promote the availability of flexible work arrangements
 - Grant employees the right to request Work-From-Home or compressed work schedules alongside providing adequate infrastructural support and relevant guidance to employees who avail themselves of teleworking. This would allow women to better balance their formal employment with other demands on their time
- Further improve the maternity and paternity leave system
 - Promote the introduction of family-focused policies that provide constant support to women, notably through a comprehensive parental leave scheme that encourages greater parity between paternity and maternity leave. For example, this may include elements that incentivize uptake by fathers (through bonus months or “daddy quotas” – i.e. reserving a part of parental leave periods for fathers)
 - Introduce a ‘shared parental leave’ system allowing both new parents to share up to a defined number of weeks of leave and weeks of statutory pay between them, in place of maternity leave and pay
 - Alleviate the liability of parental and maternity leaves on employer through part funding from social security
- Provide for more universal childcare services
 - Enhance the childcare policy with benefits/support being linked to labour force participation, i.e. ‘in-work’ benefits, participation in job training or other active labour market programmes. This would serve as an incentive for working mothers alongside encouraging women to rejoin the labour market
 - Create a Corporate Citizen Program to encourage large private employers to give employees better childcare options as well as extended maternity and paternity leave
 - Put more emphasis on the critical early years from 0-5 by providing well-funded early childcare services, which with the right stimulation, could be a win-win that enables more women to work while making sure that all children enter primary school with the right foundations for success
 - Promote access to comprehensive, affordable and high-quality child care such as daycare centers to free up women’s time for formal employment
 - Help women through major life transitions by providing ancillary benefits such as breastfeeding rooms or referral services for carers, and investing in support networks that provide women with mentorship and connections to the workplace

- Take innovative steps to recognize unpaid care work and invest in a quality paid care economy that creates jobs for women and men
 - Measure all forms of care work and take unpaid care work into account in decision-making
 - Promote active labour market policies that support the attachment, reintegration and progress of unpaid carers into the labour force
 - Invest in quality care services, care policies and care-relevant infrastructure
- Support the education of women to make them more employable
 - Address the education mismatch in the job market with targeted training and retraining programmes for undereducated workers, largely middle-aged and older workers
 - Skill development and mismatch must therefore be considered over an individual's life cycle – namely, basic skills being developed at school, complemented by the accumulation of work-related (practical and generic) skills and accompanied by retraining and new-skill acquisition in line with changing technologies
 - Promote education, skills development, STEM education and capacity building to enable women and girls to participate as empowered agents in the fourth Industrial Revolution, new collar jobs, green economy entrepreneurship and new areas of trade and investment, as well as their facilitation and liberalization. Significantly increased investment in and transformative financing of "women's capital" development is imperative to enable women's economic empowerment and open innovative avenues of entrepreneurship
 - Consider specific measures that incentivise parents to keep girls into education beyond the mandatory age, for example by making cash transfers to poor and lower middle income class families conditional upon specific criterias, such as on their daughters' course attendance
 - Further raise women's skills for the future world of work through capacity and skills training
 - The World Bank's 2019 Africa's Pulse report outlines three types of skills training that affect women's productivity and earnings: (i) gender-sensitive agricultural extension services; (ii) socio-emotional skills training; and (iii) information programmes that support women switching sectors.
- Set a measurable target for increasing women's employment
 - Indicate a target for female employment rate over a certain period. This goal is better than reducing the gender gap, because the gender gap can decrease even if the situation worsens for women but worsens more for men.

Introduce time-bound gender-responsive fiscal policies while striving to maintain a simple and competitive tax regime

- Support female labour force participation through policies which have macroeconomic and distributional effects, such as tax deductibility for childcare, tax relief/credits, and childcare subsidies. Such policies reduce the net tax liability, thereby increasing the net income gain from accepting a job
 - For instance, a tax-deductible child-care option gives parents who want to return to the workforce, or work more hours, the ability to do so-at an affordable cost. For instance, in two-parent households, each parent would qualify for 50% (of their marginal tax rate) deductibility. By construction, this ensures that no household is worse off under the proposed reform and they can always stick with their current subsidy if they so choose. Only households that would be better off under the tax-deductibility option would choose to avail themselves of that option
- Promote gender budgeting to ensure that tax and spending policies and public financial management instruments address gender inequality and the advancement of women in areas such as education, health, and economic empowerment
- Enhance the existing mechanisms to support the creation of women-friendly digital products
 - Design digital products that are convenient for women and family – for example create online platforms that enables users to book caregivers, nurses, and doctors for the elderly, saving time for women who are tend to be responsible for elder care and freeing them up to pursue other (paid) activities
- Further develop physical infrastructure that can enhance women’s empowerment
 - Improve public infrastructure to make commuting less burdensome and safer for women; When investments in infrastructure are gender-sensitive and implemented, they not only save women time but can generate employment opportunities and boost their incomes
 - Foster an improvement in the competitiveness of women-owned micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises and enable them to go macro and fostering women's organizations, cooperatives, self-help groups and professional associations

- Strengthen institutional capabilities to promote women's interests
 - Continuously strengthen the institutional capacities for policy and legal reforms to ensure women's rights are enshrined in law and enforced by authorities
 - For instance, to facilitate women's participation and advancement in the workplace, the Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement was enforced in 2016 in Japan. Under the Act, employers with over 300 regularly employed workers are required to establish action plans, based on an analysis of the situation concerning the status of their female employees, and make them public. They are also required to disclose information regarding female participation and career advancement in the workplace.
 - Assess and remove any potential discriminatory laws against women, including through strong legal frameworks to advance gender equality in all areas, ensuring their full implementation, and monitoring their impact is a crucial prerequisite
 - Consider the introduction of gender quotas in political representation for a more balanced decision making for all citizens
 - Around 130 countries worldwide have some form of constitutional, electoral or political party quotas and the average level of representation for women in countries with quotas is around 27%. For instance, in 2003, Rwanda committed to grant at least 30 per cent of posts in decision making organs to women. Since then, women have continued to hold the majority of seats in the Parliament for several years, with over 60% of women in the parliamentary seats in the last election, making Rwanda as the country with the highest proportion of female MPs.
 - Parliaments and political parties can play a key role in supporting young women's political participation, for instance through specific empowerment programmes, or by enabling young women to access leadership positions and providing training and mentoring opportunities.
 - Promote pay equity initiatives and pay transparency legal provisions as a key lever in preventing gender pay differentials
 - Ensure transparency in selection process regarding recruitment and granting of promotions
 - Promote progress towards parity through enabling policies and regulations such as protection against violence and laws on the rights of women to work

Support existing institutions and the policy action focused on gender

- Further enhance the support provided to agencies engaged in promoting gender equity
- Build a short, compelling vision statement for gender equality that connects to citizens' lives and portrays a specific result for a societal change

Promote access to reliable and comprehensive gender statistics

- Improve the collection, compilation, dissemination and use of data disaggregated by sex and age
 - Encourage the further development of methodologies and tools for improving data collection and dissemination on women's representation in decision-making positions across all sectors. The capacity of national statistics offices to measure gender-specific access to economic and financial resources and to undertake time-use surveys is also important in accelerating implementation of the critical areas of concern regarding poverty and the economy
- Undertake assessments and compile data to ensure evidence based policies
 - Consider introducing Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) to help prevent unintended consequences of structural gender inequalities embedded in our society and allowing policy makers to foresee the impact of a new regulation, policy or programmes on the lives of women and men and the relations among them
 - Encourage the dissemination of more detailed/regular gender-differentiated data and information for policy makers to be able to assess the situation and develop appropriate, evidence-based responses and policies. Such data could include gender distribution in the workforce, distribution of income, gender distribution in part-time work, etc
 - In France, the "Professional Future" Law (Loi Avenir Professionnel) of 2018 introduced a new chapter in the Labour Code relating to measures aimed at eliminating the gender pay gap. It established the obligation to publish a certain number of indicators relating to pay and promotion differentials and actions taken to eliminate them. The new index particularly targets wage differentials and introduces levers to eliminate them, including in SMEs as long as they have 50 or more employees. In the form of a score out of 100, the index of gender equality consists of five main criteria which assess gender inequalities in companies
 - Improve the collection and dissemination of gender statistics on the informal economy
 - Undertake a thorough assessment of the country's positioning regarding gender specific international indices and initiate actions on deficient areas with clear targets
 - Setting a rationale, action plans, priorities, timelines, objectives, expected outcomes and/or targets, and effective policy planning across institutions for promoting gender equality

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Kofi Annan famously said: *“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.”* Indeed, the unprecedented challenges triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the overall questioning of traditional economic models call for a feminist response and solution. To that end, as expounded in this report, Mauritius stands to gain from achieving a boost in the participation of women in the labour force and foster gender equity as a key lever for attaining a fairer, more inclusive and sustained economic development path. If we fail to tackle the obstacles to women’s empowerment, we could squander the potential of a sizeable chunk of our population and incur a significant loss to the productive capacity of our economy at a time when the ageing of the population and weak productivity growth are already weighing on growth prospects. In fact, an empirical assessment undertaken in the report – adapted from a previous IMF paper – corroborates the idea that adding more women in the work force would generate socio-economic gains in Mauritius.

Key among the recommendations made in the report, besides the need to invest in affordable and quality childcare services and a more equitable parental leave system and to strengthen institutional capabilities to promote women’s interests, is a shift in mindset vis-à-vis the role of women in society and in the workplace. Overall, the challenge of boosting gender equity calls for the endorsement of thoughtful and robust principles and arrangements as well as the adoption of proper strategic planning and execution in order to make things work effectively. Along the way, the recourse to international technical support and expertise and lessons learned from the successes and failures of other countries could prove beneficial in unlocking the doors to success of Mauritian women and unblocking their avenues of opportunity. Above all, we all have a role to make gender equity a reality. Hence active and regular consultations with actors of the social and economic spheres, along with the proper integration of the perspectives of Mauritian women in the formulation and implementation of policies is key to ensuring that envisioned measures are attuned to the country’s socio-economic and cultural realities. As stressed in a recent speech by Linda Laura Sabbadini, Director at ISTAT, the Italian National Institute of Statistics and Chair of Women 20, a G20 engagement group dedicated to women’s issues, *“crisis times often provide opportunity to achieve a very clear and wide-reaching awareness on the need to make previously delayed decisions.”* She further added that a key priority

to boosting women’s engagement would be to “*focus on some measurable and monitorable key strategic points*”. Overall, the onus for Mauritius Inc. is to dare the difference and bet on women to reap the full harvest of gender equality and capitalise on women’s empowerment force multiplier which is, indeed, a key and reliable criterion for achieving a Pareto efficient outcome.

J. Gilbert Gnany
Chief Strategy Officer

March 31, 2021
[Released on May 21, 2021]

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ANNEX I:

Case studies

Underlying orientations and courses of action deployed by other nations are summarised in the sections below.

Place women empowerment at the heart of the policy debate

- Shift social norms about the role of women in work and society
 - Australia: In developing its first gender equality strategy, the Australian state of Victoria launched a consultation paper seeking input from business, community groups and the public through an open submission process and online, through a Twitter hashtag (#Vicforwomen). As a result of this, a discussion paper was published which summarised five themes and priorities which emerged from the submission process and laid out key questions for further consideration and discussion. These were then addressed during consultation sessions held nation-wide in August and September 2016.

Establish a conducive framework to boost female labour force participation

- Promote the availability of flexible work arrangements
 - Zurich was the first firm in the UK to advertise all its vacancies with flexible working options. According to the study, nearly 20% more women applied for management roles.
 - As per the World Bank report titled Mauritius Addressing Inequality through More Equitable Labor Markets, “Despite the greater labor force participation, women are likely to continue to bear most of the burden in housework and family care. These activities compete for women’s time and energy with the labor market and may oblige women to seek less competitive and less remunerative career paths and greater employment flexibility. Hence, subsidized child and elderly care and work-time regulations that promote flexibility and facilitate part-time work are likely to be effective. For example, guaranteeing women the possibility to switch to part-time schedules in the same jobs after they deliver could help reduce the risk of career disruptions by allowing a smooth transition from maternity leave to employment.”

- Further improve the maternity and paternity leave system

- Singapore, New Zealand & Australia: The ratio female-to-male labour-force participation rate has increased in some developed economies, rising to 86% in New Zealand, 85% in Australia and 79% in Singapore. In 2013, Singapore extended its parental leave scheme to allow sharing of leave by working fathers, and Australia mandated 18 weeks of paid parental leave in 2011.
- UK - 'Shared parental leave': From April 2015, parents in the UK can share parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child. The scheme allows both new parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of statutory pay between them, in place of maternity leave and pay.

- Provide for more universal childcare services

- Australia has reached a consensus on the importance of investing in childcare to enable more women to work if they so desire. To fulfil this aim, the government established a Productivity Commission investigation in 2013. In 2018, a new childcare policy has been introduced, broadly in line with Productivity Commission recommendations. Childcare subsidies will also increase for those with low incomes but will decline for those with middle and high incomes. This restructuring may help ease the pressure on families, particularly those with lower incomes. Ongoing evaluation of the effects of this policy on families at all income levels, and continued exploration of models to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of childcare, are important and may lead to a shift in the way childcare is delivered or its pricing is regulated.
- In Norway, the expansion of universal childcare for toddlers increased the likelihood of married or cohabiting mothers' employment by 32 percentage points vis-à-vis the baseline participation rate of 63 percent.

- Introduce gender-responsive fiscal policies

- Ireland introduced equality budgeting on a pilot basis in 2017 as part of a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government (May 2016) to “develop the process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights”. The pilot builds on Ireland’s framework for performance budgeting by encouraging departments to identify programmes where they can set performance targets relating to one of nine equality dimensions. Initiatives such as poverty proofing government policies and the addition of a gender module to the tax-benefits model complement the introduction of an equality lens to the performance framework.

- Enhance the existing mechanisms to support the creation of women-friendly digital products

- For instance, digital products designs tailored to women could be safer for them. In Kenya, a ride-hailing app called An Nisa Taxi serves only women and young children and provides them with only female drivers. Design changes could also be used to create products that directly address issues women face in the household.
- In Nigeria, Greymate Care is an online platform that enables users to book caregivers, nurses, and doctors for the elderly, saving time for women who are tend to be responsible for elder care and freeing them up to pursue other (paid) activities.

- Strengthen institutional capabilities to promote women's interests

- Forty-two percent of countries have some type of mandated gender quota. A “reserved seats” quota requires that a certain percentage of government seats be occupied by women. At 30 percent, Rwanda’s quota is particularly high, only eclipsed by Nepal’s quota of 33 percent. Djibouti enacted reserved seats quotas for the first time in 2018, and its percentage of women lawmakers shot up 15 percent. Other gender quotas are less strict, but can be quite effective. Costa Rica and Italy both applied quotas to their candidate lists, and female representation increased seven and twelve percent, respectively.

- On International Women’s Day 2017, the Government of Iceland presented a new law requiring all employers with more than 25 staff members to prove they give equal pay for work of equal value. The legislation, that would take effect from January 2018, aims to close the country’s wage gap by 2022. It would make Iceland the first country in the world to make equal pay mandatory for both private firms and government agencies. According to the law, government agencies will be required to document how education, experience, responsibility and other performance factors are valued and incorporated within the pay system. They will all go through an audit to analyse the pay system and salaries. The report from the audit will be published and agencies failing the audit would have to notify employees and union. The legislation allows employees to seek compensation.

○ France – Gender Equality Index

The 2018 French law for the freedom to choose one's professional future introduces a new chapter in the French Labour Code relating to measures aimed at eliminating the gender pay gap. This new chapter establishes the obligation to publish a certain number of indicators relating to pay and promotion differentials and actions taken to eliminate them. The new index particularly targets wage differentials and introduces levers to eliminate them, including in SMEs as long as they have 50 or more employees. In the form of a score out of 100, the index of gender equality consists of five main criteria which assess the inequalities between women and men in companies:

- Salary (40 points). The indicator identifies the average earnings of women and men in a company. Performance bonuses and benefits in kind are taken into account, but bonuses related to working conditions, departure and precariousness are excluded. To get the full 40 points, a company will need to narrow the gap between women's and men's earnings to zero.
- Percentage of men and women who have benefitted from a pay increase over the year (20 points). To get full points, a company will have to pay the same salary increases to women as men, to the nearest 2% or two people.
- Evaluation of promotions in companies (15 points). These points are awarded to companies which, during the year, promote as many women as men to 2% or with a maximum gap of two people. For companies with 50 to 249 employees, this criterion is merged with the previous one on pay increase.
- Maternity leave (15 points). The full score will go to a company that pays women returning from maternity leave. Please note that if an employee in this situation does not receive a salary increase, no point will be awarded to the company for this criterion.
- Have at least four women among its top ten salaries (10 points).

- Japan: To facilitate women’s participation and advancement in the workplace, the Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement was enforced in 2016. Under the Act, employers with over 300 regularly employed workers are required to establish action plans, based on an analysis of the situation concerning the status of their female employees, and make them public. They are also required to disclose information regarding female participation and career advancement in the workplace. The Act was revised in 2019 to further accelerate the efforts to facilitate the promotion of women in the workplace. The revised Act has (i) expanded the scope of employers required to establish action plans and make them public (from employers with over 300 regularly employed workers to over 100); (ii) strengthened employers’ information disclosure regarding female participation and career advancement in the workplace, and expanded the scope of employers required to disclose this information (from employers with over 300 regularly employed workers to over 100).

- Support existing institutions and the policy action focused on gender

- In 2014, the newly elected Swedish government declared itself a “Feminist government”, which is committed to integrate a gender equality perspective in decision-making both nationally and internationally and into resource allocation. The overarching objective of the government’s gender equality policy is “that women and men shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives” which is further spelled out in six sub-goals. In order to ensure the implementation of its gender equality vision, the government uses the dual approach of combining gender mainstreaming with special measures for gender equality, with a specific budget appropriation for gender equality. As part of the gender mainstreaming efforts, Sweden runs a programme for Gender mainstreaming in government agencies (GMGA) – to ensure that the activities and services provided by participating government agencies contribute to achieving the government’s gender equality objectives. In addition, the government’s gender equality vision is implemented through gender-responsive budgeting. Sweden’s gender equality vision has also been translated into the country’s foreign policy, officially labelled as “Feminist Foreign Policy”. The work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in foreign, development cooperation and trade policy will take as a national starting point the national government’s overarching vision of the feminist government.

Australia has a breadth of organisations that are driving progress on gender through a spectrum of activities.

- Training, tools and resources: Significant support is available for individual women and companies. Chief Executive Women provides leadership and professional development programmes targeted at women as well as scholarships, and the Pathways to Politics Program set up by the Women’s Leadership Institute Australia provides support and encouragement to women who aspire to elected office. The Recruit Smarter initiative by the government of Victoria works on ways to reduce gender bias in recruitment, and software is available to help companies reduce bias in recruitment.
- Recognition and awards: Programmes such as the Telstra Business Women’s Awards help lift the profile of women in business.
- Research and advocacy: The Sex Discrimination Commission undertakes comprehensive research and advocacy efforts. For example, it recently released a report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities, and it has conducted an inquiry into female labour-force participation through the Supporting Working Parents Review. In addition, many academic and community groups perform research and advocacy. Some are focused on specific topics including, for instance, the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance, while others, such as the Women’s Electoral Lobby, have a broader lens.

- Undertake assessments and compile data to ensure evidence based policies

- Since 1 January 2013, all new or amended laws and regulations as well as major investment or procurement contracts at the federal level must include a mandatory ex-ante impact assessment on gender equality along with other assessments of potential socioeconomic and environmental impacts. Quantitative and qualitative thresholds ensure the proportionality of these efforts in relation to the respective law or regulation. The Ministry of Finance and the Federal Chancellery therefore provide content related and technical assistance. The impact assessments are disclosed for consultation and parliamentary discussions. Ex-post evaluations of the impacts are to be performed by Ministries within 5 years and reported to Parliament in the Annual Report on Impact Assessment submitted in May.

ANNEX II:

**OECD Toolkit for mainstreaming and implementing
gender equality**

Introduction

In a report entitled “OECD Toolkit for mainstreaming and implementing gender equality”, the OECD focuses on strengthening governance and accountability for gender equality as a means to improving the gender-responsiveness of public policy. It also identifies measures to increase gender equality in state institutions. It highlights a range of possible actions to take and pitfalls to avoid in: (i) institutionalising gender equality and gender mainstreaming; (ii) supporting gender balance in all state institutions (executive, legislative, and judiciary) and structures, and at all levels; (iv) developing and sustaining gender mainstreaming capacity; and (v) establishing inclusive accountability structures.

Secure leadership and commit at the highest political level, at the appropriate level of Government, to the development and implementation of a whole-of Government strategy

Rationale

- To convey a country’s goal for a gender-equal society
- To set new expectations for the attitudes and behaviour of both men and women
- To use as a benchmark for measuring progress

Potential solutions to consider

- ✓ Ensure that the vision statement is align with international benchmarks and national policy and/or development objectives
- ✓ Develop an analytical framework and a related plan of action
- ✓ Conduct broad consultations with stakeholders from both inside and outside the Government, and with target groups form the public
- ✓ Define measurable goals and indicators linked to high-level outcome targets
- ✓ Articulate a clear set of responsibilities, timelines, action plans and monitoring mechanisms

Pitfalls to avoid

- x Establish a theoretical vision that does not portray a specific societal change
- x Insufficient communication of the gender equality vision statement to policy makers
- x Collect and analyse information without a clear analytical framework
- x Insufficient involvement of Government and non-governmental stakeholders in the (i) development and dissemination of strategy and; (ii) assessment and verification of findings
- x Focus only on output results (e.g. number of awareness raising events)
- x Lack of accountability mechanisms

Establish an institutional framework to ensure the effective implementation, co-ordination and sustainability

Rationale

- To effectively implement a Government vision and strategic plan
- To ensure that the public sector fosters gender equality across Government policy and within society as a whole
- To help establish a baseline for future performance monitoring
- To allow stakeholders to collaborate and share expertise

Potential solutions to consider

- ✓ Clearly define and widely disseminate requirements indicating the actors in charge of implementing gender equality-related tasks and mainstreaming policies, and which resources will be allocated for this purpose
- ✓ Ensure gender-disaggregated statistics and data are collected on the impact of policies and programmes on gender equality
- ✓ Incorporate gender equality objectives in the individual staff performance objectives
- ✓ Introduce incentive/sanction systems to encourage institutions' compliance to gender equality requirements.
- ✓ Allocate and systematically review resources to meet the strategic goals and work plans
- ✓ Establish coordinating bodies or committees within government and issue regulations or legislation to ensure vertical and horizontal coordination on gender equality and mainstreaming;

Pitfalls to avoid

- x Gender equality institutions and focal points/units are under-resourced and far from the apex of power
- x Line ministries and government agencies work on gender equality in silos, with insufficient capacity, planning and accountability
- x Coordination mechanisms/efforts are fragmented and responsibilities reside in multiple institutions with risks of duplication, overlapping and missed opportunities
- x Central gender equality institutions have limited capacities, inadequate or non-existent budgets and/or unclear responsibilities
- x Lack of effective coordination between governmental institutions, social partners and civil society, which weakens the overall implementation of the gender equality strategy

Integrate evidence-based assessments of gender impacts and considerations into various dimensions of public governance

Rationale

- To allow policymakers to foresee the impact of new regulation, policy or programmes
- To ensure that policy-making is based on sound knowledge and understanding of gender-related issues
- To better assess the situation and develop appropriate, evidence-based responses and policies

Potential solutions to consider

- ✓ Incorporate gender impact assessments *ex ante* and *ex post* to assess whether the intended outcomes were achieved
- ✓ Align gender analysis practices with the mainstream requirement for regulatory impact analysis of public governance (including procurement, consultation, service delivery, etc)
- ✓ Build the awareness of statisticians and representatives in line ministries of gender issues through information campaigns and trainings

Pitfalls to avoid

- ✗ Develop tools that are too complex to be used by a wide range of actors
- ✗ Capacity development programmes do not reach out to all concerned staff/institutions
- ✗ Insufficient resources, limited capacity in ministries and statistical offices to define the need for gender-disaggregated data and integrate gender perspectives into mainstream indicators and data collection efforts

Rationale

- To allow the Government to target resources more effectively
- To ensure that gender equality is being promoted and implemented across all areas of Government
- To ensure more oversight of Government's gender budgeting practices

Potential solutions to consider

- ✓ Conduct a gender budget baseline analysis and an *ex post* gender impact assessments
- ✓ Undertake a gender needs assessments as well as a gender audit of the budget
- ✓ Apply a gender perspective in performance setting and the allocation of budgeted resources
- ✓ Ensure clear leadership and strong co-ordination mechanisms for gender budgeting
- ✓ Tagging budget information which relates to gender equality, i.e. systematically assigning distinct functional classifications or codes to the relevant budget lines, programmes or performance indicators, can be useful for highlighting and monitoring over time how money disbursed through the budget contributes to achieving gender goals

Pitfalls to avoid

- x Gender targets that are set are not specific, measurable, achievable, relevant or time-bound
- x Budget managers do not have the expertise or resources to undertake meaningful gender assessments
- x Lack of timely performance information
- x Treating *ex post* gender assessment as an 'afterthought' when it is incorporated into a wider impact assessment (e.g., when undertaken as part of a broader evaluation of a program)
- x Insufficient engagement with civil society to enable evidence-based policies which promote gender equality
- x Institutional roles and responsibilities are not clear and line ministries do not have sufficient guidance or capacity to deliver gender budgeting

Strengthen the capacity of independent institutions and advisory bodies to monitor the implementation of gender equality

Rationale

- To allow the Government to target resources more effectively
- To ensure that gender equality is being promoted and implemented across all areas of Government
- To ensure more oversight of Government's gender budgeting practices

Potential solutions to consider

- ✓ Ensure oversight institutions and advisory bodies are mandated and given sufficient authority to monitor, oversee and promote the implementation of gender equality over all of government
- ✓ Establish a framework and a mechanism to measure progress of the implementation – including a regulated process, an analytical framework and specific indicators

Pitfalls to avoid

- x Oversight responsibilities lay within government institutions instead of independent bodies – thus compromising reliable results
- x Monitoring efforts are not conducted regularly
- x The response mechanism does not translate into individual institutions' responses – also lacking adequate resourcing

Strengthen the evidence base and systematically measure progress towards gender equality performance, based on gender

Rationale

- To ensure that gender equality strategies achieve their intended impacts
- To improve decision making by allowing programmes to be adjusted for greater impact and enhancing accountability and institutional learning
- To ensure that the most relevant data and indicators for gender equality are collected and disseminated effectively

Potential solutions to consider

- ✓ Establish a national monitoring mechanism as part of the national gender equality strategy indicating institutional responsibilities for measuring progress
- ✓ Promote national, regional and international coordination and cooperation mechanisms to promote consistent gender equality data collection and measurement
- ✓ Require data disaggregation by gender as well as the incorporation of a gender perspective within national statistical legislation
- ✓ Establish and adequately resource a capacity development plan to strengthen government capacity to collect relevant data and information against set gender impact indicators

Pitfalls to avoid

- x Focus only on “input indicators”, like number of trainings and number of beneficiaries, instead of “outcome indicators”, that describe the outcomes of these efforts
- x Gender equality monitoring mechanism remains vague and roles and responsibilities inadequately defined
- x Lack of clear leadership and accountability frameworks makes monitoring efforts ineffective and fragmented
- x Insufficient coordination mechanisms among national statistical offices and key institutions tasked with implementing gender equality and mainstreaming throughout government

Establish effective, independent, and impartial complaint and appeal mechanisms to protect rights for gender equality and consider complaints in a competent and impartial manner

Rationale

- To provide independent recourse for complaints related to gender-based violation of rights and discrimination
- To contribute to the longevity and sustainability of gender equality reform during periods of change in the political environment
- To provide reliable information about the challenges faced by victims of gender-based discrimination and gender-based crimes (including gender-based violence) and on the challenges in the actual implementation of gender equality policies in the country

Potential solutions to consider

- ✓ Establish an independent complaint and appeal mechanism to protect rights for gender equality and consider complaints related to gender-based discrimination
- ✓ Conduct communication and information campaigns regarding gender equality complaint and appeal mechanisms to promote their existence and accessibility
- ✓ Ensure that there is political commitment to ensure the independence, impartiality and sustainability of gender equality complaint and appeal mechanisms/bodies
- ✓ Establish an independent appeal panel, as well as criteria on its independence and operations

Pitfalls to avoid

- ✗ Absence of complaint and appeal mechanisms or bodies to protect rights for gender equality
- ✗ Gender equality complaint and appeal mechanisms are not known or accessible
- ✗ Absent or insufficient safeguards to protect independence of an appeal mechanism/body
- ✗ Ensure that there is political commitment to ensure the independence, impartiality and sustainability of gender equality complaint and appeal mechanisms/bodies

Mainstream gender in internal Parliamentary processes and practices

Rationale

- To address gender equality concerns, with mandates clearly spelled out in rules of procedures, statutes, or other procedural documents
- To scrutinise all governmental policy and legislation from a gender perspective, ensure that all laws abide by international gender equality commitments and are aligned with national policies
- To better understand the perspectives, interests and needs of women and men, girls and boys in order to make public policy more responsive and effective

Potential solutions to consider

- ✓ Securing endorsement and support of parliamentary leadership
- ✓ Conduct gender audits or self-assessment of current policy gaps
- ✓ Build in-house gender research capacities, including in gender analysis and analysis of sex-disaggregated data
- ✓ Mandate the use of gender mainstreaming tools in core parliamentary processes, such as gender analysis and/or gender impact assessments

- ✓ Empowering gender bodies to scrutinise budget plans, laws and policies
- ✓ Introducing and undertaking gender budgeting initiatives
- ✓ Create channels for gender audit findings to feed into existing policies in order to further strengthen implementation and outcomes

Pitfalls to avoid

- ✗ Create a policy “in a vacuum” or without reference to broader gender policy initiatives and commitments
- ✗ Make policy progress dependent on financial resources
- ✗ Place responsibility for gender mainstreaming solely in gender equality mechanisms
- ✗ Position gender mainstreaming work as an “add-on” or voluntary activity
- ✗ Limit oversight powers of gender bodies to, for example, review and amend budget bills
- ✗ Ignore the findings of gender mainstreaming tools, including gender budget statements
- ✗ Limit consultation processes within parliament or externally

Achieve balanced representation of women and men in parliaments/legislatures at all levels

Rationale

- To reflect the composition of the population itself and capture valuable voices, perspectives and expertise
- To enhance effectiveness of policy decision
- To remove barriers to women fulfilling their potential

Potential solutions to consider

- ✓ Consider special measures such as (legislated or voluntary) gender quotas to increase the number of women candidates
- ✓ Encourage political parties to introduce internal measures to promote women’s advancement, candidacy and leadership
- ✓ Align parliamentary sittings and voting in plenary with school calendars and holidays
- ✓ Develop a code of conduct or ethics for members of parliament (MPs) and staff that include provisions on gender-sensitive behaviour and language
- ✓ Setting limits to voting times to promote work-life balance
- ✓ Organise seminars and gender training sessions addressing both MPs and legislative employees on a regular basis about existing legal provisions, counselling facilities and initiatives taken by governmental, gender equality mechanisms and civil society organisations

Pitfalls to avoid

- x** Adopt measures without a specified threshold, rank placements or enforcement mechanisms
- x** Limited engagement of political parties in introducing gender-sensitive internal processes.
- x** Lack or insufficient reporting channels for incidences of sexual harassment
- x** Uneven mainstreaming of gender considerations in the organisation, monitoring and evaluation of all capacity development efforts
- x** Reserving responsibility for gender training only for gender equality mechanisms

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