



Ministry of Business, Enterprise and
Cooperatives
(Business and Enterprise Division)

Gender Policy Statement

January 2017

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Mainstreaming and Enhancing Gender in Policies, Practices and Programmes

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Paper contextualises the gender policy of the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (MoBEC) in light of the National Gender Policy Framework 2008 and International Conventions to which Mauritius is a signatory party, highlights key sectoral interventions and focuses attention on emerging areas based on the analysis of findings, consultations and existing policy documents. Its main aim is to identify some entry points that provide a framework for mainstreaming gender in policies, programmes and activities of MoBEC, and make appropriate recommendations for promoting full and equal participation of women and men in the development process.

1.1 Rationale

Achieving gender justice is a matter of basic human rights and is a fundamental principle of the Republic of Mauritius, as enshrined in its Constitution which stipulates that “*in Mauritius there have existed and shall continue to exist without discrimination by reason of race, place of origin, political opinions, color, creed or sex*¹.”

¹ Constitution of Mauritius (1968)

The Constitution not only grants equality to women but empowers the State to adopt measures in favour of women. Consequently, women and men must participate equitably in the national development process.

While Mauritius has a good track record regarding women's empowerment in terms of policies, legislation, institutional and infrastructural support, prevailing gender gaps still persist. The core role of Government and development actors is to endow its citizens with an enabling environment where women and men are granted the best conditions under which they can develop their full potential.

1.2 National Gender Policy Framework, 2008 (NGPF)

Fully conscious that gender equality and equity must be central to all development models, Government adopted the National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF) in 2008 which embodies a vision of empowering women and recognizes that gender is a cross-cutting issue. It also argues that adopting and incorporating a gender approach in all developmental issues remain a prerequisite to attain full human development.

The vision of the NGPF is to have *“A society in which all girls and boys, women and men live together in dignity, safety, mutual respect, harmony and social justice; thrive in an enabling environment in which they are able to achieve their full potential, in full enjoyment of their human rights; are equal partners in taking decisions to shape economic, social and cultural development, in determining the values that guide and sustain such development and equally enjoy its benefits”*².

² National Gender Policy Framework, Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, March 2008

1.2.1 Requirements for Effective Implementation of NGPF

The effective implementation of the NGPF requires that each Ministry should:

- (a) develop its own sector specific gender policy;
- (b) draw on the policy framework for revising /developing sectoral strategies and ensure coherence among policies; and
- (c) mainstream gender in programme design, performance indicators and budgetary allocations.

1.3 Compliance of MoBEC with the NGPF

The MoBEC Gender Policy Statement subscribes itself to the broad principles of the NGPF and is guided by its comprehensive vision. This policy statement reflects the commitment of the MoBEC to mainstream gender in its sector specific interventions.

1.4 Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the gender policy statement of the MoBEC is to promote gender equity, equality and social justice for a sustainable society.

1.5 Specific Objectives

- Explicitly outline the commitment of MoBEC to gender equity and equality;
- Integrate women's and men's concerns and experiences in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes;
- Promote a gender-responsive organizational culture;
- Promote women's equal participation with men as decision-makers and equal partnership in ensuring a sustainable society.

1.6 The Commitment of the MoBEC to Achieving Sustainable Society and Gender Equality

MoBEC has been entrusted with the responsibility to formulate policies and strategies pertaining to business and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

This Ministry has always been empowering women to form part of the mainstream of the society. Several activities/ projects are being implemented at the level of the Ministry to achieve Sustainable Development and Gender Equality.

Women have equal access to all the schemes, facilities and business development services offered by the Ministry.

These activities are listed below:-

I. Training and Capacity Building Programmes

Women are provided with the following training facilities to enhance their skills which equip them to be successful entrepreneurs:

- Entrepreneurship and Management Development Programmes (Managing Your Business level 1&2, Financial Planning, Marketing and Branding, Human Resource Management, etc)
- Technical Workshops and Seminars (Taxation, Labour laws, Import and Export Procedures, Tender Preparation, Quality Standards, etc)
- Handicraft courses (Pyrography, Floral Arrangement, House Model Making, Ceramics and Pottery, Leather Craft, Fashion Jewellery, Textile Design, etc)

II. Participation in International Fairs SME Refund Scheme

There is no gender discrimination to participate in this activity. All facilities provided under this scheme, apply to men and women equally.

III. [SME Trade Fairs](#)

Women are afforded equal opportunities to participate in all the SMEs Trade Fairs organized by the Ministry. It is to be noted that there is no gender discrimination in respect of the services offered by the Ministry. Men and women are empowered to work as partners in the Business World so as to attain competitive edge and sustain in the global world in the long run.

IV. [Awareness Campaigns](#)

Specific campaigns on a regular basis are undertaken, targeting women in different localities in terms of support and financial facilities being offered and business opportunities available.

1.7 **Vision of MoBEC**

To develop a strong, diversified, competitive, resilient and innovative business and enterprise sector operating in a sustainable environment.

1.8 **Mission of MoBEC**

- To act as a facilitator and catalyst in the promotion, development and growth of a globally competitive and innovative MSME sector through the creation of the appropriate legal, institutional, operational and financial framework.
- To provide appropriate technical, professional and managerial support to businesses for enhancing economic growth and sustainable development.

1.9 **Engendering Business and Enterprise**

Business and enterprise development can make a very significant potential contribution to women's empowerment, gender equity and equality. However, unless there is firm commitment to mainstreaming gender into policies/programmes geared towards business

and enterprise development services, it will be impossible to level the playing field for achieving effective gender equality.

1.10 Organizational Structure

The portfolio of the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Business and Enterprise Division) comprise inter alia, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and Competitiveness, with the main objective of facilitating and promoting a competitive, vibrant and conducive environment for business and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) development.

The MSME sector is an important pillar of the Mauritian economy and is critical to its economic transformation. As at 2015, the contribution of MSMEs to GDP was 40 percent and to total employment around 55 percent. The most ambitious goal of Government is to make the MSME sector the backbone of our economy.

Being given that Government is laying much emphasis on the business sector for the socio-economic development of the country, several important targets have been set both in the Government Budget and the Vision Statement 2030 for the development of the business sector and increasing the competitiveness of the human resources and business industry in general. Hence, a Business and Enterprise Unit is being restructured and would be staffed by a technical cadre comprising three levels to formulate viable policies for the implementation of Government programmes.

The Business and Enterprise Unit, comprises the following levels:

- (i) Principal Business and Enterprise Analyst;
- (ii) Senior Business and Enterprise Analyst; and
- (iii) Business and Enterprise Analyst.

1.11 Gender Staffing Breakdown (GSB)

The GSB is a vital analytical and functional tool indicating the percentage of the workforce represented by each gender. It enables tracking the mobility of staff in different units or functions and understanding the difficulty in attracting or retaining a particular gender in a particular place.

The staffing position gender-wise is as follows:

- (a) Business and Enterprise Division highly dominated by females with more than 67% while 80% of the Gender Cell Committee consists of females;
- (b) SMEDA consists of an equal gender distribution with 50% of males and 50% number of females.

1.11.1 Gender Distribution in the SME Sector- the Potential & the Promise

Among the 26,858 SMES registered at SMEDA as at September 2016, only around 5400 are active women entrepreneurs. It is to be noted that women have equal access to all the schemes, facilities and business development services offered by the Ministry.

2.0 INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

2.1 Strategic Policy Development & Road Map

A common strategy for the whole Ministry which delineates a clear understanding of the areas of intervention of the MoBEC highlighting the linkages of business, enterprise and cooperatives and a Road Map for the attainment of highest levels of business growth through gender mainstreaming need to be developed.

While the vision of the Business Enterprise Division should be reviewed, a vision for the MoBEC should be developed with clear-cut gender sensitive outcomes. A gender analysis

would help to discern areas of intervention for effective gender mainstreaming. Evidence-based policy development that focuses on results-oriented gender based outcomes would facilitate the gender mainstreaming process.

2.2 Gender Cell

A new Gender Cell has been set up at the Ministry and a Gender Focal Point was appointed since July 2016. To date, the Gender Cell met on three occasions and has effectively communicated to all the staff of the Ministry the importance of Gender mainstreaming and has also finalised the Gender Policy Statement.

The Gender Cell will remain at the forefront to oversee gender issues and ensure that all activities/programmes are gender sensitive. Supportive services as far as possible would be made available to ensure that women occupy the right place and feel satisfied in their job so that they can deliver effectively and efficiently.

2.3 Capacity for Gender Mainstreaming

While policies, programmes and legislations at MoBEC addresses Gender concerns to some extent, specific tools like gender analysis, gender audit and sex disaggregated data analysis need to be continually utilized together with other gender assessment tools to monitor gender mainstreaming and measure performance in the area of gender equality in policies and programmes. Capacity needs to be built at the individual, system and institutional levels to ensure that the design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes are gender sensitive.

2.4 Resource Allocation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting

Gender- Responsive Budgeting is a methodology that analyses the impact of actual government expenditure and revenue on women and girls as compared to men and boys. It helps governments decide how policies need to be adjusted, and where resources need to be reallocated to address poverty and gender inequalities.

2.5 Policy Measures and Strategies for Gender Mainstreaming

Gender sensitivity in relation to the business and enterprise sectors is concerned with the promotion of gender-balanced development in terms of social equity, economic efficiency and efforts to foster sustainable society. These goals can be achieved through the implementation of strategies that are adapted to conditions, needs and potentials of both women and men.

The following describes strategies and policy measures that can support to engender interventions of the MoBEC:-

➤ Policy Level:

- Developing a common vision, mission and goal of the Ministry and ensure that these are engendered;
- Conducting legislative review of existing Acts and develop legislations that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in all business and enterprise;
- Promoting policy formulation and implementation by addressing gender equality in all policy dialogues with government institutions, donor agencies and civil society organizations;
- Facilitating access of women in business to financial and non-financial services for promoting and sustaining their enterprise;
- Valuing women contribution in enhancing business efficiency, competitiveness and community involvement and participation;
- Sharing and replicating good practices, projects and programme experiences and lessons learnt in promoting gender equality;
- Ensuring that gender balance and gender perspective is considered in research;
- Disseminating the National Gender Policy Framework at all levels of the Ministry and ensure full commitment of its implementation by all Units/Departments;

- Promoting an approach that ensures the participation of women in policy development and decision- making processes in every Business and Enterprise;
- Promoting information, education and knowledge sharing on gender balance and gender mainstreaming and about options in businesses that are open to people of both sex;
- Strengthening capacity of staff of the Ministry and all its stakeholders, including SMEDA to ensure that gender concerns form an integral part of all decisions and activities;
- Ensuring data collection is sex disaggregated and used as a baseline for assessing gender gaps;
- Including assessment of progress on achieving gender equality and results in the performance measurement framework;
- Conducting a strong advocacy campaign on Business Enterprise, sustaining development and their gender dimensions among policy makers, stakeholders, NGOs, CSOs, and the public at large.

➤ **Organisational/Institutional level**

- Promoting gender parity in all departments and at all levels within the Ministry;
- Providing a conducive environment whereby a culture of equal respect of men and women prevails;
- Establishing strategic partnerships and networking with the Ministry of Gender, Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (GECDFW) to promote development of expertise and competence for gender mainstreaming;
- Building capacity of both administrative and technical cadres on gender- related issues;
- Conducting periodic gender audit and gender- sensitive assessment exercises that would enable effective monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes;

- Ensuring that sensitization/workshop/programmes/induction courses include a gender component;
- Ensuring that the gender cell is well resourced and positioned with adequate support to ensure that the design and implementation of policies are done through a gender perspective and that the gender cell becomes fully functional; and
- Monitoring the gender impact of business and enterprise policies development and implementation through development of baseline sex disaggregated statistical data.

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