

Key Findings and Recommendations of

The Gender Audit in the Civil Service in Mauritius

**Study Commissioned by
The Parliamentary Gender Caucus**

Mauritius National Assembly

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Background

A Parliamentary Gender Caucus (PGC) has been formally set up at the level of the National Assembly in December 2016 through an amendment to the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly.

The Caucus saw its official launching in March 2017 and is presently receiving technical assistance by the UNDP under its Country Programme 2017-2020, Component 2- Dealing with Gender Equality Challenges .

The overall vision of the Caucus is to work for the promotion and attainment of gender equality through, *inter alia*, recommending the carrying out of periodical gender assessments of government policies; and research on salient gender issues, as provided by Standing Order 69(6) of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly.

At its meeting dated 21 April 2017, the Caucus unanimously agreed to spearhead a gender audit exercise in the civil service in Mauritius with a view to establishing the baseline situation on the status of gender equality in the programming and operational dimensions of sectoral Ministries in Mauritius. The Caucus further agreed that the Audit would be carried out by the UNDP Gender Expert attached at the level of the National Assembly.

The findings of the report create the basis for concrete and contextual recommendations to build up on existing efforts of Ministries to consolidate their work within a human-rights based twin-track approach to women's empowerment activities and gender mainstreaming measures.

The results of the audit are intended as a foundation for continued and on-going improvement and assessment. Furthermore, the findings seek to guide the formulation of gender action plans by sectoral Ministries based on existing institutional strengths and further strengthen areas that need redress.

Aim

The aim of the gender audit is to examine the systems and processes within institutions that are conducive or act as impediments towards gender equity and equality¹ and propose recommendations to address sectoral gaps.

Overall, the objectives of the Auditing Exercise are to:

- identify the constraints and challenges which have acted as hurdles to the effective implementation of sectoral gender policies;
- assess the extent to which organisational structures are responsive to gender equity;
- take stock whether Ministries have been allocated funds for gender mainstreaming purposes; and
- assess whether Ministries possess the expertise and know-how to understand gender mainstreaming in their specific fields.

¹ Gender Equality refers to equal access to social goods, services and resources and equal opportunities in all spheres of life for women and men. However, gender equality does not necessarily result in equal outcomes for men and women, as they have different needs and priorities
Gender Equity is the process of being fair to women and men. Women and men should not only be given equal access to resources and equal opportunities, but they should be given the means of benefitting from this equality.

Methodology

All Ministries have been invited to participate in this exercise. There was a total of 30 participants².

The auditing exercise was conducted over a period of three months, starting 01 December 2017 to 01 March 2018, by the UNDP Gender Expert attached to the National Assembly, and with the administrative support of the Secretariat and other Officers of the National Assembly.

Gender Mainstreaming in the Audit was defined as a strategy to achieve gender equity and equality and defined as per the 1997 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) guidelines, i.e.,

“[Gender Mainstreaming is] ... the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetrated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

It is further important to highlight that as part of gender mainstreaming strategies, the combined set of strategic approaches inclusive of the technical, financial and institutional processes in place to achieve equality has been analysed in light of the responses of Gender Focal Points³ and members of the Gender Cells of Ministries⁴.

² The Ministry of Defense and Rodrigues stated that it was a newly created portfolio and was, therefore, not in a position to participate in the audit exercise.

³ Gender Focal Points have been nominated at the level of their Ministries to report to the Parliamentary Gender Caucus on the status of gender equality in their respective sectors. Gender Focal Points are not below the rank of Deputy Permanent Secretaries given that they will have to influence policy making.

⁴ Gender Cells of Ministries comprise representatives of the Human Resource and Finance sections, as well as from the Administration and Technical cadres. Members of the Gender Cells have been nominated to report to the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare on programmes being implemented within their Ministries to address women’s empowerment and gender equality.

The following steps were adopted for conducting the gender audit exercise.

Step 1: Preparing for the Audit

- Gaining management buy-in from the Secretary for Public Service, Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms.
- A preliminary exercise was carried out with Gender Focal Points to inform the latter of the Auditing exercise and of the contents of the Questionnaires.

Step 2: Understanding Gender in the Public Sector

- A desk review of the key documents pertaining to gender in Mauritius was undertaken.
- A short questionnaire underpinned by the Gender Integration Framework was conceived to conduct a preliminary staff survey to explore the underlying political will/existing technical capacity for gender mainstreaming/ perceptions of accountability and the organisational culture of the institutions being audited.
- In December 2017, an induction course on Gender Mainstreaming Strategies was carried out for Gender Focal Points (GFPs) to introduce key gender concepts.
- GFPs were also apprised of the status of gender equality in Mauritius based on official statistics during the said workshop.

Step 3: Investigating Further

- An in-depth questionnaire was used to investigate further into specific gender issues.
- The Questionnaire was explained to the GFPs during the above-mentioned induction course.
- Conducting a focus group discussion with the representatives of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms was seen to be important to obtain an overall insight into the policies of the Government for the civil service in Mauritius.

Step 4: Moving Forward: Recommendations

- Key recommendations have been formulated to further gender mainstreaming within the civil service.

General Findings

- ❖ Overall, the civil service in Mauritius has a gender sensitive institutional culture. There appears to be a deep personal, institutional and political commitment to achieve gender equality at all levels in the civil service, from the administrative to the technical cadres of the National Gender Machinery.
- ❖ Ministries and Departments adhere to principles of equality of opportunity in recruitment processes.
- ❖ There is an acknowledgement that women's rights are human rights and there is a broad acceptance that gender equality is a critical and indispensable component of human development in Mauritius to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a holistic manner. However, gender is still not fully viewed as a cross-cutting issue in the sectoral Ministries.
- ❖ The findings reveal that gender-mainstreaming efforts have been offset by a number of factors, namely, human and financial resources, as well as a lack of systematic approaches and technical capacity to effectively carry out gender mainstreaming as part of implementation of respective sectoral gender policies of line Ministries.
- ❖ All Ministries have formulated their respective sectoral gender policies, however, the accompanying costed gender action plans have yet to be drafted.
- ❖ Whilst all participants in the audit exercise understand the distinction between sex and gender, there is a reported lack of technical capacity as to how to practically mainstream gender in different sectors and/or portfolios of Ministries.
- ❖ Members of the Gender Cells and Gender Focal Points are aware of the major international and regional human rights instruments in place for women's empowerment and gender equality.

- ❖ The overall policy formulation and implementation cycle remains to be fully engendered at the level of sectoral Ministries. Similarly, gender sensitive indicators are not fully utilised to inform policy making and in Monitoring and Evaluation (M &E) processes. Concurrently, members of the Gender Cells also revealed that there is limited technical capacity to formulate gender sensitive indicators in their respective sectoral policies and programmes.
- ❖ All Ministries have been allocated a budget of Rs. 200,000 to implement Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). However, the findings of the audit reveal that GRB is yet to be fully implemented in an efficient manner for longer term outcomes in sectoral Ministries.
- ❖ Whilst Ministries have gender policies, the overall mission/vision/customer charter is not yet harmonised with the gender policy. As a result, addressing gender equality is still seen as a separate task, rather than being mainstreamed in the overall vision of that Ministry. Similarly, gender mainstreaming in itself is seen as an add-on task for members of the Gender Cell.

Specific Findings

Gender Mainstreaming in Programming and Operations

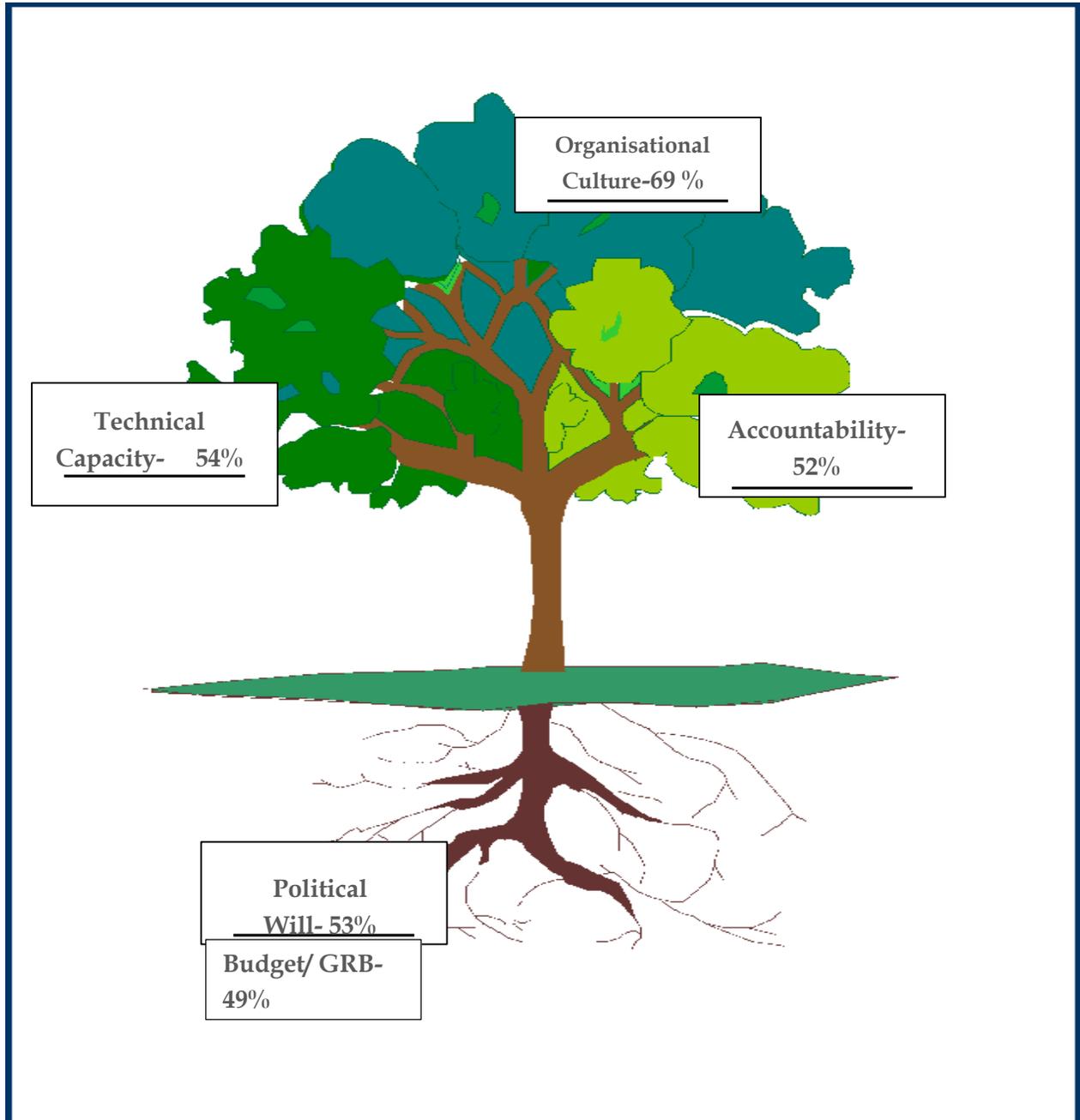
The gender auditing exercise was carried out using the overarching concept of the Gender Integration Framework (GIF). The GIF stipulates that transformative change is rendered possible when the pillars of organisational dimensions are amenable to gender mainstreaming for gender equality and equity.

The axes examined in the audit relate to political will, technical capacity, accountability, budget, and organisational culture, represented by the GIF Tree. Together, the significance of these four elements in transforming *gender-blind* organisations into *gender-responsive* holistic entities is vital.

The existing literature reveals that political/ top-level will and commitment acts as an anchor akin to that of the roots of the tree viewed as being the core element to initiate and promote institutional transformative change; whilst the other core dimensions are equally essential measures in the quest to effectively mainstream gender in the culture, policies/ programmes and projects of the entity. These axes have been examined during the gender auditing process.

The findings have been integrated in the GIF Tree as follows:

Overall Average Percentage of Gender Mainstreaming in the Public Sector : 56 %



In a more explicit manner, the following were examined:

Programming Dimensions	Rating
Programme Planning Design & Implementation	Ministries' organisational procedures and methods are conceptualised and implemented in a gender sensitive manner to an extent of 45%
Monitoring & Evaluation	Gender disaggregated data guides or influences policies/ programmes or are mainstreamed in the monitoring and evaluation of developmental projects and programme outcomes to an extent of 52%
Technical Expertise	Ministries have an overall technical capacity of 54% to engender sectoral policies/programmes
Partner Organisations	There is an effective 68% of channel of collaboration and consultation with stakeholders working in the field of women's empowerment and gender equality. Thus 68% of policies/programmes/projects are influenced through a bottom-up approach
Organisational Dimensions	Rating
Institutional Commitment/ Gender Policy	There is a 53% institutional commitment towards implementing the National Gender Policy Framework and human rights instruments pertaining to women's empowerment and gender equality
Staffing/HR	The extent to which there was gender balance in the Ministry's/Department staffing patterns and institutionalisation of a gender sensitive environment through gender sensitive human resource policies is 61%
Organisational Culture	The extent to which there is a certain level of gender sensitivity in the Ministry's norms, structures, systems, processes and relations of power is 69%
Financial Resources	49% of the Ministry's budget is perceived to be allocated to redress sectoral gender gaps

Recommendations

- ❖ It is strongly suggested that relevant Ministries take stock of the findings of this exercise. The National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming⁵, chaired by the Honourable Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, should also be apprised of the findings of this exercise to guide its future strategic direction.
- ❖ All Ministries should be called upon to formulate their respective action plans to redress weaknesses identified. Social, infrastructural and economic developmental programmes by all sectoral Ministries should imperatively take into account and redress gender differences/disparity within their mandates and portfolios, as informed by gender disaggregated data and indicators. This calls for a sector-wide holistic governmental approach to gender mainstreaming.
- ❖ In-depth capacity building on gender mainstreaming (GeM) in specific sectoral issues is of the essence not only for Officers of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, but also for Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and Members of the Gender Cell of sectoral Ministries. Capacity building should be carried out prior to formulation of the Gender Action Plans of sectoral Ministries. The GeM capacity building workshop should be inclusive of the whole policy and budgetary planning cycle, from gender analysis to formulating SMART⁶ gender sensitive performance indicators, to strategies on how to tangibly and systematically mainstream gender in specific sectors and in the budget. Ideally, the training exercise should take the form of a sectoral Training of Trainers (ToT) Programme so that mobility of GFPs does not lead to a loss of technical competence for the Ministries. A ToT is also seen as a solid investment in technical assistance in light of its snowballing effect.

⁵ The overall objective of the National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming is to work towards mainstreaming gender into sectoral policies.

⁶ SMART Indicators relate to being Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound

- ❖ The capacity building exercise should clarify the role of GFPs and members of the Gender Cell and should also equip them with skills on how to formulate sectoral gender sensitive indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation purposes.
- ❖ Members of Gender Cells and Gender Focal Points should attend refresher courses on gender analysis and gender mainstreaming on a regular basis.
- ❖ In order to sustain the momentum and commitment at the highest level of decision making towards gender mainstreaming, there should be sensitisation on the value-added of gender mainstreaming for development. The importance of gender responsive budgeting as an efficient method of carrying out the budget planning exercise throughout the cycle (from issuance of the Budget Circular to the Budget Speech) should be emphasised. This would result in a trickling down effect reflecting on gender sensitive programming and implementation. It is hence proposed that a high-level symposium be organised comprising the Heads of sectoral Ministries, Gender Focal Points, the Budget Sector Team/ Analysts and the Financial Secretary. This half-day symposium would take the form of “Budgeting and Efficiency- GRB as Smart Economics⁷”. Basing the Symposium on the concept of “Efficiency and Smart Economics” would no doubt resonate better with macro-economists and gain additional legitimacy.
- ❖ The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development is encouraged to implement its gender policy and institute Gender Budget Statements as part of gender responsive budgeting. The Gender Budget Statement would further act as an accountability document and M&E mechanism to monitor the disbursement of the GRB funding allocated to Ministries and Departments to redress sectoral gender gaps.
- ❖ A “how-to” checklist on how to practically engender the policy development and implementation cycle for all Ministries should be developed to guide Ministries on gender analysis, gender impact assessment and gender mainstreaming.
- ❖ In light of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms being a strategic and key Ministry, it is recommended that the capacity of the Gender

⁷ Concept adopted by the World Bank.
World Bank, 2012, World Development Report (WDR) on Gender Equality and Development

Focal Point and Gender Cell of that Ministry be enhanced to engender its programme and engender the Performance Management System of Government.

- ❖ Similarly, as a strategic entry point, the training Module of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms should be engendered. In this context, the Civil Service College may include gender module in the training component related to the “Code of Ethics”.

Conclusion

The gender audit exercise has revealed that while the civil service can celebrate a number of successes, there are also a number of challenges that have been identified to further gender mainstreaming into the policies, programmes and budgets of sectoral Ministries. These include technical capacity on sectoral gender mainstreaming and implementing gender responsive budgeting as well as the formulation of gender sensitive indicators.

The recommendations put forth in this report seek to address the gaps uncovered in a very tangible and achievable manner. The recommendations may be addressed as part of the costed Gender Action Plans to be formulated by each Ministry and implemented through the budget provided by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. Ownership and leadership to achieve gender equality through gender mainstreaming strategies remain at the level of each Ministry.