



MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL

INNOVATION FOR TECHNOLOGY

**STUDY ON THE EVOLUTION OF
WOMEN AND GENDER
DEVELOPMENT OF OVER THREE
GENERATIONS IN MAURITIUS**

Final Report

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P R E F A C E

The story of Mala, Rose, Shehnaaz, Louisa. It is also the story of Dereck, Zameer, Chan and Babu. This is a story of how these women impact upon their men and children and vice versa. This study tries to understand women's quest for greater freedom, equity, and access while playing the multiple roles of wife, mother, homemaker, bread-earner, community helper and much more. This drama of women's evolution is not seen in a vacuum or background of unrealistic dreams utopian visions of "happily ever after" scenarios but against the rough seas of socio-economic forces, buffeted by the turbulent waves of local and global politics and diplomacy. There were strategies of compromise and acceptance vying with promises of change and betterment.

Against this larger macro-economic, demographic picture of national development it is undoubtedly also the story of human rights and human development where the nightmare of poverty, ignorance, discrimination, unemployment, shrouds all peoples in its darkness. Every where there are some who are even less equal to others than the rest as George Orwell states in his "Animal Farm".

'Women's rights, we learn painfully and slowly are human rights after all and 'unless the slaves themselves protest, unite and join hands,' even Abraham Lincoln the champion of the rights of slaves alone could not do much?'

It is a slow but steady march through the independence decade in Mauritius towards finding a voice, which could be heard through the cries for democracy and freedom cries against colonisation, cries for emigration, cries for affiliation with Britain. In that decade women were seen as part of the crowd – their needs were not different, their thoughts were with their husbands, with their fathers and with their sons. They all walked together from the gloomy humiliations and suppressions of the 'crowded baracoon' of the colonists to the horizons where the word 'independence', and "self-governance" was lighting up the different corners of an island ready to be reborn.

There was no doubt that without an overt rebellion women had begun to find a more purposeful destiny. Titmus and Meade had almost rung the death knell for the island, what with overpopulation, unemployment, skyrocketing aspirations of the young, thwarted dreams of the not so old, all of it became a cauldron of strange vapours almost suffocating the passionate nation builders of the sixties.

The family planning slogan mongers and advocates of the late 50's and early sixties won the day and awakened the consciousness of the people and men and women moved to change their country's destiny by greater awareness of their individual roles and positive responses to the need of the hour. Women leadership though scarce brought changes dramatically by understanding the call for greater education, health-care, birth control and giving unstinted support for the family. Individuals, governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), corporations, policy-makers, multilateral organisations have a role in transforming the potential of national resources and the promise of technology-know-how and networking into social arrangements that truly promote fundamental freedoms everywhere rather than just pay just lip service to them. Women in their own right played their own part in the national developmental scenes. Women in Mauritius had begun by the late sixties to be more visible in the socio-economic life of their country. Most women however stay away from the political echelons of power by not joining the exacting hysterical electioneering campaigns either for the party or for themselves. They moved into the practical down to earth, areas of building their lives through sane forays into work and education, home making, child caring, employment in farming and agriculture.

More and more choices and opportunities opened so that each person could lead a life of respect and value. Home was still the forefront of the women's dream – to marry, to settle and have children. The dream was a continuation of her mother and grandmother's reveries. However, education opened new frontiers - free education, birth control, better health, industrialisation all provided new challenges. When human development and human rights advance together, they reinforce one another – expanding people's capabilities and protecting their rights and fundamental freedoms. From parallel pathways both in concept and action followed in the earlier decades – development and rights through the arduous work of economists and social scientists, through political activists and lawyers promoted a final convergence where concepts and action now meet in the same arena of new partnerships and alliances through the spirit of democracy, social justice and human welfare. In this build up the UN system, the commonwealth machinery, all gave the gender movement moral legitimacy and a legal framework. Although the civil and political rights were integral parts of the development process ---

questions had to be asked and women spearheaded the answers and changes so that anomalies in the constitution could be addressed and the discrimination issues against women workers, women employees revisited.

The attitudinal barriers within the hardened entrenched patriarchal world had still to be hacked away. That was not easy since the patriarchal concrete had hardened into the cells and marrow of our womenfolk themselves. Of course, said some of the women in the rural areas, "he must be consulted in all matters ... and he can do no wrong". The sense of inferiority despite legal empowerments and the sheer vulnerability of her position in the home as mother and wife allowed for many injustices to continue and triumph in the home front and work-front. In the political arena the few brave ones who stuck out wore labels which the "macho men" tacked on. Derogatory terms like 'Orangina' and "Bond girl" were littered on newspapers and consumed by a public ready to be amused and entertained. Further, the women were given importance only as long as they followed obediently the dictates of the majority. And the majority were clearly men.

There was need to bring a dynamic long-term perspective to the fulfillment of rights. Rights of women could only be realized in a socio-economic context and a close look at the economic institutional constraints made a closer look at ways to overcome them obligatory.

The law, the constitution and the social mechanisms helped to bring gender equality on a more realistic level giving the rhetoric and advocacy its teeth brought in its train an amazing empowerment to women who worked outside the homes. They were now empowered through the law to denounce violence within the homes and ask for redress and social support. The connectedness and the links of these domestic issues to children's rights and child abuse also surfaced automatically. When the gender issues were being mainstreamed all social-cultural and economic issues had to be looked at afresh. Environment, social security, productivity issues, childcare and nurture and other interests began to surface and called for particular attention since the state's accountability and commitments were called to question. The convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) was agreed to in 1979 and the convention on the Rights of the child 10 years later. In 1990, 10% of all the world's countries had ratified all six major human rights instruments, but by February 2000 in 10 years this increased spectacularly to nearly half of all countries.

As the 20th century ends and the 21st century emerges globalisation with its information highways and communication technologies, new global rules and institutions is accelerating the need for a new developmental paradigm of political and economic integration. As corruption escalates within the private and public sectors, a new ethic of governance is mandatory if anarchy and chaos is to be eschewed. The end of cold war has not meant the end of war itself. On the end other hand new threats of terrorism armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing and religious bigotry continue to smear the front pages and headlines of the multimedia press, Internet, T.V. and cable leaving the ordinary citizen with a sense of futility and deep powerlessness. It has brought new threats to human security and human freedom. The results of globalisation despite its obvious gains in technology and trade have resulted in violations in human rights, growing inequality and social strain. "The distance between the incomes of the richest and poorest country about 3 to 1 in 1820, 35 to 1 in 1950, 44 to 1 in 1973 and 72 to 1 in 1992.

A recent study of world income distribution among households shows a sharp rise in inequality - with the Gini coefficient deteriorating from 0.63 in 1988 to 0.66 in 1993 (a value of 0 signifies perfect equality, a value of 1 perfect inequality) Gaps between rich and poor are widening in many countries - in the Russian Federation the Gini coefficient rose from 0.24 to 0.48 between 1987 - 88 and 1993-95. In Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States it rose by more than 16% in the 1980s and early 1990s. It remains very high in much of Latin America - 0.57 in Ecuador, 0.59 in Brazil and Paraguay. Meanwhile, economic growth has stagnated in many developing countries. The average annual growth of income per capita in 1990-98 was negative in 50 countries, only one of them an OECD country".

Human Development Report 2000.

Entrenched economic and political interests clearly evident in the WTO rules and its applications will further accentuate the divisive values of the neo-colonial hierarchy of interests. It is important for the south -south dialogue to balance the see-sawing power base and use today's technologies to build new regional networks and build alliances to fight the poverty, exploitations, the dictatorships, and assert human rights on all frontiers.

Unless the Human Right Covenant is respected in global agreements and all stakeholders are consulted, the state and the global actors like the WTO and the NGOs may all have separate

developmental agendas of interests. Communication in the super highways of technology may consequently turn into a nightmare of cacophonous sounds not different from the famed Tower of Babel. Trade rules, gender rules, workers rules all will have to have a common human rights basis of action to be coherent and equitable. From the hierarchy of power when we talk of international agreements, it must be consonant with the state and individual rights simultaneously respecting the ethics of governance, responsibility and empowerment at all levels of international and national systems. Where is the binding glue in this noble vision of common goals?

The global figures are strangely frightening. The global on-line community is growing exponentially; reaching 26% of all people in the United States but fewer than 1% in all developing regions. What communication are we talking about? The media gap and the digital gap are already creating abysmal rifts between countries. Undoubtedly, the gender issues are deeply and inextricably tied with the historical notions of patriarchy and the results of industrialisation. In time it nurtured a social system in which individualism figured strongly through sobered by democratic and parliamentary procedures and sometimes by an impartial judiciary. This individualism if it is again not governed by ethical rules of growth and empowerment it can lead to an impasse within the systems of co-operation and development.

By allowing newer entrepreneurial routes to wealth, industrialisation allowed corporations to become standard form of organisation for business activities. Private sector business meant 'shareholders interests reign supreme'. Business ethics thus gives way automatically to ruthless competition as enterprises vie for the highest returns and growth rates. Worse even, ethics came to be derided by leading economists like Milton Friedman in his oft quoted statement "The social responsibility of business is to make profits."

"Business ethics is still regarded by many well-intended people as an oxymoron or a contradiction in terms. There is a firm belief that the corporation's ethical obligations do not extend beyond those of their shareholders. As a result of this new creed of business, pollution, depletion of natural resources, child labour, fraud, corruption, employee and consumer abuse, all go undeterred as private enterprises thrive in a market-place that fails to provide the signals to keep in balance the conflicting interests of

shareholders and other stakeholders.”¹ Against this backdrop gender issues just like child protection or the protection of minority interests all receive a backlash in the absence of social responsibility. “Might is still right” as Nelson Mandela reluctantly conceded but the struggle “to reverse this questionable ethical order is constant, consistent and committed.”

The need for ethical principles is an integral part of economic engines. They serve the same kind of functions as fuel and timing systems do in engines: ‘impetus and co-ordination’.

When the fuel and timing systems fail the engine stalls, Similarly when ethical principles are violated the economic engine fails. Women all over the world are debating over the true meaning of development. They are acutely aware of the power of multinationals in the globalisation process and its impact on real issues of poverty, unemployment and stagnation. The example of Monsanto in India is a case in point. This is an example where “corporations are manipulating science and promoting scientific fraud to silence and censor the moral and safety debate, which they see as interference in their profits. Corporate protectionism is the order of the day but increasingly though, the countries of the South are teaching the world lessons in ethics and morality and in sustainable development.”²

Researchers are questioning whether the indices selected by the UNDP itself to measure social development are conceptually well defined and whether the criteria chosen adequately measure it. It is argued that the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Development Index (GDI) ignore completely the role of land reforms in enhancing capabilities. What is being proposed under the indices is “within the framework of the existing developmental paradigm” which is white, male and market dominated?

Coming back to the story of Mala, Rose, Shehnaaz and Louisa we can clearly see that the gender battles fought in 1970s were critically important. Women gained access to jobs, education and credit. But as they dressed for success in their business suits, the world tended to forget that 90% of women chose to have children and that women would remain seriously handicapped in the workplace unless the state and the civil society established a system of family supports and subsidized child care.

¹ Deva Armoogum in l’Express of 24 October 2000

² Organic Consumers’ Association – a world-wide consumer protection organisation

There is also no question that women in the 21st century have awakened to new roles and challenges. Mala's children have greater choices open to them and Rose's children have gone into professions denied to their mothers and grand-mothers thanks to the privileges and opportunities opened by free education and free health services. With greater equality of opportunity at different levels, social mobility becomes easier diminishing the intergenerational transmission of poverty. With globalization and technology led changes, the determinants of social mobility will undoubtedly change. Will Mauritian women be able to accept these new changes and re-work the new paradigm with wisdom and strength. With the new vistas open to them and the experiences they have gained from history crowded with patriarchal archetypes and masculine posturing the task before them is formidable and daunting.

Tara Hazareesingh one of our 'indepth' interviewees summed up our work in terms of the period chosen by the researchers succinctly. "I came to Mauritius in 1951 where essential services like electricity and water were meagre commodities and both men and women had many obstacles to overcome whether political, economic, social or cultural. Mauritius has developed by leaps and bounds and both men and women find themselves freely enjoying the benefits of post-industrial Mauritius of 1990's and beyond but I hope they will be able to reconcile the benefits of material progress with the preservation of spirituality and a strong sense of community service."

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The Mauritius Research Council approved and provided funding in 1997 for a study on gender development with the focus being on the evolution of women over the last three generations in Mauritius. The objective of the research is to trace and describe the lives of women in their interface with men and how they have met the challenges of modernization since post -independence period. This study is expected to answer some of the questions which women are asking themselves on their role in society, to record their struggles and to evaluate their overall achievements.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- Describe and record the evolution that has occurred in the lives of Mauritian women over the last three generations. The research will fill a void as no comprehensive and systematic study has been undertaken on this issue.
- Analyse the impact of social and economic change on the lives of women and women's own perception of the quality of life and their adaptation to change.
- Analyse the changes in the role of women and the impact and implications of change on gender relations, as well as on the quality of life of men and women and the family as a whole.
- Contribute towards assessing the social development and quality of life of Mauritians by providing the necessary basic information for such an evaluation.

The project is fully justified as the White paper on Women and Development (1995) and the National Gender Action Plan (2000) prepared by government

have consistently drawn attention to the need for research on gender issues to guide policy and programme developments. This research study is a follow up of these documents. It is also expected to fill a void as no previous comprehensive and in-depth study based on qualitative and quantitative analysis had been undertaken on the subject.

B. BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

MODERNIZATION

The twentieth century has been a period of momentous global developments and rapid changes in the social, economic and cultural lives of the people in almost all societies. This has been accompanied by an unprecedented process of the modernization of society occurring mainly through the technological revolution. An ordered division of labour and the application of science and technology to production and management of goods and services is characteristic of modernization. The modernization process involves changes in the income-generating sectors, which, in turn, impact on the macro and micro level institutions and gender roles and relationships. Changes may be the result of a process of targeted planning or the untargeted consequence of the process of modernization itself. The full outcome of planning may or may not be fully understood during the process itself. For example, the creation of increased employment opportunities for women through industrialization may add to the workload of women because of the double burden at the household level and at the work-front. This may not have been necessarily anticipated at the time of planning.

The focus in the process of modernization is on machines, be it at the production line, in terms of maintenance or servicing and in funding research and development. The tendency has been to overlook the human element in industry. Again modern societies based on the intensive use of technology lay emphasis on individual achievements. The team spirit and the contribution of the group as a whole and the worker within the family context are often underplayed. The need to look beyond the individual to the community as a whole is only gradually beginning to be understood.

In modernized societies, the money element moves centre-stage as the most efficient unit of measurement of progress. The performance of the man or woman at the work place is evaluated and merit-rated with reference to what he or she can achieve by wielding the tools of modernization. Consequently, in modernized societies watertight male/female division of labour which is the characteristic feature of traditional societies gets diffused and male/female roles and relationships re-ordered. Extended and joint-families get converted into nuclear units.

CLASH OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Traditional societies are typically centred on family and kinship ties and tend to perceive change as a threat to established codes of values and behaviour. But changes due to the modernization process bring the promise of economic prosperity and gain. While societies do adapt to the reality of the opportunity of economic gain, there remains a resistance to change in social and cultural spheres, especially in the established roles of men and women caused by transformation in lifestyles and social institutions. In endeavours to eliminate poverty and achieve better standards of living and welfare, most societies have had to modernize their economies through reforms and structural changes. Modernization, however, does not altogether eliminate gender oppression, while traditional roles may be questioned or diluted and the institution of the family may undergo transformation.

There has been an ever-growing concern for human rights, welfare and expression of individualism. While modernization may create awareness among women of these rights, it does not guarantee the realization of these rights, despite the development-taking place. This can only lead to sense of frustration and unfulfilment among women, in particular.

THE TRANSITION IN MAURITIUS

Mauritius offers the example of a society that has evolved very quickly from a traditional mono-crop agricultural society into a Newly Industrializing Country (NIC) - with a success story of its own. Its hopes are pinned on becoming, information-based society of the new millennium. It is becoming a society where women are coming out of the private sphere of the home and family into the public sphere of the economy and politics.

Nevertheless, while having adapted to the new economic opportunities, which have increased the participation of women in the formal wage sectors, there is reluctance to let go of the culture, values and attitudes that still govern the family and the community. The people of Mauritius - both men and women - can be applauded for maintaining some of its traditional traits. Because, not all the changes that have swept over the country have been perceived as necessarily beneficial. Women have benefited significantly from the upgrading of their economic status, but, at the same time have succumbed to the stresses and strains of coping with their new roles in the 'new age' society.

During the decades spanning from the 1950's to the 1990's, the proportion of women in the work force of Mauritius in the age group of 20-59 increased from around 15% to 40%. Some other striking features of this period are:

- More women work to ensure family survival - to supplement family income, so as to meet rising cost of living;

- Increase in women-headed households, which has compelled women to take up paid employment to support their families; and
- Increased demand for women workers in certain sectors of the economy, especially in industries requiring low skilled labour.

In Mauritius, the relationship between the enhanced role of women in the work place outside the household and the level of women's empowerment is not necessarily directly correlated. In addition, not all women may have control over their own earnings.

Another phenomena is that while women taking on traditional male roles may be acceptable to society, men taking on traditional female roles are not always looked upon favourably. This is obviously due to die-hard attitudes of both men and sometimes even women. This dichotomy in attitudes towards men's roles and women's roles is the major reason for the multiple burdens being imposed on women, with the modernization process.

Thus, Mauritian women, more than many of their counterparts in more developed countries, are caught between the '*Scylla and Charybdis*' of modern living because of the very real proximity of internationalism and all that it means and the omnipresence of yesteryears traditions. On the one hand, they are urged to take on additional responsibilities so as to provide the best for their families and themselves and on the other hand, are unable to provide enough of their time and self for the family since, in most cases, their struggle a solitary one.

This study is about the role of society in helping men and women find their appropriate places in the new age of liberalism and globalisation. At the same time, the threat of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is driving more and more governments to eulogize on the role of the family as the surest means to ensure security and wholesomeness in society. After having moved a full circle, the family has found its true role as the foundation stone of human society.

This study seeks to show how Mauritius with its specificities, can chart a path for maintaining its economic survival which has to be based on competitiveness and efficiency, while ensuing social stability. For facing up to this new challenge, the family is vital and strengthening the family inevitably means **empowering gender roles within the family**.

C. METHODOLOGY OF THE PROJECT

The project was undertaken over the period 1997 to 2002. The study took cognizance of the numerous reports that have been prepared on the status of women in Mauritius especially over the past two decades. Although these reports reflect the national scene and provide in-depth analysis on specific aspects of the issues pertaining to women, they do not always tell the story of

women in all its complexity. The positive developments have not always been juxtaposed with the less desirable offshoots of development which have been come into being, hand in hand with the increased employment of women in the labour market and the greater sense of individuality and freedom felt by women themselves.

So, in addition to official reports and documents, articles appearing in newspapers and pamphlets have been researched so as to obtain an all round picture of the process of change in gender roles that has been taking place.

This research while being 'feminist' in topic does not fully fall into that genre. Feminist research tends to be characterized by concerns about gender and power, unlike *'research based on symbolic interactions which focuses on definitions of situations and the construction of shared meanings'*. Some methodological and theoretical perspectives cut across types and, therefore, are generic; such as research on issues pertaining to the emancipation of women. Research based on critical theory, feminist research, and almost any other such kind of research may seek to identify, document and change oppressive social conditions, though justifications for these perspectives may have different theoretical and ideological origins.

Research on women could become very muddled and therefore unfocussed; especially if the knowledge gained is to be used to change oppressive social conditions. Social scientists have warned of the dangers arising from research of this type. The danger of becoming confused has been avoided by establishing some basic criteria on which progress and change could be evaluated. In addition, a basic set of statistical data has been provided on which change can be measured.

The need to do qualitative research, employing both inductive and deductive reasoning when past experiences could weigh heavily on conclusions reached could prove to be dangerous research. Some of the dangers have been avoided by taking a holistic approach to issues and adopting an issue-based approach to the whole research.

Mauritius is cited as a success story in its endeavours to transform the economy from a mono-crop agricultural economy to a modern industrial and diversified one. Thus, economically, the Mauritian people have achieved substantial improvement in living standards and widespread absolute poverty does not exist. However, is there another side to the success story? What are the trade-offs that have occurred? How well are these trade-off understood and accepted? How has the social fabric of Mauritian society changed? What are some of the hidden costs to the much proclaimed economic success? These are some of the questions that this study seeks to answer.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The study was started in August 1997. It is a two-year project involving five distinct activities (a) - (e). These are described below:

- (a) Detailed in -depth survey of 70 individuals to gain qualitative data on views on changes that have taken place in the socio-economic life in Mauritius.
- (b) Oral tradition - Women and men have been interviewed by the Principal Investigator.
- (c) Informal in-depth interviews and participant observations have been undertaken.
- (d) Secondary data-literature survey of reports, press interviews and other data has been compiled and inferences made on the major issues.
- (e) Reviewing documentation and writing up of project report.

STAGE I

In order to establish a new dimension to women's development, some seventy individuals were interviewed thus providing the qualitative in-depth means to reconfirm existing secondary data. Oral traditions were particularly important in the past, so interviews with three or four generations within the same family and on random basis have been useful in providing a longitudinal picture of change in the individual life of members of society.

The results of the focus group activity initiated in December 1997, were a bit disappointing because although men and women were very eager to talk and share their views and experiences, December and January were a bad time to undertake these activities as there was too much going on, so the response rate was low. This activity has further been constrained by having to recruit another research assistant to take care of organizational and logistic problems in the responses received from the first round of discussion. More focus group activities were organized in 1998 because there are many variations based on the social and cultural background.

STAGE II

A detailed literature survey including reports, press interviews new paper articles and other data have been used for locating the gender issues Mauritius. This has included an examination of the social fabric of society during the post war period and the whole issue of gender empowerment and change that occurred as an effect of family planning uptake by women during the 1960's.

Launching the survey work for which the research instrument had to be prepared and field personnel and trained took much longer than originally planned. These activities were not completed till mid 1999.

Three case studies have also been conducted on the evolution of gender between three or four generations during the period.

Finally, a survey of 525 men and women was conducted which has established the gender relations, gender values and aspirations of Mauritians in all walks of life in 1999.

The time frame for the study has been as follows:

- (a) Research Staff was recruited and research methods were developed between August and October 1997.
- (b) Fieldwork was initiated in October 1997.
- (c) In November 1997, training was given to the resource persons for conducting focus group discussions so as to ascertain male and female experiences and attitudes respects to socio-economic changes and how these changes at macro-level impact on status and position of women at micro (family), mezzo (community) and macro levels.
- (d) Interviewing continued till May 2001.
- (e) Report writing was started in June 2000 and continued till December 2002.

D. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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CHAPTER II

GENDER THEORIES AND DEFINITION

CHAPTER II

GENDER THEORIES AND DEFINITIONS

A. GENDER

The term 'Gender' has been increasingly used since the 1980's by academics, activists and development planners the world over to refer to the different kinds and levels of relationships between males and females. Despite increased usage the term 'Gender' is not always well understood. Often it makes reference to an individual's biological identify. Thus, the term 'gender' is often interchangeably used with the term 'sex'. It is also sometimes loosely treated synonymous with 'woman' in development parlance. But although gender is inclusive of the 'sex' and 'woman' connotations, it is more complex. While 'sex' merely brings out and highlights the biological male/female difference, 'gender' is a social construct.

It refers to culturally learned differences in behaviour of males and females and to the "*social characteristics whereby women and men exist in a dynamic structural relation to each other*"¹. The longitudinal studies carried out by G. Murdock in over two hundred societies brought out the pervasive differences in male-female roles. Male roles involved physical strength, cooperation and travel (mobility). Women's roles were less physically exhausting, more isolated and less mobile. Sociologist, Roy G.D. Andrade brought out that male roles reflected activities characterized by dominance, aggressive nature and lesser emotional expression. And men tended to be almost always wielders of political power. Thus, male/female behaviour patterns get cast into stereotyped moulds. These patterns also vary with specific contexts of class, culture, society, economic and political environment and time period.

"Biology is destiny". But, gender roles are not. They can change and shift. The understanding of feminism and the feminist analyses of social and political theory based on understanding the real distinction between the terms 'gender' and 'sex'. The essence of feminism is that the natural biological distinction cannot be the determinant of the male/female roles within households and outside.

Gender roles and relations change over time and vary from culture to culture and between classes. Women on account of their sex, may be considered weak and assigned roles that do not require much physical strength or responsibility. Gender roles are, therefore, marked by distinct and non-overlapping roles in typical activities for men and women who are described as masculine or feminine. But this can change and is not even universally

¹ Mundock, G

applicable. The sexual differences, on the contrary, are universal and normally unchangeable.

GENDER ROLES

Gender roles are influenced by age, class, race, religion and the economic and political environment. As changes occur in the social, economic and political conditions, (example structural change) gender roles too can change. Gender roles are learned behaviours which individuals acquire through identification with persons of their own sex.

Gender roles are complex and multiple. For example, a woman agricultural labourer is an employee and a wage earner at the same time she is a wife and homemaker. She performs a productive role, a reproductive role as a mother and a community role as a community service provider. Both men and women perform productive roles for which they may get paid in cash or in kind. Women perform an equal or a greater amount of work within the home as homemaker, much of which is taken for granted and not given its due recognition as 'productive work'. The whole issue of accounting for women's work in the home in national GDP statistics, is being taken up by various women groups at the UN international and other forums.

Yet, if the family is not maintained, its members will not be able to function effectively. The inequalities in gender roles affect the development and perception of men and women about themselves and their entitlements, which in traditional thinking is considered normal. Approached from the Gender in Development perspective, gender inequalities are undesirable and need to be eliminated, as these are an obstacle to equity and the self-development of the individual, be they man or woman.

"Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals, the development of countries and the evolution of societies, to the disadvantages of both men and women "2

There are those who that assert that too much is being made of the issue of gender equality. One way of locating reality is to try and understand the consequences of gender inequality. The arguments for promoting gender equality then are:

- (1) Gender inequality leads to inefficiency and involves economic costs. It is costly not only for women but also for men and children. It can lead to low output both at home and at work.
- (2) Gender inequality sustains social injustice and therefore, it is incongruent to social justice and human rights objectives.

² UNDP

- (3) Global evidence concludes that women (especially as mothers) become more economically vulnerable after marriage. Safe and secure motherhood requires a fundamental recognition that women have rights to pursue livelihoods on their own behalf and find equality in the work place.

Thus, correcting of gender disparities is acceptable as a strategy for eliminating gender- based inequalities. Efforts are thus on going in both developed and developing countries to promote gender equality.

PATRIARCHY AND GENDER

Patriarchy is a factor construed as a key to feminism. In literal terms, patriarchy means rule by the father. Within families, it manifests itself as domination by the father/husband, wife and children being relegated to subordinate position. Within and outside the households, boys are oriented to be independent, assertive and aggressive. On the other hand, girls are oriented to be more “other-centred” and dependent. As a result, girls develop a negative self-image. The attitude of patriarchy also finds articulation at a broader plane. Women get excluded from the public sphere and confined to the private (household) sphere on account of patriarchy. It is a

“system of male authority where men have power over women through the operation of economic, political and social institutions.

Patriarchal societies have taken different economic and political forms historically but in each, the distribution of power is based on sex/gender division, where men have access to and control over resources which enable them to oppress women, both inside the private arena of the home and within the public sphere of politics, culture and paid work/production.”³

*“Gender relations are power relations through which men and male values have super ordinate status over women and female values, and socialization into gender roles is an integral part of the patriarchal power structure”.*⁴

Discrimination of various kinds is held to stem from patriarchy. Preference for sons in child birth; discrimination against the girl child and women in access to food, nutrition, health and education; relegation of girls to peripheral and household chores; lack of freedom and mobility for girls; sexual harassment of women within and outside households and in work place; denial of inheritance, property and marital rights; domestic and societal violence against women etc. are all considered to be various manifestations of patriarchy.

“Contra distinct from patriarchy is matriarchy in which authority and leadership positions are with the mother and other females. In most societies, according to anthropological experts like James Frazer,

³ Lavalette, Pratt; Social Policy, 1997

⁴ Leonard; Hollway

transfer of power in its various dimensions from the female to the male contributing to patriarchy, had taken place long ago. But this transfer was only partial in matrilineal societies in which descent was reckoned, and devolution of property effected, in the female line. In these societies, while political power was transferred to men, economic power remained with women”⁵.

GENDER INEQUALITIES

Correcting gender inequalities requires focusing on the needs of women because women, have been disadvantaged as a result of restrictions, in terms of education, employment, subordinate legal status and allocation of power. Gender needs are classified as Practical Gender Needs (PGNs) and Strategic Gender Needs (SGNs).

The PGN needs emanate from gender roles and are considered necessary for the effective performance of assigned roles. For example, provision of drinking water and fuel facilitates the role of family maintenance etc. The satisfaction of practical needs reinforces existing roles and division of labour. On the other hand, the Strategic Gender Needs (SGN) seek to change relationships and allocation of power and authority. For example, SGN calls for demands for equal employment opportunity, equal legal rights and equal wages. The Strategic Gender Needs (SGN) arises as a result of awareness of inequalities. The SGN approach seeks to change the subordinate position of women through equal access to education, employment economic security, decision-making and legal framework.

The strategies for changing the gender roles are varied and can be grouped under three basic perspectives - the 'functionalist', 'conflict' and 'socio-psychological' perspectives. According to the functionalist perspective, the historical basis for division of labour does not hold good, because technology has eroded the importance of physical strength in most types of work. And, the functionalists advocate institutional modifications to bring about new roles of men and women, for example, in the family itself. The conflict theorists believe that the real obstacles to women's access to equality arise from archaic attitudes of male dominance. They call for social action for the removal of these obstacles. In terms of the socio - psychological perspective, discrimination and prejudice against women emanate from socialization, that is, creation of rigid sexual identities in the formative periods of individual's lives. In this perspective, what is advocated for role change is changing the process of socialization.

The conclusions are that in gender relations, women have been assigned a subordinate position, which acts as an obstacle to the realization of their potential. Gender inequality is considered as undesirable. Efforts are being made to promote gender equality in some form in almost all societies striving for modernization.

⁵ Gopalan, Dr Mrs. Sarala: 50 years of Indian Republic (2000), Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

The process of modernization and industrial development is facilitated through planning. The arguments of Feminist thinkers, to which development planners now concede, state that development planning for most part has tended to ignore gender issues or address these in a limited way. The outcome of the development planning in the 1950's and 60's was in most cases to dis-empower women economically and widen the inequalities in growth and development opportunities available to men and women.

Feminist thinkers and critics paved the way for bringing about role changes through intellectual debates and through advocacy focusing on gender needs.

B. FEMINISM

The term 'feminism' has meant different things at different points in time, in different parts of the world, in different societies and in different sections of the society within the same country.

A broad current definition of feminism that was arrived at in a South-Asian workshop of India, Pakistan Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka is: *"An awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family and the conscious action of women and men to change this situation"*⁶

References are often made to 'waves' of feminism. The first wave is largely related to the women's suffrage movement of the 1840's and 1850's. As women achieved the primary political right of suffrage in several countries through a long drawn-out struggle, the women's movement itself seemingly lost its momentum. However, a second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960's leading to a full - fledged liberation movement. Feminist doctrines and theories came to be shaped out and fine-tuned. The underlying gender inequalities and attendant adverse power equation relative to men were seen as endemic to societal structure. The call was for overturning the edifice of male power. The assessment by the United Nations that while women contributed to two-thirds of the hours worked, they accounted for only 10% of the world's income and they possessed only 1% of the world's property helped reinforce the Feminist movement for greater social justice towards women.

From being associated only with the struggle for democratic and legal rights in the past, it was transformed into a reformist movement operating largely outside the home front; directing its efforts against many forms of discrimination. Over time, it has come to be associated with the struggle against male domination, outside as well as within households. Masculinity and femininity are not any longer considered mutually exclusive and as exhaustive determinants of feminism.

At the philosophical plane, distinction is made between radical feminism and liberal feminism. Radical feminism has an important similarity with the Marxian thought. The common measure between the two is the belief that the

⁶ Bhasin, Kamla & Said Khan, Nighat; "Some questions on feminism and its relevance in South Asia", 1986.

State is not an autonomous entity. There are differences as well. Marxism puts State power in the economic context. Radical feminism places State power in the gender context. According to Marxism, the State represents the deeper structure of patriarchal oppression; the state is seen as an instrument of this oppression. For radical feminism on the other hand, the argument is not *instrumentalist* but *structuralist* - that is, the structure of the State is conditioned by the male-female divide. It is also the case of radical feminism that State intervention in terms of affirmative legislation for providing welfare for women is in the nature of transforming private dependence of women on families into public dependence on the State, vesting it with new forms of patriarchal power. In this perspective, it is also held that women are turned into a reserve army of labour, a submissive workforce, for employers to exploit, giving women only flexible, low paid and segregated jobs.

While radical feminism, thus, takes a negative view of the State, liberal feminism places the State in a positive perspective and takes a reformist approach. It is grounded on the belief that distortions in women's representation in politics, public life and work place can be removed through incremental reforms rather than through *sex revolution* as called for by radical feminism. It is on this basis that certain crucial institutions championing the cause of women have emerged in the United States - the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC).

Nor is feminism necessarily a Western concept. It is a "*transformational process*". Feminism in Asia was part and parcel of the struggle against colonial rule. The colonial rulers often perpetuated archaic patriarchal practices. They transported into the laws of the countries they colonized, the elements of western patriarchy, as well. While their own economic interests such as creation of commercial plantations did result in bringing women out of the households for work, women working in such plantations or other commercial enterprises became victims of discrimination in the workplace and of exploitation. When the colonial rulers left, the freed Nation States inherited this legacy of entrenched patriarchy and exploitation of women. When the leaders of the freedom struggles fought against the colonial rulers, they took women as well as feminism on board. Their demands included issues like prohibition of polygamy, termination of the seclusion of women, remarriage of widows, women's education and emancipation etc.

FEMINIST WRITINGS

Feminists did emerge in different countries outside the West as well - China, Egypt, Iran, India etc. In the eighteenth century, the Chinese scholar Chen Hung-Mou wrote on women's education and deprecated exclusion of girls from education. Kang Yu-Wei attacked foot binding of women and their subordination in China. In the nineteenth century Egypt, Ahmed Fares El Shidyak wrote his book "*One leg crossed over the other*" (1855) supporting women's emancipation. The books of another Egyptian, Qasim Amin entitled "*The Liberation of Women*" (1899) and "*The New Woman*" (1900) are best known

for advocacy of women's emancipation and are also considered as important documents concerning the Arab feminist movement. He argued that foreign domination could not be terminated without liberation of women. He raised arguments based on Islam in support of his call for women's development. He was also a supporter of the Western model of Development. The works of Qasim Amin have, no doubt, been controversial. Several intellectuals of nineteenth century Iran also championed the causes of feminism, registering their opposition to practices such as polygamy and seclusion of women. In India, Raja Ram Mohan Rai agitated against women's enslavement and the practice of *sati* (the practice of the wife entering the husband's funeral pyre). Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore and Syed Ahmed championed several causes of women.

Mahatma Gandhi, with his strong grassroots realism, summarized the Indian women's status very succinctly: *"She (woman)has an equal right of freedom with him (man). By sheer force of vicious custom even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have been subject to. Many of our movements stop half way because of the condition of our women"*

There were also several women feminists in Asian countries - Pandita Rama Bai (1858-1922) of India (she challenged religious fundamentalist orthodoxies); Kartini (1879-1904) of Indonesia (she pioneered the cause of women's education); Jin Jin (1875-1907) of China (she was involved in revolutionary politics and women's issues); and Sugala and Gajaman Nona of Sri Lanka who fought against women's passivity).

There have been several misconceptions about feminism - that it leads to disruption of domestic peace, that it is against motherhood; that it is a middle class phenomenon; and that it promotes hatred of men etc. However, questioning the drudgery of domestic work or imposition of mindless and repetitive child bearing or opposition to servility at the household level cannot be construed as disruption of domestic peace. Rather all these aspects of feminism stem from advocacy of a humane approach to women's issues. Feminists are not to be seen as home-breakers when they call for humane and egalitarian reordering of male-female relationships.

Nor is motherhood the sole role of womanhood. The feminists arguing in favour of the right of the woman's choice in child bearing cannot be construed as feminism standing against motherhood. Motherhood is not confined to the physical act of child bearing. It also involves problems of child-care in all its physical, emotional and economic dimensions.

Often, feminism is seen as a middle class phenomenon because the media, especially in developing societies, tends to project women's issues as they are perceived in urban areas. The articulate media persons themselves are also frequently from the urban middle class. But, feminists do represent the causes and issues of all women, whether they are in urban or rural areas. The non-government organizations championing feminist causes are indeed grassroots institutions with bases in urban as well as rural areas. Women participating in

group activities like in women's groups or while individually participating in literacy programmes are to be seen as participants of feminist struggles.

Feminists only struggle against patriarchal attitudes leading to iniquitous male domination and violence, and not against men as such.

Feminist thought has found expression down the centuries in the hands of many thinkers, scholars and writers, glimpses of which are presented below:

Christene de Pizan (1364-1430)

Christene de Pizan was a poet who moved from Venice to France. In her poetry, she had an approach of integrating personal, political, moral, religious and feminist themes.

Two of her important books were "*Le roman de la Rose*" and "*Le livre de la cite des dames*". She believed in the capabilities of women and challenged the destructive and demeaning attitudes to women. In her second book, she used the image of a mythical city peopled by historical and contemporary women. She catalogued the achievements of women and defended their capabilities. She drew inspiration from historical characters like Joanne of Arc.

She emphasized the importance of responsible governments, political ethics, women's rights and religious devotion.

According to her, however, women from downtrodden sections of society were degenerates. In this regard, she has been criticized that she was not perceptive of the reasons why women tended to degenerate. If they fell victims of degeneration, it was because of their financial difficulties and illiteracy.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759- 1797)

Mary Wollstonecraft is famous for her feminist treatise entitled *the Vindication of the Rights of Women*, (1792). This work was largely in the nature of strictures on contemporary political and moral subjects.

She believed and propagated that knowledge was power and that intellect would govern. She was influenced by Rousseau's ideas of Romantic Enlightenment. While she conceded the natural differences between men and women in terms of biological functions, she believed in equality of sexes based on reasoning capacity of humans. She argued that if boys and girls and men and women were given equal opportunities for access to education and socialization, they would display the same reasoning power and capabilities as men.

She tried to convince people that the finer sensibilities of women like use of soft language, susceptibility of heart, tenderness of sentiments and polished taste were construed as weakness.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), Harriet Taylor Mill (1805-1858) and Helen

John Stuart Mill and Harriet were man and wife and Helen was their daughter. The Mills and their social circles consisted of Radicals, Philosopher as well as Utilitarian. They were enlightened thinkers. They stood for equal rights for women and men, intellectual advancement and emancipation of women through education and participation of women in public life. According to them, motherhood should not lead to the subordinate position of women who should have as much civil rights as men.

The Mills trio spearheaded two different streams of feminist thought (discussed earlier), which were to concretise decades later –

- (i) Liberal stream standing for reformist pursuit of the rights of women, legal, political and economic; and
- (ii) The radical stream, that is, pursuit of rights of women based on analysis of human sexuality and of social institutions including marriage, family etc.

Karl Marx (1818-83), Engels (1820-95) and Max Weber (1864-1950)

In a letter to Kugelmann, Karl Marx wrote in 1868: *“Any one who knows anything about history also knows that great social transformations are impossible without the female ferment. Social progress can be precisely measured by the social position of the fair sex”*.

Marx and Engels also believed that there is *“no sex or woman question as such. Depriving the female sex of rights is not biologically conditioned”*, but is rooted in the economic relations of the exploitative systems based on private ownership of the means of production.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as the class structure of industrial societies was getting increasingly complex, the two-class model of the Marxian theory was getting to be further debated. Max Weber, the famous German political economist and sociologist projected his concept of *social stratification*. While conceding class differences, he invited attention to what he called *status* - being a person's position within a hierarchical order. Status was seen as an amalgam of several factors, one of the determinants of which was gender.

The Pankhurst (Emmeline Pankhurst) – 1858-1928 and Richard Pankhurst

Richard Pankhurst was a British socialist Women's Suffragist. Emmeline whose mother had also been a feminist and Suffragist married Richard.

The Emmelines established the Women's Franchise League in 1889. In 1903, Emmeline established the Women's Social Political Union (WSPU). The objective of the WSPU was to recruit women irrespective of the sections to which they belonged, elite or working class, for the purpose of carrying on women's struggle for franchise right.

Early in the 20th century, the Media did not evince much interest in issues relating to women's rights. In this backdrop, in the year 1905, the WSPU took recourse to agitational approach under the leadership of Christabel, daughter of Emmeline. The WSPU disturbed the public speech of a Cabinet Minister and courted arrest. They were charged for assault, convicted and sentenced to pay fine. They refused to pay the fine. The event made history and came to be known as the "*Black Friday*". Emmeline herself was imprisoned on several occasions. The Black Friday symbolized Civil Disobedience.

In the context of the First World War, the suffragettes were released from prison. They participated in war efforts. Women came to work in enterprises which were traditionally considered as preserves of men.

In 1917, Emmeline and Christabel formed the Women's Party. The party called for equal remuneration, equal marital rights and divorce law, equal custodial rights over children, equal participation for women with men in public service and governmental intervention for providing safeguards to women and their children. The party also argued that the responsibility of the Government would also include the well being of families.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

Virginia Woolf was a novelist. She was closely associated with the Bloomsbury group progressives. "*A Room of One's Own*" and "*To the Lighthouse*" were her works. In the former work, she brought out that creativity needed an androgynous mind. In the latter work, she brought out the destructive nature of metaphysical belief in strong and fixed gender identities.

Virginia and her associates believed in the economic, psychological and emotional autonomy of women. It is the exaggerated importance given by women to men that inhibited women's development.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986)

Simone de Beauvoir believed in existentialism. In her essay on "*The Second Sex* (1949)", she argued that to be a woman is to be deprived of one's subjectivity. In order to assert her subjectivity, the woman should negate her femininity. If women are to improve their economic condition, they should free themselves from the "object" position. The female as defined by men is in the nature of objectification of women. According to her, gender is socially created.

Women are not free individuals but members of an oppressed caste, relegated to an inferior position by religion and socialized to a status of psychological dependency. Women should unite in a political struggle to liberate themselves. They should also participate in an autonomous feminist movement.

Joke Smit (1933-1981)

Joke Smit was the initiator of the second wave of women's movement in the Netherlands. She projected the gender gap in the Dutch society. She also contributed to the "*Women in Development*" (WID) Policy in the Netherlands. In 1967, she wrote a crucial article entitled "The Discontent of women" in the Dutch literary magazine, "*De Gids*". This, together with a number of other articles led to the formation of the Man Woman Society (MWM). She contributed much in bringing home that child caring resulted in serious inhibition of full economic participation by women. The issues projected by her included encouragement for women to enter the labour market, equal opportunities, equal pay, unionisation of women, etc.

In 1973, she called upon the Government to establish an Emancipation Policy. Accordingly, an Emancipation Commission was constituted. A law on equal treatment was established.

According to Joke Smit, during the first wave of feminism, socialism over-rided feminism on account of underestimation of the powers of patriarchy; in fact, feminist solidarity should have been given precedence over party solidarity.

She questioned the sanctity of power relations within marriage. She anticipated many of the issues which became crucial in the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) – domestic violence, accounting for paid and unpaid work, division of household responsibility and the caring function between men and women etc.

The concept of "*Women in Development*" propagated by Joke Smit, indeed, became central to Dutch Government Policy. Along with environment and removal of poverty, women in development became one of the inevitable criteria of Dutch international assistance.

Luce Irigaray (1930)

Luce Irigaray called for liberation from masculine-feminine philosophical thought in her first major work entitled "*Speculum of the Other Women*". She argued that women stood excluded from western philosophy; that the view on women was what men made it to be; that the economics of patriarchy was one in which women were caught as objects endowed with use value for exchanges between men; and that women should construct their subjectivity on their own terms.

Martha Nussbaum (1947)

Martha Nussbaum is an academic by her background having been educated in New York and Harvard Universities. Her famous work is "*Women and Human Development*" (2000). She based her thoughts on justice on the reality of struggles of poor women. She questioned the role of the family as an institution in the basic societal structure. According to her, principles of justice would warrant State interference in families subject only to an appropriate degree of space for personal choices in matters of love and care. She gave a framework of universal norms of equality and liberty founded on ten basic human capabilities – life (capability to have normal longevity), bodily health, bodily integrity (to be secure against violence), sense of imagination and thought (to imagine, think and reason), emotions (capability to have emotional development free of fear and anxiety), practical reason (to be capable of critical reflection), affiliation (to be empathetic to others), empathy with other species (animals, plants etc.), play (capability to enjoy recreation) and control over ones environment.

C. GENDER IN ECONOMIC THOUGHT

Gender as such did not receive detailed consideration in economic thought for long. In the understanding of economic activity as "paid labour", women were seen only as supplementary earners.

The classical economic thought of Adam Smith was delineated in macro terms. Focus was on political economy and society as a whole and on production, consumption, distribution and free trade for economic growth. The reality of sexual division of labour and its connection with capital formation did not receive attention. While it was noted that women worked for wages, the argument was that the wages paid to men should be adequate enough to maintain a family. Rather, the perception was of productive and reproductive functions. The Victorian world vision was one of women being seen as household managers, with the primary responsibility of child bearing and rearing.

The neo classical economists, while changing track from political economy concentrated on microeconomics - the role of individuals and firms, impact of changes at the margin on equilibrium etc. Basic factors like inequities in wealth distribution and collective human behaviour were not reckoned with.

Marxian economics did, of course, give attention to gender. But its emphasis was on larger issues of social structure and class conflicts. And, the issue of sexual division of labour with male-female differentials in the pricing of labour did not evoke any interest in theoretical analysis.

It was during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that 'gender' started receiving attention in the hands of Fabian socialists. Male-female wage differentials came to be scrutinized by Sydney Webb and Beatrice Webb. They found women received lesser wages for skilled work relative even to men's wages for unskilled work. The situation was attributed to competition amongst women themselves for accessing employment opportunities to meet subsistence needs. The Equal Wage Debate started gaining ground.

Later, Alfred Marshall projected his "human capital" theory (1930). His argument was that the productivity of workers as well as their wages were functions of education. According to him custom was responsible for women's lower wages. Pigou also dealt with the problem of unequal wages (1952). According to him, wages would be unfair if they were below marginal productivity or if they were not the same for similar labour.

Since the 1960s, the theory of the New Household Economics is being projected. Gary Becker (1971) is a well-known proponent of this theory.

"In a hypothetical two person household, a man and a woman through exchange of market work and household production, maximize each person's own utility as well as total utility of the household. Assuming both can do both types of work, women's return from the market was lower because they were less skilled. Their return from domestic labour was more because they had the expertise. Likewise, men were better at wage work and less equipped for domestic work. The best solution was therefore, where men did more market work and women did more non market work. The model had this merit, that for the first time, it analysed the household as a productive unit where domestic labour was equated to home production of goods and services. Secondly, it did not take the household as a composite glued together unit. The trouble was that it did precisely what feminists were protesting against - the justification of status quo. It did not ask why women had expertise in household production only. Was it not the prior denial of training for wage/market work? Over a period of time, the existing division of labour would lead to further attrition of skills for the woman in market work such that while total utility for the household may be maximized, her own will diminish while that of the man will increase for the reason that his returns from market will be even higher."⁷

There is also what is known as "*Game theoretical Model*" which came into currency about two decades back. The essence of this model is the thought that the exchange between economic agents is a bargaining process. In the economy prices are external to economic agents and actors who are not adversarial to one another and whose behaviour pattern is not conditioned by conflicts. Economic agents compete with one another in terms of deft and thoughtful moves and countermoves. This theory has been of significance

⁷ Maithreyi, Krishnaraj, How gender figures in economic theorizing and philosophy, Economic and Political weekly, Vol. XXXVI No. 17, April, 28 - May 4, 2001fi

and interest to feminists. For them, bargaining between agents may be at the households or at the work place. The objective of the bargaining game could be maximization of well being.

“Amartya Sen (1983,1990) popularised this model in two articles, now widely quoted, to emphasize the household partnership. Household partnership is at once cooperative and conflictual. It is cooperative because each member gains from the common pool than if she or he was alone, but at the same time, it can be conflictual in so far as the interest of the partners vary regarding the shares from the pool. The limitation of this model is that it takes bargaining behaviour as voluntary where an action can be coerced either explicitly or through social sanctions. A woman may identify the good of the household as coinciding with her own even when it is inimical to her own interest. Given the fact that gender has social meanings, there may not exist a perfect correlation between an individual’s economic correlation to the household and his or her decision-making power. Feminists also contest the notion of a common household pool as the standard model especially in the third world.....”⁸

D. INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

INTERVENTIONS OF THE UN SYSTEM

Ever since its creation in 1945, the United States Organization has been actively involved in promoting the advancement of women through the establishment of international treaties and conventions, advocacy and mobilization of thinking in favour of women, provision of training and research and programme support. The UN conventions and treaties are legally binding. Complying countries are required to provide periodic progress reports and reports on prevailing situations. Some of the leading conventions are:

- (a) Conventions relating to political rights and marriage. These include the convention on the Political Rights of Women - 1952, *the "Convention in the Nationality of Married Women"* - 1957 and *the "Convention on Consent to Marriage"* - 1962.
- (b) Conventions concerning Education and Employment
The ILO Convention on Equal Remuneration was passed in 1951. This convention calls for practice of equal pay for work of equal value. The Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO) was passed in 1960. The World Conference on Education to All (1990) Jomtien made commitment for University Education to all.

⁸ Ibid, Maithreyi Ktishnaraj

There is a strengthening of international advocacy spearheaded and supported by the United Nations system to end gender inequalities and eliminate all types of gender position of women through equal access to education, decision making and legal framework.

Theoretically, the process of gendered development looks reasonably easy and feasible. Its realization is a complex process. Traditional attitudes about gender are a challenge. The process itself involves trade-off's and its impact on gender relations and social cohesion. There is need to critically analyse the outcomes of gender equality and what gender equality leads to. The concept of gender equality is not unchallenged. There are societies that value collective interests and family values which are more central to socio-economic and political debates rather than the system of patriarchy and its ensuring living patterns and inequalities. It is therefore not surprising that many families in contemporary Mauritian society are questioning and rethinking the role of women at work. What is the impact of long hours of work on women as wives, mothers and individuals? There is some amount of "resent" and many woman feel they are not prepared to pay the price of equality. There are issues that need to be understood and researched in the process of gendered approach to development.

UN WORLD CONFERENCES ON WOMEN

The United Nations declared the year 1975 as the International Year for Women, holding the first UN World Conference on Women at Mexico basing it on the theme of '*Equality, Development and Peace*'. The decade 1975-85 was also declared as the UN Decade for Women for concentration on the development and advancement of women. In 1980, the Second UN World Conference on Women was held at Copenhagen and the progress since the first Conference was reviewed. At the end of the decade, the third UN World Conference on Women was held at Nairobi in 1985, when the "*Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies – 2000*", a 15 year perspective for Women's Advancement was chalked out. The Year 1994, at the end of yet another decade, witnessed the Fourth UN World Conference on Women at Beijing. The Beijing Declaration was made and a Platform for Action established to renew national pledges to establish '*Equality, Development and Peace*' and to increase the pace of activity. Since then, the Beijing Plus Five- Women 2000, Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Women was held at New York. This Session took stock of the several unfinished tasks and urged the need to strategize more intensively to remove discrimination, restore equality and dignity to women and provide them access to information, choice, resource, participation and power.

Thus, the quarter of the century from Mexico to Beijing to New York has been a momentous period with women given a high profile on the international agenda and national action. The UN Charter, CEDAW and the World Conferences on women have been defining landmarks in the history of women's development, and guided nations to orient their Constitutions and laws and establish policies and programmes to establish an equal society for

women and men so as to remove discrimination wherever it exists. National Women's Movements have gained strength and momentum and become sustained. Women's organizations have networked at the national, regional and global levels to generate all round political will that would spur the States into a pro-active mode of women's development and to create awareness amongst the peoples of the world to give up archaic mindsets. The struggle is on, and would necessarily continue to prevent slippage into retrogression and foster progress.

It is the feminists who are now carrying forward the struggle of women for *de jure* and *de facto* realization of equal wage for work of equal value.

GENDER RELATED UN CONFERENCES

Other UN Conferences and Conventions which have implications for gender and development are:

- International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo 1994 (ICPD). The ICPD recognized the empowerment and autonomy of women and empowerment of political, social, economic and health status as an end in itself and also as an essential requirement for achieving sustainable development.
- The UN Convention on the Right of the Child emphasizes on women empowerment as a strategy to improve the welfare of children and focuses on the needs of the girl child. Besides the Conventions and Conferences, the UN system has provided for research and training for the advancement of women through its agency INSTRAW. The UN has provided gender - disaggregated data and provided support to countries to develop mechanism for gender - disaggregated data. Through its agencies, which includes UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, IFAD and WFP, the UN has strived to improve the gender inequalities across the globe. As a result, the educational attainments of women have improved; gender inequalities in power and decision making reduced and overall improvements achieved in health. It is greatly as a result of the UN system that systematic action was possible and the thinking spearheaded by the early feminists and suffragettes saw the light of day. In fact the arguments run that whenever women start entering an occupation in large numbers, men seem to start disengaging themselves from it. This is even for professions like pediatrics. The feminist movement and writings passed its way for change through consciousness raising, awareness creation, advocacy and action for social reform. The vision of the feminists, supported and strengthened through advocacy on our international scale through the UN system and its agencies, was successful in bringing home to development planners and leaders of the world, the need to focus on concern for women and take account of Gender in Development thinking and planning, i.e. to develop a gender perspective. But what

is the 'Gender perspective'? In the views of gender analyst and writer, Gita Sen, a gender perspective means,

“recognition that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the case of human beings, and therefore between economic growth and human development. They are workers in both spheres – those responsible and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer the most when the two spheres meet at cross purposes, and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two.”

G. Sen.⁹

It is generally accepted that the goals of development is the improvement in the standard of living, elimination of poverty, reduction in social inequalities and promotion of social justice. Writers Gita Sen and Caren Grown proposed that the focus of development should therefore be on women because women constitute the poorest of the poor and the most disadvantaged. Women's subjugation to male dominance restricts women's access to economic resources, political power and decision making. Gender subordination is deeply ingrained and requires consciousness raising if it has to be eliminated.

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⁹ Sen, G “Alternative Visions in Development”

THE IMPACT OF THE UN ACTIVITIES

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The feminist movement and writings passed its way for change through consciousness raising, awareness creation, advocacy and action for social reform. The vision of the feminists, supported and strengthened through advocacy on our international scale through the UN system and its agencies, was successful in bringing home to development planners and leaders of the world, the need to focus on concern for women and take account of Gender in Development thinking and planning, i.e. to develop a gender perspective. But what is the 'Gender perspective'? In the views of gender analyst and writer, Gita Sen, a gender perspective means,

“recognition that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the case of human beings, and therefore between economic growth and human development. They are workers in both spheres – those responsible and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer the most when the two spheres meet at cross purposes, and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two.” G. Sen.¹⁰

It is generally accepted that the goals of development is the improvement in the standard of living, elimination of poverty, reduction in social inequalities and promotion of social justice. Writers Gita Sen and Caren Grown proposed that the focus of development should therefore be on women because women constitute the poorest of the poor and the most disadvantaged. Women's subjugation to male dominance restricts women's access to economic resources, political power and decision making. Gender subordination is deeply ingrained and requires consciousness raising if it has to be eliminated.

¹⁰ The World Bank; Development in Practice, Toward Gender Equality, The Role of Public Policy.

E. APPROACHES TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
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It was in the early 1970s that women came to be looked upon as a category by itself in development. In the context of jobless growth of economies, the fruits of economic growth not trickling down to the disadvantaged sections and poverty and hunger continuing to be on the increase, the United Nations affirmed that the quality of development was as important as economic growth. In the backdrop of the women's movement, the contribution of women to productive economy also received increasing attention. Assumptions underlying the prevalent stereotypes in the planning process and the consequent distortions in resource allocations came to be questioned. Demands were made that development policies be changed and resource allocations altered to be fairly targeted to secure women's development.

The "*poverty alleviation*" strategies of the developing societies recognized the contribution of women in providing the basic household needs - water, fuel and fodder - and laid emphasis on income generating programmes. While this was indeed an improvement in the sense that the household as such received attention, the problem was that the family was treated as a homogeneous unit. Redistribution of benefits was not given the deserved attention without which development of women in the true sense of the term could not come about. This led to the "*efficiency approach*".

There have been different theories of women's/gender development. The Women in Development (WID) approach was based on the recognition that investment in women would lead to increased productivity as they were involved in a number of economically productive activities. This approach brought out that women were excluded from 'development' as they were plainly invisible to development planners. It called for integration of women into the development process, for enhancement of women's productive roles and satisfaction of their practical gender needs. While this approach brought benefits to women, it was felt that it also increased the gap between men and women by increasing the workloads of women.

The Women and Development approach (WAD) also sought to address the practical and basic needs of women, but in addition, it sought institutional changes to eliminate discrimination against women. The strategies advocated included legal reforms and affirmative actions to include women in decision making.

The Gender and Development Approach (GAD) approach is more holistic. Its concerns include relations between women and men and it does not focus on women as an isolated entity. It calls for recognizing the need to mainstream gender sensitivity and awareness at all levels of policy making and planning, and for the totality of men's and women's lives being accounted for by the development planners. The prescription is that development initiatives should address women's strategic needs, starting with addressing practical gender needs, the end product being gender equality and equity.

The World Bank, in its report written for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women pointed out how public policy can and should support services and infrastructure that provide the highest social returns and that are most heavily used by women. It also pointed out that *“policy reform that provides an enabling environment for economic growth goes hand in hand with investing in people.... No efforts at gender equality, however, can be successful without the participation of women themselves.”*

A very crucial aspect of public policy reform for bringing about investments in women is ensuring a gender perspective in National Budgets through gender analysis. Gender analysis is a process. It is not a checklist after the event, or an audit introduced at only one point of the process. Gender analysis is not just focussed on outcomes, but on the concepts, arguments and language used to justify policy, and how, and by whom, needs are interpreted.

“Any budgetary analysis is incomplete if the impact of gender has not been considered. Gender is an integral part of economic issues, and the focus of analysis is whether or not the policies challenge or reinforce the existing power structure and dominant groups.

“The processes of gender are dynamic and display constantly changing patterns. Understanding gender demands an understanding of cross cutting phenomena and the use of cross-disciplinary methods.

“Incorporating gender at budget level calls for integration not only horizontally but also vertically to bridge the macro-micro divide. For example structural adjustment policies (SAPS) have typically included modification of the tax structure, freeing of prices to allow more unfettered functioning of the market, removal of direct subsidies and indirect transfers, dismantling of state enterprises for marketing and distribution, tightening of credit and incentives to particular sectors of the economy - all of which have different gendered implications for the micro level.”¹¹

Women’s participation in development can become effective only if women have the capability to discriminate between the right and wrong routes of development and to steer the course by influencing decisions.

In the future paradigm of social development, men and women have to be seen and treated as equal partners in progress despite the advantage of lead that men have all along had. Women need to be given the space - rightly due to them and hitherto denied - in terms of rights, access, recognition of contribution and dignity as individuals.

At the conceptual and theoretical level, of course, gendered development looks reasonably easy and feasible. But its realization is a complex process. Traditional attitudes about gender are a challenge. The process itself involves

¹¹ Wasring, Dr. Marilyn; Towards a Gender Perspective of the National Budget, Parliament and the Budgetary Process, including from a Gender Perspective - Regional Seminar for English-Speaking African Parliaments, 22-24 May 2000, Nairobi (Kenya)

trade-offs and is not without impacts on social cohesion. There are societies that attach importance to collective interests and “family values” as being more central to socio economic and political debates rather than patriarchy and its attendant inequities. Many families in contemporary Mauritian society are questioning and rethinking the role of women at work. Questions are also being asked about the impact of long hours of work on women as wives, mothers and individuals? There is some amount of “recall” and many feel that they are not prepared to pay the price of equality. These are issues that need to be understood and researched in the process of gendered development.

Theoretically, the process of gendered development looks reasonably easy and feasible. Its realisation is a complex process. Traditional attitudes about gender are a challenge. The process itself involves trade-offs and its impact on gender relations and social cohesion. There is need to critically analyse the outcomes of gender equality, what gender equality leads to. The concept of gender equality is not unchallenged. There are societies that value collective interests and family values which are more central to socio-economic and political debates rather than the system of patriarchy and its ensuring living patterns and inequalities. It is therefore not surprising that many families in contemporary Mauritian society are questioning and rethinking the role of women at work. What is the impact of long hours of work on women as wives, mothers and individuals? There is some amount of "recent" and many woman feel they are not prepared to pay the price of equality. There are issues that need to be understood and researched in the process of gendered approach to development.

There are issues that need to be understood and researched into as part of the strategy to adopt a gendered approach to development.

The differences are briefly discussed.

Some of the barriers to gender equality are:

- The outmoded attitudes about the roles of women, such attitudes create resistance to change.
- Direct and indirect discrimination, laws that are discriminatory can be more easily changed than those practices acquired through socialization.
- Inflexible work and career structures.
- Poor support and facilities for childcare and other home-based responsibilities.

It is desirable from all perspectives that discrimination against women on grounds of their gender be removed as such discrimination affects their growth, development and progress.

Theoretically, the process of gendered development looks reasonably easy and feasible. Its realization, however, is a complex process. Traditional attitudes about gender relations are a challenge. The process itself involves trade-offs and its impact on gender relations and social cohesion could social cohesion could be negative. There is a need to critically analyse the outcomes of gender

equality and what gender could to. The concept of gender equality is not unchallenged. There are societies that value collective interests family values which are more central to socio-economic and political debates rather than the system of patriarchy and its ensuring living patterns and inequalities. *It is therefore not surprising that many families in contemporary Mauritian society are questioning and rethinking the role of women at work.*¹⁷ What is the impact of long hours of work on women as wives, mothers and individuals? There is some amount of "recent" and many woman feel they are not prepared to pay the price of equality. These are issues that need to be understood and researched into as part of the strategy to adopt a gendered approach to development.

CHAPTER III

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE
OF WOMEN DURING THE
COLONIAL PERIOD**

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CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The next three chapters trace the socio-economic development of the country since it was first inhabited, then colonized and eventually became an independent nation. Thus, Chapter III focuses on the period up to Independence in 1968, Chapter IV from Independence to 1990 and Chapter V from 1990 to 2000. While the main events of national importance have been referred to in Chapters III, IV and V, the focus has been on the impact that these events have had on the women living during these times.

The analysis has been undertaken under three broad headings of political, economic and social development. However, based on the issues of topical interest to the particular period covered by the Chapter, the focus of each Chapter has differed. This chapter thus starts with some details on the coming of the first immigrants to Mauritius and their life, in particular, of the early women settlers.

However a common trend runs through these chapters and standard tables on the economic and social aspects of the development of women are contained in all three chapters. These chapters thus provide the backdrop for the better understanding of the survey and the survey analysis, which are contained in Chapter VI.

LOCATION AND CLIMATE

The Republic of Mauritius consists of the two main islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues and a number of small outer islands. The land area of Mauritius is around 1,865 sq. kilometres and Rodrigues is around 110 sq. kilometres. The islands are of volcanic origin and are encircled by fringing coral reefs.

The island of Mauritius is located at latitude 20° south and longitude 58° east and is about 800 kilometres off the coast of Madagascar.

The climate is tropical to sub tropical for the most part although climatic conditions vary from district to district. Summer extends from October to April with temperatures ranging from 20° on the central plateau to 30° in the coastal regions. Temperatures fall to between 13° to 18° in the central plateau to around 20° in the coastal regions.

Mauritius receives conventional, relief and cyclonic rains. Conventional and cyclonic rain falls mainly in summer while the South East Trade winds bring relief rain throughout the year. The rainfall varies from around 750 millimetres in the west coast to 1,650 in the south and east coast to around 3,810 millimetres in the highlands.

Rodrigues which is situated at Latitude 19.4° south and longitude 63.2° east and 600 kilometres east of the island of Mauritius shares the same volcanic origin. It has a similar climate but is drier with an annual rainfall of about 1, 250 millimetres.

A. THE MAURITIAN POPULATION - 1600 - 1968**EARLY COLONIZATION**

Human settlement of the country dates back to only 1600 AD. Mauritius did not have permanent human settlement prior to this period; however Arabian and Portuguese sailors had used the island as a port of call for water and food even before 1000 A.D¹².

The Dutch were the first to attempt colonization in 1638. Cornelius Simonz Gooyer landed on the coast of Old Grand Port (then called Warwich Haven) with a doctor, a priest some soldiers and slaves. A settlement was started and in 1639 Van der Stel who brought more men and some women as well replaced Gooyer. The settlement prospered despite much initial hardship and by 1706 it had grown to some 400 contented inhabitants. Unfortunately, fortunes were reversed when the island was hit by a succession of violent cyclones and floods. *"Visits of pirates became numerous while the marooned slaves were constantly setting fire to the buildings and plantations."*¹³ And the settlement was abandoned for the safer one at the Cape of Good Hope in 1710. After having introduced both sugar cane and the deer from Java, which was one of their most important possessions, all the settlers, including soldiers and followers left.

The French then took over the island in 1721, and especially under Mahé de Labourdonnais, did much to turn the island into a prosperous, strategic port of call for their possessions in India. With the defeat of France to England, in the Napoleonic wars, Mauritius was handed over to England as part of the peace treaty.

Some details of the political and social conditions of the people during the French and British periods are given in the rest of this Section.

As there was no indigenous population, all Mauritians are immigrants. There were three or four types of people who have made Mauritius their home. The early settlers-Dutch and French - resorted to the system of slavery, buying their labour from the African continent, as well as from India. Secondly, French brought in hired workers from countries including France, Batavia - the present day Indonesia - and India.

The first batch of French settlers came from St. Malo in 1722 and a small number of Catholic French-speaking Pondicherrians were brought from India. Inhabitants from Bretagne and Normandy in France were also brought in. But the three

¹² Addison & Hazareesingh, K; A New History of Mauritius, Revised version, Editions de l'Océan Indien, 1984

¹³ De Burgh-Edwardes, S. B. ; F.R.G.S., F.R.C.I., "History of Mauritius(1507-1914), East and West LTD. London, 1921

groups were not treated equally. The hired workers from Normandy and Bretagne kept their isolation from the other hired workers, those from Pondicherry who were not legally treated as white workers merged with the distinct category of liberated blacks.¹⁴

After the abolition of slavery in 1835, the British introduced the system of indentured labour from the Indian subcontinent and at a point, also attempted to recruit labour of Chinese origin. The arrival of the Indians marked a change in the racial mix of the population, which also gave the island its specificity.

The indentured labour system was started in 1834 and by 1839 the Government of India suspended emigration because of the number of cases of abuse and ill-treatment reported. Several criticisms were made about the system of indentured labour. The immigrants were often deceived about the conditions of work, "*with a few exceptions the immigrants were treated with great and unjust severity by overwork and personal chastisement; their lodgings were either too confined or disgustingly filthy.*"¹⁵ From other historical writings of this period, it transpires that indentured labourers were treated no better than slaves and conditions of work and living were indeed appalling.

As a result of its history, the population of Mauritius is very mixed, comprising peoples of European, Indian, African and Chinese origins. Major religious groups are Christians (mainly catholic), Hindus and Muslims.

The gender mix of this early population is of great interest. "*Slaves were purchased in the ratio of 4 to 5 males per female.*"¹⁶ Data available as from 1846 with the Central Statistical Office is given in table III.1 below:

TABLE III.1:
POPULATION ENUMERATED AT SELECTED CENSUSES BY POPULATION GROUP AND SEX,
ISLAND OF MAURITIUS, 1846 - 1952 (THOUSANDS)

Year of Census	General Population			Indo-Mauritian Population			Chinese Population		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
1846	102	56	47	56	48	7	-	-	-
1861	115	60	56	193	142	51	(1,552)	1,550	2
1911	107	52	56	258	139	119	(3,662)	(3,313)	(349)
1952	148	70	78	335	171	164	18	10	7
1962	203	99	104	454+	231+	223+	23	13	10

Central Statistical Office, Digest of Demographic Statistics, 1989

- *Figures in brackets refer to total figures*

¹⁴ Dukhira, Chit, "Evolution of Democracy in Mauritius: Local & National, appearing in the souvenir magazine to mark SSR's Birth Centenary (1900 - 2000)

¹⁵ Addidon J. & Hazareesingh K.; A New History of Mauritius, revised version, Editions de L'ocean Indien, 1984

¹⁶ United Nations, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW, Initial and second periodic reports of States parties, 1992

The 1962 Census gave figures for breakdown into Hindu and Muslim population as shown in Table III. 2 below:

TABLE III.2
Population enumerated at each census by community and sex,
Island of Mauritius, 1962 (Thousands)

	1962 ^{1/}	
Total population	Both sexes	682
	Male	343
	Female	339
Hindu	Both sexes	344
	Male	175
	Female	169
Muslim	Both sexes	110
	Male	56
	Female	54
Sino-Mauritian	Both sexes	23
	Male	13
	Female	10
General Population	Both sexes	203
	Male	99
	Female	104

Source: Central Statistical Office, Census Report 1983, Pg. 83. .

1/ 'de facto' population

The above Table provides the picture of how Mauritius was populated as from the first complete census of the population that took place in 1846. As stated in Central Statistical Office (CSO) Reports, it is probable that criteria used in classifying the population by population groups during each of the censuses were not similar. Figures are, therefore, not strictly comparable from one census to another, before 1962. The General Population is a residual group, which includes all those who could not be classified as Chinese or Indo-Mauritian.

Starting off as the predominant group up to 1861, the General Population was overtaken, in terms of numbers, by the Indo - Mauritians between 1851 and 1861 when the biggest-ever inflow of indentured labour occurred. In the early period, the population coming from India was regarded as a homogeneous group. As from the 1962 Census, a distinction based on religion was made between the Hindu and Muslim population.

As for the Chinese population, an attempt was made as early as 1760 to try Chinese labourers in the sugar plantations in Mauritius.¹⁷ A batch of 300 was forcefully brought to Mauritius in 1760 by the Comte d'Estaing. However, the experiment was short lived as within a year, the Chinese labourers demanded to be repatriated because they were afflicted by the death of their relatives and friends. Almost a century later with the imminent abolition of slavery, the

¹⁷ Li Tio Fane, Pineo, La Diaspora Chinoise, 1985

planting community convinced the then British Governor, Sir Galbraith Lowry Cole of the wisdom of resorting to China for cheap labour. "*Ce serait semer des shillings pour recueillir des guineas*" This translates to 'It would be sowing shillings to reap guineas'. With government approval, "*William Gordon introduced the first batch of Chinese labourers in August 1826*".¹⁸ However since the conditions of work were deplorable and aroused by the local residents, the Chinese labourers realized they were being exploited and stopped work and went on a destructive rampage. The situation deteriorated and they had to be transported back to China.

Another type of Chinese immigrants arrived in Mauritius during the early 1800's. This was the "*commercial trader who accompanied the merchandise from Calcutta, Pondicherry, Madras and Singapore which Chinese traders were supplying to the local market*"¹⁹. They came to Mauritius as from 1826, as small independent traders, "having heard from relatives that the colony offered good economic prospects."²⁰

The Chinese population was first recorded in the 1851 Census and according to the 1861 Census they comprised less than one percent of the total population. By 1952, they represented a little more than 5 percent.

"Unfortunately no statistics are available on the number of Muslims in the colony during the period of French occupation,"--- "*among the oldest Muslim families on record in Mauritius is that of Gassy Sobedar.*" [which] "*date back to 1791.*"²¹ The number of Muslims "*grew to such an appreciable size that by the year 1765 they began celebrating the Tenth Day of Muharram (Yamseh) as a public festival.*"²²

Another interesting point that transpires from Table III.1 is the gender discrepancy between the different Mauritian ethnic groups. There has been almost equal numbers of males and females within the General Population between 1846 and 1891 when the number of females began to exceed that of males by about 1.3%. This trend among the General Population continued until in 1952, there were about 10 % more females in this ethnic category than males.

Among the Indo-Mauritian and Chinese populations, there has always been an excess of males over females, although the trend has been towards a closing of this gap. In the early years this male: female discrepancy was very significant. For example, the early Chinese immigrants were mainly men and according to the 1846 census, there were only two Chinese women for a Chinese population of about 1,552.

¹⁸ Moheeputh, Anand ;The Chinese Labour Experiment, Week-end Sunday 28 April 2002

¹⁹ Ibid James Ng

²⁰ Ng Foong Kwong, James; The Beginnings of Chinese Commerce in Mauritius, 1826 - 1875, Journal of Mauritian Studies, Mahatma Gandhi Institute

²¹ Emrith, Moomtaz; History of the Muslims in Mauritius, ELP Ltee, 1994

²² Ibid Emrith, Moomtaz

LIFE OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY YEARS

Glimpses into the lives of women in the early years are given by Vijaya Teeluck²³ and Marina Carter²⁴.

The graphic details of the day -to- day activities of Mauritian women make us understand the road that women have travelled over the past two centuries.²⁵ While Teeluck tells the story of the slave population in the pre-1936 period, Carter confines her story to the coming of Indian women either within the indentured system or outside the system from the 1830 to the end of the century. By 1846, the imbalance between Indo Mauritian men and women was reduced and many other measures were taken to improve the living conditions of the slave and indentured labour population.

In terms of their civil rights, as stated in the Code Napoleon, women had little rights. As long as they were unmarried they remained under the protection of the father or head of the patriarchal household. When married women were not treated as majors; they were subject to the 'master' during the period of slavery. Even after the abolition of slavery, the conditions of women did not change much – they were subject to the husband.

Teeluck points out that both men and women slaves were brought in for the construction of the sugar industry. Women had to do almost all the tasks undertaken by men in the cane fields. This included planting, clearing and harvesting. They also provided a pool of secondary labour which the planter could draw upon. They were the 'weaker second ' group working behind the main group, weeding, picking up left canes and leaves.

Women also worked as domestic servants in the houses of sugar planters. Although the work in the house was less physically difficult, women were exploited as domestic servants as much as they were in the cane fields. Working in homes meant that they were less liable to be shifted from one plantation to another and probably enjoyed more avenues for betterment for themselves and their families.

But whether women worked in the cane fields or the home, they were not able to use the sugar industry for their advancement. Most of the jobs requiring skills were held by men. Thus there were only 14 women among the 120 slaves working in the sugar mills. There were no women drivers and in the other skilled occupations there were, based on the 1823 Census, only one female cooper and one female carpenter.

²³ Teeluck, Vijaya; Bitter Sugar, 2001

²⁴ Ibid Carter, Marina

²⁵ Much of the references of the early life of women are taken from their writings of Teeluck and Carter unless otherwise stated.

Sack making and trading offered the few chances women had to make some additional money for themselves. But even in sack making, women's wages were lower than that of men. Women also engaged in domestic - related services such as laundering, dressmaking, cooking etc. to earn a little more for self-improvement.

Finally, the common image is that of female slaves using 'liaisons of convenience' with white men or fellow slaves who are gang -leaders or others in positions of power, as a means for material improvement. Through such liaisons slaves could receive clothes, jewellery and food apart from moral support for the care of their children. Women were often tempted to live in '*concubinage*' or marry freed slaves as such liaisons offered an opportunity for being manumitted. Slave women could either save enough money to purchase freedom or become free through marriage. Since the first route required considerable effort and determination, it is the second option that seemed to be more realistic.

The irregular relationships have been viewed differently by different people depending on whether the viewer was in empathy with the woman or not. But whether these women were acting as prostitutes or not it was a survival strategy which gave some respite, however temporary, to slave women and even a chance of freeing themselves. Obtaining freedom through the official means was often not feasible for slave women; probably due to their living conditions.

The stereotypes created by official morality and views of slave owners is that permanent liaisons among slaves were not possible because of the licentious nature of the slaves. This theory could be refuted because the very nature of the sugar industry undermined family life. First, it was common for families to be dispersed all over the island since with the expansion of the sugar industry, male slaves were often sold for manual labour while the rest of the family stayed behind. It was difficult under these circumstances for the woman to maintain the family in the absence of the male or father. On the contrary, it attests to the resilience of women and their determination to continue caring for their offspring that the slave family survived slavery.

Apart from being perceived to be 'licentious', slave women were also believed to take their reproductive roles negatively. It has even been asserted²⁶ that women practiced infanticide because they considered pregnancy a curse. But it would appear from the complaints made by these women that women risked severe punishment to protect their children. Many women were punished for complaining about the food and lack of time to look after their children. Research in to the development of fetuses has also shown that it was the women's poor health, nutritional deprivation and stress that affected the development of the fetus.

²⁶ Ibid Teeluck, Vijaya; Bitter Sugar, 2001

Historians have highlighted the role played by Creole women in the establishment of Chinese Commerce in Mauritius.²⁷ *"Creole spouses and partners of Chinese men played a major part in the acquisition of shop licenses, offering what the authorities described as a "prête-nom" by registering shops in their own names whilst the trade was in reality carried out by their male partners."*²⁸

Hence, the early Chinese merchants depended on these women to cut through the administrative procedures and to act as crucial intermediaries for Chinese immigrants vis-à-vis Mauritian society.²⁹ This is an interesting anecdote and indicates the important role played by women in fostering economic advancement. Such unconventional alliances have given birth to a community of Chinese/ Creoles having both distinctive Chinese/Creole/African features who have added to the process of 'metissage'. Although due to continuous mixed marriages, it is not very easy to distinguish their ethnic origins very clearly today.

The socio-cultural conditions of life for Chinese as well as other women must have been poignant. *"The imbalance in the male/female population affected social stability and so in order to avoid further unrest and problems, women were recruited or encouraged to accompany their husbands in later years."*³⁰

The overall imbalance between males and females within each group must also have led to many mixed liaisons thus increasing the size of the General Population. Female slaves who worked as domestics were often better treated than other slaves who worked on the fields and were often on more intimate level of relationship. *"This was however accompanied by the possibility of sexual exploitation. Problems related to this were difficult to investigate as the whole truth could never be gathered."* In later years³¹

The life of the Indian women was no less poignant. The concern for greater recognition of their roles, the ability to take control of their lives and that of their children and for betterment of the family was as great as it was for slave wives and mothers. It is possible that many of the women who came as part of the indentured labour system fought their battles, presumably under the patriarchal domestic roof. While it was common after 1864 for women to accompany their men folk, there was a trickle of women who came alone, even during the time of slavery, as described by Marina Carter. She gives one of the most interesting descriptions of the conditions of Indian indentured women in those early days in her book *"Lakshmi's Legacy"*.³²

She reveals the pathetic conditions of Indian women in 19th. Century Mauritius. Their position was further complicated by the male/female

²⁷ Ibid Ng, James

²⁸ Ibid Ng, James

²⁹ Ibid Ng, James

³⁰ Ibid, United Nations CEDAW

³¹ Ly Thio Fane, P

³² Carter, Marina; *Lakshmi's Legacy*, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1995

imbalance within the Indo-Mauritian population. As shown in Table III.1, in 1846, there were seven - Mauritian men for every Indo Mauritian woman. By 1961, the ratio had improved to 3 men: 1 woman and since 1911, there has been almost equal numbers of men and women. Most of these women came as wives, but on reaching Mauritius, their positions became very insecure because they faced harassment from all quarters. *"They were often objects of sexual harassment by overseers and of competition between Indian men."* It is unclear whether they would have fitted into the theory of the 'migrant woman' who looked upon migration as an opportunity to *"flourish as autonomous and independent social and sexual beings"*.

It would be beyond the scope of this study to give greater details on the social position held by women during this period. But it would appear that women were seen as 'dependents, unproductive persons, their legal, economic and social position in the society ill-defined, unstructured and at its worst not recognized or even acknowledged.' Carter believes that *"Indian women in Mauritius faced a triple oppression"*. In addition to the state laws and the plantation codes of conduct, which prohibited movement of persons without a pass and so on, she had to abide by strict communal sanctions and family controls which further limited her mobility.

Sarita Boodhoo³³ also comments about the living condition of the early Indian immigrants which may be paraphrased thus. The housing patterns of the estate camps remained unchanged during the ninety years of indenturship. The standard pattern of accommodation was invariably a set line of 30 to 40 rooms - known among the Bhojpurias as *"dhan camp"* from the French *'dans camp'* - with another line, back to back behind. Cooking facilities were provided outside in a verandah running down from the roof in front of the rooms. The roof was thatched with dried up cane tops and strengthened with bamboo poles cut down from the riverbanks. The walls as well as the floor and the compounds were plastered with mud and cowdung, the whole kept spotlessly clean, and the houses would be floored with cowdung regularly if not on a weekly basis, and the waft of the wind would carry the freshness of the cowdung. In the summer season it would be coupled with the aroma of the ripe mangoes and the smell of sugar from the nearby sugar mills as wells the *"raisins"* fluid oozing out from the trunks. In the early days, there were some three hundred small sugar mills, each with its estate barracks.

Boodhoo continues to describe the life styles of this simple but hardy people. They slept on gunny bags on the floor. They had few belongings and even less jewellery, which they kept in a casket as their forefathers, had done in India. Their main cooking utensils were some pots and pans, a sieve, a few spoons, copper glasses, and some plates. The grinding stone and the milling stone were important possessions, which were kept preciously. Firewood was

³³ Boodhoo, Sarita; Bhojpuri Traditions, Mahatma Gandhi Institution, 1984

the main cooking fuel and was collected by the women and children from the nearby forests.

Despite the harsh barrack conditions and the ignominious Vagrant Act, as well as the prohibition of movement without a pass from one district to another, yet what sustained them was the community spirit, a common language, its culture and traditions. The “baitkas” or Community Centres which sprung up in the ‘camps’ helped pass on this culture to the younger generations.

Popular songs were written about their miserable conditions which helped to create a sense of community and brotherhood among the Indians. They underwent hardship together and their common suffering became a unifying badge of identification and solidarity among them.

*"The roti (bread) remains burnt on the tawa, (the griddle),
one's feelings have remained in one's heart."*³⁴

John de Lingen also describes the life of the labourers. *"The ornaments women wore were of copper and silver, for the economic situation did not permit the use of gold"*.³⁵ He continued to praise their toil and labour. The Indian indentured labourer worked all day long physically. *"And then, until far, far into the night, and early before dawn, their little lamps could be seen burning, and their voices could be heard, praying, teaching, consoling. And it is thus that the torch of faith has been kept alive"*³⁶ Women played an important role in keeping this fire for knowledge and deep faith in the omnipresent awake in the hearts and minds of these wretched people. Young and old would huddle around the fire in the kitchen and tell and retell the stories of the Indian divine heroes, a tradition which they continued for many decades after. Whether literate or illiterate, women were truly the bearers of tradition and religion for the community.

In terms of economic activities of women, he stated that a few went to work as labourers. In fact, their chief additional occupation was cattle rearing.

The reason for the low status of Indian women was clear enough. Indian immigrants came during the period when the status and position of women was very low in India. Social reformers like Raja Mohan Roy were fighting cruel systems like ‘Sati’ (burning of widows along with their dead husbands) female infanticide, child marriages and denial of education to women. Both Hindu and Muslim women from the Indian sub continent had low status and were passive recipients of male authority.

So in Mauritius, as well, the fate of women whether they were labourers or wives of labourers was hard and restricted. They were submitted to the same

³⁴ Bhagat, Madhukaral, Popular song on the life of the early immigrants, 1945

³⁵ Ibid, Hazareesingh

³⁶ De Lingen, John; Indian Centenary Book, p.20, Port Louis, Mauritius, 1936

rigors of the law as applied to their men folk who had total responsibility for them.

In their own ways, each of these women who survived the harshness of life in the early days was a heroine. But one woman has become a poster model for this period. She is Anjalay Coopan.

Box III.1

ANJALAY COOPAN*

Although women were docile and accepted considerable harshness, they were drawn into the economic/political struggles that emerged in the late 1800's. One of the most vivid memories is that of Anjalay Coopan who was killed during an uprising on the sugar estates.

As stated by historian Dr. S. Reddy of the University of Mauritius to the author in an interview,

"It is true that Anjalay Coopan was among the people killed at the uprising on the sugar estate in 1943. She was present in the crowd of workers protesting. So she may have been one of the women protesting. Implicitly, because she was present, it may be assumed that she was a protester. But she was not a union person."³⁷

*Today, one of the most important sports stadiums situated in the north of the island has been named after her - Anjalay Stadium.

Some details on the main institutional arrangements that were introduced during this period for improving the living conditions of the population as well as workers are given in the Section on Social welfare.

As regards to legal protection, women had little. During the period of slavery, slaves were the property of their masters and had no civic rights. The *Code Noir*, which came into force in 1723, regulated the treatment to be meted out to the slaves. According to the law, slave women had to be punished by their husbands. The legal conditions of girls and women did not change much after the abolition of slavery. They continued to be the legal responsibility of their fathers and husbands after marriage.

³⁷ Report of the S Moody Commission, 1943

As shown in Table III.2 below, in spite of the harshness of everyday life, the population grew, as the number of women increased. By 1983, women outnumbered men by a few thousand. Up to 1972, there was equality between men and women.

B. POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

It was during the French period, that Mauritians had their first taste for political activity. It was fifty years after the French first landed in Mauritius, viz. during the French revolution, that two Mauritians first represented the island at the Assemblée Coloniale in 1790 in Paris.³⁸ The Assemblée had been set up to make laws for the different French colonies each of which came under the direct responsibility of a Governor appointed in France. During the same year, another important development took place. This was the setting up of elected municipalities. Thomas Esnouf was the first mayor of the 'Municipality du Canton de Port Louis', as the capital's local authority was called. In 1803, the municipalities and other public institutions were abolished under Napoleon Bonaparte's autocratic rule.

In 1810, Mauritius changed rulers once again when the French surrendered Mauritius to the British as part of the Treaty of Amiens, which concluded the Napoleonic wars. During the early British period, the administration of the island was fully entrusted to the colonial office in London. However it is to the credit of the British and to their good sense that as from the start, no attempt was made to apply British Law, language or religion. In fact, the Mauritian plantocracy had seen to it that provisions had been introduced for the protection of the French language and culture as part of the Treaty of Capitulation which the first British Governor, Farquhar, rigorously respected. The first move towards some delegation of powers was when the British Constitution was proclaimed in 1825, which provided for the setting up of a Council of Government or legislature for Mauritius, which, nevertheless, comprised five top British officials.

Almost a decade went by and after much efforts by Adrien d' Epinay, leader of the Franco - Mauritian plantocracy, constitutional reforms were implemented through which Mauritians were entitled to hold government posts. A number of Mauritian professionals was gradually recruited into the civil service as a result of these efforts.

There was a parallel development in the political area as Mauritians were also given some political responsibilities when the legislature was enlarged to 14 members. Seven of these were ex-officios, all of whom were 'colons', from the main Franco Mauritian families, and there were seven other unofficial

³⁸ Dukhira, Chit; "Evolution of democracy in Mauritius to mark SSR's Birth Centenary (1900 - 2000)"

members. The first legislative meeting took place in 1839 but it was only in 1941 that the public was admitted to the legislative sessions. The setting up of the newspaper, *Le Cernéen* (1832 - 1981) by Adrien d'Epinay indicates the evolution of the politically open nature of Mauritian society – an evolution which had taken less than a century.

The struggle for a free speech and a more equal political life was also taken up by the coloured population with the establishment of another newspaper. This was '*La Sentinelle de Maurice*' by Remy Ollier in 1843.

The coming of the Indian indentured labourer marked the beginnings of the Mauritius of today - not only in terms of the ethnic mix but also as regards the economic and socio-cultural environment. The first batch of Indian labourers came in 1834 bringing with them the social and cultural tradition of rural India. The lives of these labourers were regulated by the rules of the joint family system, which provided help and support even to distant relatives who happened to share the same roof. Indian society was a closely-knit structure with a headman in every important village. He was the virtual leader of the community and it was through the 'panchayat' a form of local government that he exercised authority."³⁹

By 1904, the first Indian newspaper was published by Manilall Doctor – an Indian philanthropist who came to Mauritius from South Africa to help improve the conditions of the labourers. The newspaper, however, had but a brief existence of a decade. This was also the period when the Arya Samaj was set up in the 1910's and the Seva Shivar movement began. The Arya Samaj was important for the emancipation of women. It stood "*for the abolition of the caste system, the abandonment of the purdah and the education of girls.*"⁴⁰

The Indian subcontinent was experiencing a renaissance of values and cultures through the Arya Samaj which sought to abolish child marriage, encouraged the remarriage of widows, promoted female education so as to allow all women an equal opportunity to develop. Obviously with the majority of population in Mauritius belonging to the Indian, [Refer Table III.1] these social and religious movements impacted on the Mauritian population and added impetus to the struggle for Independence at the national level.⁴¹ It was through this sense of belonging to a community as well as a deep attachment to certain traditional values that the immigrants were able to survive the early ignominies and later even demand for political rights.

"So far as the leadership at the national level [for the Indo-Mauritian population] was concerned it was provided in those days very largely by those influential members of the Muslim community who were playing a prominent part in the social

³⁹ Hazareesingh, K; History of Indians in Mauritius, Macmillan, 1975

⁴⁰ Mannick, A.R; Mauritius: The Development of a Plural Society, Spokesman, 1979

⁴¹ Mulloo, Anand; "Dr S Ramgoolam, His Life, His Walk, His Ideas" Vol.1, 1980

and economic life of the country. Foremost among them were the Bahemias, Toorawas, Currinjee Jeewanjees --- and Dawjee Mohammed Vajid."⁴² They were active not only in the field on trade, commerce and industry, but pioneered the way in the professions of law and medicine as well as in the Civil Service. While subscribing to the ideals of a common Mauritian nation, many leaders found it expedient to maintain a provincial approach to politics, *'this was more apparent among the Muslims'* ⁴³ This eventually led to the setting up of the Comité d'Action Musulman in 1959.

From early times, the Muslim community had⁴⁴ lobbied the Government to promulgate specific Muslim laws based on Islamic Shari'at (Qur'anic injunctions) to regulate Muslim marriage, divorce and inheritance.) In 1931, Muslim government servants were allowed to take a holiday on three Muslim festivals; but it was much later in 1965, that *"it was accepted in principle that steps would be taken to introduce the Muslim Personal Law in Mauritius."* ⁴⁵ This issue was finally resolved in 1981 when Parliament ruled that there will be only one civil law for all communities. However, this issue continues to resurface, from time to time, as it attracts many adherents.

In the meantime, Port Louis regained its Municipal Corporation in 1850, which was an entirely elected body of 18 members. But the property and literacy requirements were so high that the electorate comprised only about 1.2 % of its population of 50,000. Its first mayor was Louis Léchelle.

Although women had no political rights, the eldest son of a woman having immovable property of a certain worth and who was a British subject had political rights. This was an early evidence of the overt discrimination that women faced. Her progeny could enjoy rights because of her wealth. She did not have the right to enjoy her own possessions.

At the national level, the first elections were held in 1886. Once again the requirements were so high that the electorate - **only men** - comprised about 1 % of the population which stood at around 400,000. The population now was a healthy mix of the descendants of the early 'colons', liberated slaves, Indian immigrants and a sprinkling of Chinese merchants and shopkeepers. But the electorate were mainly the descendants of the 'colons'. It was only much later that the electorate began to better represent the heterogeneity of the population. For example, it was only by the end of the 18th century that the two descendants of Indian immigrants were appointed to represent the Indian immigrants. They were Dr. Xavier Nallétamby, a Pondicherrian in 1891 and Arland Kistnasamy, in 1901.

⁴² Ibid, Hazareesingh

⁴³ Ibid, Hazareesingh

⁴⁴ Ibid, Emrith, Moomtaz

⁴⁵ Ibid, Emrith, Moomtaz

By the early 20th century, the political scene was no longer dominated by the 'colons' and many of the 'coloured intelligentsia' such as Raoul Rivet, and Indians joined in the fray for more autonomy, greater responsibility and even self-rule. The Conservative Party was led by the progressivists such as Emile Sauzier and Edouard Nairac (later Sir). There was a movement led by Dr Maurice Cure for the country to be returned to France and united with Madagascar and Reunion, which however found little support from the plantocracy at the next General Election in 1921. Helped by Alfred Gelle and Rivet, Laurent founded the l' Union Mauricienne in 1932.

In 1936, another political party was founded - the Mauritius Labour Party by Dr. Maurice Cure - which had as its demands, workers representation at the legislature, franchise to labouring classes, the formation of trade unions and the granting of old age pensions to those over 65 years. Cure held leadership of the Party until he passed away in 1946. He together with others such as Dr. Edgar Millien and Dr. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (henceforth referred to as SSR) fought fiercely for political and economic empowerment.

Dr. S. Ramgoolam returned to Mauritius after his studies in 1935 and "started his long campaign for social and political emancipation of the people of Mauritius." He believed in the Fabian principle - which he imbibed while studying in the UK- of bringing maximum good to the largest number. His was a long-term plan of change through gradual and steady stages. He was distressed to see the Mauritian people, particularly of the working class, the children, the young, the women living in a state of utter backwardness, suffering from the evils of illiteracy, disease, hunger and the deadening weight of superstition and tradition.⁴⁶ As Liaison Officer for Education, his objective was to put a school within the reach of every Mauritian child in each village, as well as to ensure that children were properly fed, clothed and had shoes.

His next concern was that women should be politically empowered.

*"In a country like Mauritius where women constitute 50 per cent of the voters and where they already share to a great extent the responsibilities of society, it is time that they enjoyed the same rights as men. For this purpose, we are proposing that the Civil Code should be modified in such a way that these rights would be granted to them in all spheres of life. Consequently, we want that women who work in the Civil Service should enjoy the same privileges as do men."*⁴⁷

The next important political party that was formed was the Ralliement Mauricien. It was founded on 12 Dec. 1952 by Koenig

⁴⁶ Editor, Mulloo, Anand; Our Freedom S. Ramgoolam, Vision Books, 1982

⁴⁷ Ibid. Mulloo, Anand

*"which provided the Labour Party with its first serious political adversary after the rout of the Oligarchs which had left a vacuum. There was a need for an opposing force and Koenig seemed well suited to lead it. The formation of that new political party followed a statement by Dr. Ramgoolam on 30 May 1952 in the Legislative Council in favour of universal suffrage and responsible government."*⁴⁸

However the Party was unable to develop into a political party on modern lines and was dissolved in 1955 and "replaced by a well -structured organization, the Parti Mauricien, founded on 6 April 1955". Jules Koenig who had led the formation became the President of the Party.

*"While the Ralliement Mauricien had been rather a centrist formation---, whereas the Parti Mauricien confirmed an alliance between the conservatives and the liberals. The centrists within the party's ranks were determined to fight against universal suffrage, responsible government and the Labour Party's socio-economic programme; the last being considered as being still too leftist. Guy D'Arifat became the secretary - general of the Parti Mauricien and it contained mainly wealthy businessmen and sugar barons principally from the Franco-Mauritian, Chinese and Muslim communities. The general aims of the party were defined as "the rapprochement of all the communities for the creation of a Mauritian entity free from distinctions of class, race and religion."*⁴⁹

Gaetan Duval joined the Party and was elected in Curepipe in 1959. He became a charismatic leader and a talented orator rising to become the Party president in the 1970's. The Party Mauricien Social Democratic (PMSD) was formed in 1964 when Koenig resigned from a coalition government with the Labour party in 1963. A new all party government was formed in 1965 with the PMSD and the Labour party.

With the setting up of the Constitutional Consultative Committees in 1945 and 1947, the issue of extending the voting rights to all men and women above the age of 21 was taken up. The Committee which was chaired by the governor Mackenzie-Kennedy had the objective of overhauling the voting rights which had remained unchanged since the first election in 1886. It was at this Committee that stalwarts like SSR, Guy Forget (later Sir) and Raymond Rault took up the challenge of demanding equal voting rights for women and the extension of the vote by removing the highly restrictive literacy and property requirements. SSR was one of the most active of these protagonists championing for democracy. Their efforts were successful and the 1948 constitution provided equal voting rights for women and the vote was extended to 17 % of the then population of 419,000 from 1.2 % about half a century ago.

⁴⁸ Selvon, Sydney; A comprehensive history of Mauritius, M.D.S. December 2001

⁴⁹ Ibid Selvon, Sydney

One woman fought the election coming out victorious in the west of the island together with several other leaders of the Labour party and the other parties. She was Madame E. Rouchecouste

"a school teacher, she made a special appeal to all women in the country and came second in the Plaines Wilhems-Black River region, gaining 9,329 votes from 20, 904 voters. Jules Koenig, a Franco-Mauritian, gained the only White seat in the same region. Sookdeo Bissoondoyal, later to form the Independent Forward Bloc party, was elected for Grand Port-Savanne,-
-- "50

It was as from 1948 that an allowance was paid to all MP's. The justification for this is clear when as stated by Sir Satcam Boolell⁵¹ *"Politics was no gravy train then. Those who believed in the cause of the welfare of the rejected and neglected threw themselves into the battle without the least expectation of reward."* --- The fight for social justice was now being waged on two fronts: at the trade union level and at the Legislative Council.

"But because of the large number of official nominees who sat in the Legislative Assembly, the effectiveness of this institution as a means to bring about change was much reduced. It was to the trade union movement that the reformists turned for providing the only 'effective force ---to undermine the status quo".⁵²

The fight for real self-government and a ministerial system continued. The first step had already been made when in 1952 five liaison officers were appointed to co-ordinate between the Governor and the departments that they represented. Among the main demands made by the political parties and the Labour Party in particular were the reorganization of the education system, better health facilities, family allowance, improved conditions for workers and two-thirds extraction of sucrose content shared by small planters. It was in 1956 that the ministerial system was granted although three of the nine ministers were to be nominated and the Executive Council was chaired by the Governor.

The next important step was when the SSR was appointed as Chief Minister in 1963 with powers *"to appoint and revoke ministers as well as to prorogue and dissolve the legislature."*

The campaign for full independence continued and two Constitutional conferences were held in 1964 and 1965. By 1966, the Legislative Assembly had already taken the form it has today comprising' 70 MP's - 60 elected in 20 three-member constituencies in the island of Mauritius, two in Rodrigues and up to eight nominees chosen from among the unsuccessful candidates on the basis of community and the results obtained in the general elections.

⁵⁰ Mannick, A.R.; Mauritius: The Development of a Plural Society, Spokesman, 1979

⁵¹ Boolell, Sir Satcam Q. C. 'Untold Stories, A collection of Socio-political essays, 1950 - 1995', Editions de L'Ocean Indien, 1996

⁵² *ibid*, Boolell

The parliamentary election of 1967 was fought on the issue of Independence led by the Labour Party. It was won with a small lead - 56% for and 44% against - by the Labour party with 90 % of the electorate taking part in the elections.⁵³ Thus, SSR assumed the Prime Ministership, under the new democratic Constitution providing the foundation of freedom and equality for all, on 12 March 1968.

Hence after the long and arduous struggle, by 1968, when Mauritius obtained independence from Britain, the population had the political maturity to understand and put into practice the democratic form of government. So Mauritius remained a working democracy based on the British parliamentary form of government with a Governor General as the head. In 1992, this was changed and a President chosen by the Prime Minister with the consent of the Leader of the Opposition became the formal head of the country. The Republic on Mauritius was born.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND WOMEN

When reviewing the socio economic scene, one may say that making a headway on to the political ladder has been the biggest challenge for women. The attainment of political power has definitely been difficult for women. The coming of the slaves was accompanied by the *Proclamation du Code Noir* in 1723 which laid down the status of slaves and which authorized husbands as well as the masters to punish women. The position of women was worsened with the reformist legislation of Napoleon. In 1808, '*Le code Napoleon*' imposed the status of a 'minor' to all married women. This position was maintained until 1948 when women first obtained voting rights, however, subject to property and other conditions. Legislation giving all Mauritians above the age of 21 years voting rights was introduced in 1959.

Thus, it was almost half a century after the right to vote was conferred on a minority of Mauritian men who satisfied strict property and educational criteria, that women got the same right. Women in the US and the UK obtained their voting rights in 1920 and 1917 respectively. On the other hand, Mauritian women had to wait until 1948 when a British Governor recommended that women who satisfied the same property and educational requirement as men would be entitled to vote. In addition to owning property, voters had to pass a literacy test and be able to sign their name in either French or English. Because of the high educational and property requirements, the number of eligible voters was limited to a handful of men and even less women. It was only a decade later in 1959 that universal suffrage was accepted for all Mauritian nationals above the age of 21.

Women had the right to stand for elections as from 1948 when they were granted voting rights. Among those who stood for elections in the first elections was Madam Emilienne Rochecouste. As stated earlier, she was elected in third position in Plaines Wilhems / Riviere Noire together with Guy Forget. Sir Satcam

⁵³ Ibid, Dukhira Chit

Boolell had this to say about women in politics and about Mrs. Rochecouste in particular.

"Women have kept out of politics, first because of the rough and tumble of political life. Secondly, in Mauritius women have traditionally left politics to men, as a male occupation, although in the past timid attempts were made to come into the arena. In 1948, a lady teacher, Mrs Rochecouste, abandoned her job to be a candidate and she was elected".⁵⁴

Among the other women who were active politicians in the 1950's were Mrs. Noellie Lachicorée who was the nominated member of the Assembly and Mrs. Rada-Madamaney Ponoosamy who later became the first Minister of Women and Consumer Protection. Several women were politically active at the municipality and village council levels. For example, Mrs. Sharifa Damoo was the first woman municipal counselor in Port Louis in the 1960's.

Notwithstanding their reluctance to take the political plunge, women even in the 1950's performed their civic duty by going out to vote in large numbers. Women in different parts of the island stated how they took part in the elections in 1968. Although some women would have voted differently from the rest of the family, in the majority of cases, voting as many social obligations was a family affair. And the whole family would vote the same party. One woman recalled how the head of the family had bought several rolls of red dress material so that the whole family could be dressed alike when going to vote.

C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The broad picture of the reform activities that were being undertaken by some dedicated men and a few dedicated women on the political scene described above leads us to have a better understanding of the socio-economic developments that were also taking place.

The Arabs, the Portuguese and the Dutch were attracted to Mauritius mainly as a port of safe refuge on route for other destinations. The attempts of the Dutch to colonize the island proved abortive and short-lived.

The French who succeeded them were more successful and before their departure created the basic economic structure that prevailed for most of the last century. This included the establishment of the sugar industry and the whole network of socio economic infrastructure which went to keep the sugar industry internationally competitive. Much of this infrastructure remained intact while continuously being upgraded and improved.

⁵⁴ Boolell, Sir Satcam; Q. C. Untold Stories, A Collection of Socio-political essays, 1950-1990, Editions de L'ocean Indien, 1996

Apart from the terrible cyclones, which hit the island at regular intervals, the plagues and epidemics such as the Spanish flue, which hit the country in 19th century, the country's economy was also badly affected by the two World Wars.

The Second World War, which had ended in 1942, left the country in a sad plight. It had a direct impact on the sugar industry, which was the backbone of the Mauritian economy, and secondly it led indirectly to one of the most serious population problems that the country had ever faced. It must be stated at the outset that Mauritius was able to find a solution out of both these difficult situations in a relatively short period.

The Second World War left the sugar industry in disarray. Not only had cane to be uprooted for growing food crops but the disastrous cyclone of 1945 caused havoc to whatever crop was left. Since links with the rest of the world were cut, the Mauritian economy nearly came to a standstill as exports of sugar on which the economy depended as well as the imports of essential commodities was interrupted. However the war had one positive outcome which was to have a long-term impact on the economy of the country. This was the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement, which was signed between the UK and its sugar producing colonies which provided stable prices for sugar exports from the sugar-producing colonies. Thus, some of the risk involved in producing sugar for export was removed as planters were assured of a stable price that they would obtain for their produce.

In addition, after the war, the Colonial Office made loans, which helped to rehabilitate the sugar and tea industries after the war. Fortunately for the country it was also spared the impact of severe cyclones over the 1945 – 1953 period. In the fifties, Mauritius presented as stated by Meade⁵⁵ "*a most extreme example of a mono crop economy*" and all economic activity was geared to the sugar industry. What little manufacturing that existed had been developed to provide the sugar industry with the equipment and machinery needed for growing sugar cane or for the manufacture of sugar. Some 200 little sugar factories dotted all over the island and even in the 1950s the equipment and machinery used were the most advanced in the world and these were being repaired and maintained by a small cadre of engineers and technicians.

The sugar industry was truly the lifeblood of the economy as it was the main export of the country, provided more than 40 percent of the jobs available and generated a third of the wealth of the island in terms of the Gross Domestic Product. Because the sugar cane is a multi- use crop, its by-products, namely molasses and bagasse, have also contributed to the economy. Even with the development of some local industries, the output of cane and sugar continued to increase into the 1980's because of improved yields and more intensive cultivation, despite the fact that availability of land was a definite constraint for increasing output.

⁵⁵ Meade, J. M. " Socio economic development of Mauritius

The sugar industry has contributed towards the gradual opening- up of opportunities for social mobility. Slightly more than 50 percent of this land was owned and cultivated by miller planters. 8, 000 arpents were owned by millers but cultivated by metayers and the rest, 85, 000 arpents, by freehold small and large planters. About 19 percent of cultivated land belonged to planters and metayers owning less than 10 arpents of land. The miller planters were the 'colons' or the descendants of the original French settlers who came to Mauritius in the 17th century and the planters were largely the Indian indentured labourers who had been brought to Mauritius in the period from 1837 to 1910. The ethnic mix has been an important factor in the socio-economic development of the country.

As stated in a study on Mauritius,

"The interaction of the various ethnic groups has had a more important impact on the political and economic life of the country. It has given rise to a vibrant political climate where basic principles of democracy and freedom are jealously guarded. Similarly, the diversity has been economically invigorating."⁵⁶

Apart from sugar, the other crop of export interest has been tea, which had been expanded in the 1960s when international tea prices were high as a means of solving the unemployment problem in Mauritius. Much land in the central plateau was converted into tea plantations and leased out to small planters for a small rent. A whole network of institutions was set up to service the new industry. Unfortunately, the high prices were a passing phenomenon and the tea industry suffered losses in recent years as a result of which steps have been introduced for its phasing out. Neither did tea cultivation fully solve the unemployment problem, as younger people showed little interest in that sector.

As stated above one of the positive developments of the war was the attempt made to introduce a programme to encourage local industry under a high protection regime to reduce the reliance on the imports of all basic necessities and household items. Under this scheme, production of a range of items was started which was to pave the way for the future industrialization of the economy. This include vegetable oil and related products, paper products, a limited number of pharmaceutical products and fertilizers all of which had till then been imported. Tourism and export led manufacturing had yet to be introduced to turn the economy around. It was emigration that was much was much debated in the Assembly and in professional circles as a means to resolve the unemployment conundrum. So much so that Emigration was one of the responsibilities of the early Minister of External Affairs.

Various attempts were made to boost the economy. Not only did it stagnate but had to face another calamity - that of a 'population explosion', of a dimension not

⁵⁶ Bheenick, R and Hanoomanjee, E, Industrial Training Strategy, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Port Louis, 1984

witnessed before. The increases in population since the first settlement of the country had been due to immigration because the natural rate of increase of the population - that is the increase in population due to the excess of the birth rate over the death rate - had been negligible for most of this time. As a result the population had been increasing at less than 1 % per annum over most of the 19th century, except when there were major inflows of peoples due to immigration. Suddenly after the Second World War, the rate of natural increase of the population shot up to 3.12% between 1962 and 1972. Thus, although the economy grew by about 3 percent, it was only slightly higher than the population growth rate 2.12 percent between 1952 and 1962. Hence, the income available to each Mauritian was almost stagnant; viz. the per capita income grew by less than one percent.

TABLE III. 3
GROWTH OF THE ECONOMY

Item	Unit	1950	1960	1970
Average annual growth rate of GDP for period	%	-	2.8	6.6
Investment (GDFCF) in 1992 prices	Rs m	830	1,530	1,847
Average annual rate of GDFCF growth in 1992 prices	%		6.3	1.9

Source: Central Statistical Officer

The growth of the economy over the 1950 to 1970 period is given in Table III. 3 above. It should be noted that although the Gross Domestic Product continued to grow by about 3 % to 6 % over the 1950 to 1960 and 1960 to 1970 periods, the per capita income failed to increase at the same rate, for the reason mentioned above.

TABLE III. 4
POPULATION GROWTH IN INTERCENSAL PERIODS,
ISLAND OF MAURITIUS, 1952 - 1972

Item	Unit	1952	1962	1972
Population density per km ²	NUMBERS	269	366	443
Average annual growth rate of population increase	%	2.26	3.12	1.94

WOMEN & EMPLOYMENT

As stated earlier, the economy of Mauritius was in a depressed state, with rising unemployment and the limited capacity of the economy to create new jobs for the growing young entrants to the labour market. Unemployment was the most serious problem facing the country in the 1950's. Although Mauritius was not the scene of any of the wars, which were fought during the Second World War, some 15,000 Mauritian volunteers fought for the British on many of the battlefields in

Europe, Asia and the Middle East. When they returned after the war, they added to the pool of unemployed.

According to the 1952 Census, the labour force participation rate, which is the percentage of women who are working or are seeking jobs, was only about 15 percent for those in the age group of 15 to 60. The similar ratio for men was around 88. Of the 76,900 employed in 1952, some one third were women and around 15 % were Juveniles, as shown in the Table below. Another feature of the labour force was that it was very young. About 69 percent of the total labour force of 114,000 were below 41 years and 16 percent were below 21 years.

Unemployment was high reaching almost 15 percent of the economically active population or those who were healthy and were willing to work. As shown in the table below, unemployment was high among females, including younger ones.

TABLE 111.5

Distribution of unemployed by age group			(%)
Whole island	Male	Female	Total
Under 18 years	12.1	16.7	13.3
18-20	13.4	13.1	13.3
21-40	47.7	47.4	47.7
41-60	21.8	19.7	21.2
61-65	2.9	1.9	2.7
Over 65 years	2.0	1.2	1.8

Source: Mr. R. W. Luce, CB.MBE, Mauritius Legislative Council, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1958, Report on Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment in the colony 1958.

A strategy for the creation of jobs for men in both Mauritius and Rodrigues was introduced as a means to provide incomes for the heads of households who were unemployed. Women heads of families were not entitled to these programmes.

Working opportunities for women were limited.

“Firstly women had to have education, and the women candidate had to be outstandingly better than her male counterpart to be even considered for the job to which there were many male applicants. But women could gain employment in the service sector. The “entry of working women into the world of painful employment brought a different shift in priorities and values”.⁵⁷

An educated woman developed her identity and personality and was able to realize that she could give meaning and direction to her life and at the same time improve the quality of life for herself and her family, however because few woman completed education and the view prevailing at that time that women

⁵⁷ Hawaldar, Shakuntala, Report on the MFPA, unpublished, date 1985

should not go into employment if their husbands earned enough, prevented women from wanting to enter the labour market.

Women from middle and upper classes, therefore rarely took up gainful employment outside their homes. There were few employment opportunities for women and the number of women who were seeking jobs outside the home was also limited.

The main employment opportunities for women lay in low skill, low pay occupations in the agricultural sector as labourers or in the service sector as domestic servants. There were few other openings for women with little education. As shown in the Table below, of the 15,000 women who were working, even for the limited number of women who were educated, the only openings were teaching, nursing, or middle level administrative jobs. Mention is made of the arrival of one lady expatriate Education officer who joined the Teachers Training College in 1952 and two lady local Education Officers who had gone to the UK on training in the 1951 Report on Mauritius. Clerical jobs, which are mainly held by women today was, still a male 'enclave'.

There were however a few women who had broken the glass ceiling. An important example was Mrs. Moti from Vacoas who became the first woman labour officer in 1960. There were also a few doctors and some lawyers, mainly from the well-educated Franco Mauritian and Indian families who had managed to withstand family pressure or with family support had travelled abroad to study.

TABLE III.6
EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATIONS, 1952

Sector	Male	Female	Juveniles	Total
Sugar industry	38,027	12,658	3,498	54,143
Public service	9,523	275	241	10,029
Other Industries				
O/w Aloe fibre	555	531	143	1,229
Lime Kiln	345	258	33	636
Tea	427	514	444	1,385
Tobacco	777	784	387	1,948
Wine Industries	255	103	29	387
TOTAL	56,144	15,438	5,406	76,988

Source: Published by Authority, Report on Mauritius 1953, Government Printing Office, Port Louis, 1954

However for the majority of women who had little or no education, the only opening was the sugar industry; where they worked as agricultural labourers; the job was much more difficult than today as the industry was not mechanized. Mechanical cane cutting and loading was only introduced in the mid 1970's. In addition to cane loading, weeding and fertilization, which are the main jobs done by women today, women were also expected to cut and load cane. The hours were also longer and there were few fringe benefits.

However there is one glaring anomaly in the sugar sector, which should be highlighted. Several of these agricultural workers in the 1960's were highly motivated women and proved to be born leaders. A handful of them even became 'sirdarines' or heads of gangs of workers or foremen. As 'sirdarines' they would be responsible for organizing, paying the wages and ensuing work output of a team of 15 to 20 female workers. As from 1950's however, there have been almost no female 'sirdarines'. So in 1999, there were some 15,000 female agricultural labourers who reported to about 700 sirdars or foremen. Of these 'sirdars' only two were women. This situation has arisen because with the institutionalisation of job content and promotional structures in the sugar industry, some educational requirement has become necessary for appointment as 'sirdars'. Unfortunately, most of the agricultural labourers do not have the required educational qualifications.

WAGES

"The level of wages is largely determined by the rates prevailing in the sugar industry. In this industry minimum rates of wages for workers of the artisan category (represented by the General Workers' Union) and for labourers (represented by the Mauritius Amalgamated Labourers' Association) are negotiated by collective bargaining between the two unions and the employers' organization, the Sugar producers' Association. -----The principle of collective bargaining has also been adopted by dockworkers and other trade unions. Where the trade union is weak and incapable of fully representing the interest of its members, recourse had been had to orders issued under the Minimum Wages Ordinance"⁵⁸.

TABLE 11.7
TYPICAL MINIMUM RATES IN SUGAR INDUSTRY

Monthly Employees	Wages
Men – Class 1	Rs43.50 per month plus Rs6.00 (Regularity Booms)
Women and Young Persons – Class 1	Rs28.85 per month
Children	Rs20.08 per month

Source: Report on Mauritius, 1951

Thus women earned about 66 percent of the wages of men. Salaries for artisans and dockworkers were almost 60 percent higher than that of sugar workers. But this did not benefit women as such because women were not employed in these sectors. A cost of living bonus was paid to sugar estate workers which fluctuated based on the Cost of living index worked out by the Department of Labour.

⁵⁸Colony of Mauritius, 1951, Report on Mauritius, Government Printer, Port Louis, 1952

D. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL SECTORS AND WOMEN

This Part presents the social scene in the 1950's. The focus is on the women in their various roles within the socio economic structure of the country. The 1950's were a period of low economic growth and the country was truly in the doldrums. The social situation was depressed - so gloomy that a famous West Indian writer on visiting Mauritius called the island the 'over crowded baraccon'. He had rightly caught the essence of the sad plight of the hundreds of young unemployed with his artist's innate perception. Two main factors were the root cause of the depressed economic situation.

One was that the sugar industry had reached its production limits given the technology that was available for land clearance and for bringing new land under cultivation. Since sugar was the main stay for growth, little more could be done to increase the country's output. Secondly, the country was facing an unprecedented increase of its birth rate resulting in more mouths to feed with a given output and a growing unemployment nightmare. As the babies of the post World war 'Baby boom ' years grew up to reach their teens, they entered the labour market in hordes seeking jobs that did not exist.

The social structure did not facilitate movement and non-conformism. This made it very difficult for women to reach out to new horizons outside the family. Given the importance of the family in the early years, we start with an analysis of the family.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

Mauritius has always been a highly patriarchal society, with a high marriage rate. This meant that most adult women were married and lived in patriarchal families. The system of extended families was common in the 1950's, especially among the Hindu or Muslim communities; the system also existed among Franco Mauritian families. In many cases, the extended family also meant a single kitchen serving the head of the family and most siblings and their families.

According to the Central Statistical Office, the household is a unit composed of various members each representing a role within the family. Members of the family were soon taught the unwritten laws that governed relations within the family and what was expected of each member - as a dutiful son, wife, daughter or husband. Codes of behaviour were marked out for one and all. Moral persuasion and various forms of sanctions were used to enforce these roles on members of the household.

An important binding factor was economic; since the household survived as a whole, it was difficult for members to break away to fend for themselves. Even in situations of extreme poverty, members of a household preferred to stick together and since agriculture provided the main means of employment it tended to keep families together. Once industrial opportunities emerged, the rationale to keep together was eroded and new economic factors made it unnecessary for households to stay together. Whether cohesion within the family has helped social mobility and improvements in income levels in Mauritius is unclear.

The head of the family who was the eldest male member of the family was usually the decision-maker for the family. His wife shared an equally important position with the female members of the family. It was normally she who decided on all matters concerning the female members of the family. She was referred to as 'dadima' or 'grandmere'.

As stated by one lady at a focus group discussion:

BOX III.2

CONDITIONS OF WOMEN

The "*condition of women*" in the sixties was appalling. Women had to face great difficulties both in private and public life. They were basically invisible socially and, even if some women were professionals and had managed on a purely personal level to build a career, the great majority of them were still either unemployed or employed at the lower grades, badly paid and working under hard conditions. In the male dominated society in which we still live, women's dignity was not fully respected.

Although girls began primary school at the age of six or seven not many stayed on to complete the six-year primary education programme. They would stop by the age of 11 or 12 to look after a younger child or to even get married. Such decisions were usually taken by the "*dadima*" or "*grandmère*" of the joint family. Educating a girl was not one of her priorities. She had to see that the family was run smoothly and if additional hands were required to look after a new addition to the family, it was always the eldest girl in school who was taken out to help the family. Boys would seldom be required to leave school to help in family chores, unless he was disinclined to continue with his studies in which case would be taught a trade.

The "*Dadima's*" or "*Grandmère's*" main ambition was to find suitable matches for the girls. There was an elaborate system of match making. The village matrons

would meet regularly at social and religious functions and identifying suitable partners for the eligible young men and women was always a priority. It was important that responsibility for girls was moved to a husband as soon as she reached puberty because as a single woman she had little legal or social protection. Hence, in particular within the Hindu and to a certain extent the Muslim communities, a differential value was placed on sons and daughters. Since it was the son who would carry the family name and be the 'secours' or support for aged parents, he was groomed for this role from infancy. The system of primogeniture prevailed.

Box III.3

MARRIAGES IN THE 1950'S

The 1952 census showed that 57% of the women in the Indian Community were married by age nineteen. By age 24 years, 89 % of women were married. Around 35% of marriages were registered civil marriages; the rest were religious or consensual. What this meant was that women were very vulnerable. A man could marry one woman religiously and then contract a civil marriage with another one. The women who married religiously only, tended to loose out on her rights to inheritance from her husband if he chose to cut her out, or if he died without making a will in her favour. The situation of women in the working classes was often also very pitiable. These women had to work to support herself and her usually large family of children. If her husband happened to be an alcoholic, it was likely that he would squander her income as well with his drinking.

DEMOGRAPHY

Women comprised some 50 percent of the total population of 501,415 in 1952. The gender equality in terms of numbers was not reflected among the three communities on which information was collected in the 1952 Census. Among the General Population, the number of women exceeded that of men by about ten percent in 1952. (Table III.1 refers) But among the other two communities there were fewer women than men. There were two percent less women among the Indo Mauritian and a little more than ten percent less among the Chinese population.

The population had been increasing at less than 1 percent since the beginning of the century because the high crude birth rate was balanced by an equally high death rate. It was only since the mid 1950's that with the improvements in

sanitation and in health care and the eradication of malaria, a boom in population occurred. And the rate of population increase shot up to 2.26 percent between 1952 and 1962 and to the highest ever reached in Mauritius of 3.12 percent between 1962 and 1972.

HEALTH STATUS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

For much of the 17, 18 and 19 centuries, health conditions in Mauritius were poor. Epidemics occurred from time to time and parasitic diseases were prevalent. Occurrences such as the Spanish flue in 1919 when the mortality rate reached 60 per 1,000 killing thousands of the people was not uncommon. Thus, the early period was one of high death rates as well as birth rates with the population remaining almost stagnant.

The waves of progress experienced in some of the countries in the west with the discovery of the smallpox vaccine by Jenner in 1796 and Pasteur's discovery of the microbic origin of infectious diseases and its application in preventive medicine caused a decline in death rates in the west, but these improvements did not reach the developing countries till much later.⁵⁹ It was by the 1920's the death rate began to fall in Mauritius, with the chlorination of the water supply and the campaigns against malaria and hookworm. The eradication of malaria brought about with the introduction of DDT in 1948 set in motion the next stage for the decline in death rates. From around 27 per 1,000 in 1926- 40, death rates fell to 11 per 1,000 in 1956 - 60 period and to 6.7 per 1,000 in 1980. It has remained at that level ever since.

Combined with the sanitation and other factors, frequent child bearing had an adverse impact on the health status of women. In the early times, when the birth rate was high, maternal mortality and morbidity was equally high. Besides, it is evident from discussions with older women and doctors themselves, that women were using abortion as a means of terminating a pregnancy. As a result of these factors as shown in Table III.6, the level of maternal mortality was high in the 1940's and 1950's - the years for which figures are available. Maternal mortality reached the highest figure ever of 14.96 in 1945, but fell to around 5 in the 1950's. The high maternal mortality rates were associated with the weak and anaemic status of mothers, the lack of proper medical attendance during childbirth and the effect of frequent childbirths. It was only as fertility levels began to fall, as shown in the next chapter that the Life expectancy of women improved and maternal mortality as well began to decline. During the period 1961 – 1963, Life expectancy for women was estimated at 62 years as compared to 58.7 years for men⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Chesnais, Jean -Claude; Translated by Elizabeth and Philip Kreager, *The Demographic Transition, Stages, patterns, and Economic Implications*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992

⁶⁰ Central Statistical Office, *Digest of Demographic Statistics 1995*, Page 101, Port Louis

FERTILITY

The fifties were a period of high fertility. The crude birth rate reached some of the highest levels recorded in Mauritius between 1946 and 1958. After being around 35 percent for most of the time after 1920, it shot up to 44.7 in the 1946-50 period and 43.3 per thousand live births in the 1954 -56 period as shown below. The 1950's were truly the baby boom years for Mauritius as it was in many other parts of the world.

TABLE III. 8
BIRTH AND DEATH RATES IN ISLAND OF MAURITIUS; SELECTED YEARS.ⁱ

Period	Population at mid period	Crude Birth Rate	Crude Death Rate	Infant Mortality Rate	Maternal Mortality Rate per 0/00 Births	Marriage Rate
Average 1926-30	403,248	35.2	28.8	140.9	9.9(1933)	7.2
Average 1946-50	438,797	44.7	20.8	119.6*	5.14(1943)	16.0*
1954-55	522,577	44.3	14.7	81.3**	14.96(1945)	12.7**
1962	681,619	38.5	9.3	60.1	2.7(1953)	11.4
1968	781,615	31.2	9.1	69.1		10.2

Source: Yearbook of Statistics 1957, Digest of Demographic Statistics, several years

- Refers to period 1946-50, ** Refers to period 1951-55, *** Refers to period 1956-60

TABLE III.9
AGE SPECIFIC FERTILITY RATES, SELECTED YEARS

Year	Age group					
	15 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 29	30 – 34	35 - 39	40 – 44
1955	145	280	270	228	152	56
1962	107	298	301	233	163	60

Note: in calculating the rates, live births occurring to mothers aged less than 15 years have been included in the age group (15-19) whilst those occurring to mothers aged 50 years and above in the age group (45-49). Births for age “Not stated” and birth order “Not stated” have been prorated.

Women began their childbearing role almost as soon as puberty was reached. As shown in the above table, almost one in every seven girls between 15 to 19 years would have had a child. By the age of 35, some women would have completed their childbearing role and would have become grandmothers. Life expectancy was only around 45 years. Therefore, by the age of 40 years, the best part of their lives would have been over for many women.

FAMILY PLANNING

It was a small group of men and women who set the movement for the formal introduction of family planning into Mauritius. The movement found a dynamic leader in Mr R.T Naik who was supported in the Committee by Mr R. Permalloo and the late D.K. Jankee. Several women such as Lady Vinaya Teeluck and Dr. J. Singer (Mrs.. J. Mansoor) were active in the organisation, as stated by Mrs.. S. Hawaldar in her unpublished book on the MFPA.⁶¹

It is to the credit of Mauritius Family Planning Association and the active role played by women in this area that there has always been a 40 to 50 percent representation of women in the Organising and Main Committees of the Mauritius Family Planning Association. The President or the Vice President was invariably a woman.

The Association worked at two levels, bringing in volunteers mainly women who knew the locality well and could act as the first line of operators. These women were often not very educated and used personal contact, tact and wisdom in bringing the message to the people. At the next level, there were the supervisors, all women who organized the various activities and finally the Managing Committee over-viewed the whole operation.

The '*Action Familiale*' was the parallel organization set up at about the same time to bring the rhythm method to the Christian population. They were also organized around women dedicated to help other women reduce poverty and suffering which was brought about by having too many children. The message of both the MFPA and FP movement were the same. 'To make every birth a wanted birth. After all, it is the women who bring the babies to the world and it is they who know the pains and travail of labour. It is no surprise that women took to family planning once safe and acceptable options were made available to them.

For most of this time, society generally and religious leaders in particular vociferously condemned any attempt to introduce artificial methods of family planning or to even discuss the issue. So the pioneers of the Mauritius Family Planning Association which began their work in the early 1950's had a difficult time convincing the society of the need for family planning. In the early years when family planning services began to be made available publicly, they were targeted to married women only and men. Others had to resort to medical professionals or to pharmacies for family planning advice and contraception.

It is in the area of family planning more than in many other areas that the women of Mauritius showed their 'common sense approach to issues of every day living. While the men were busy arguing on the 'theories of life', sanctity of the foetus',

⁶¹ Hawaldar, S; The Mauritius Family Planning Association, 1985, Unpublished

'protection of the unborn', in Parliament, in the church, shivala or Hindu temple and the mosque, women did what they knew best would encompass all these noble sentiments within the means - financial and social - that they could command. By adopting family planning as a method to limit family size to an affordable level, women put Mauritius on the path leading to the 'economic miracle' of the mid 1980's. Had fertility levels remained at the 1960 level, we would have had to create not 180,000 jobs over the 1971 - 1980 period⁶² so as to reach full -employment but more than double that number. This would have been catastrophic and next to impossible.

Although family planning was not introduced in Mauritius till the 1950s, many traditional methods of birth control were practiced on the sly. And every village or town would have its 'diais' or traditional midwife who could prescribe means of aborting a foetus or preventing a pregnancy.

It is generally believed that women must have practiced some form of family planning even in the early days of colonization. In Mauritius, abortion is illegal and the law does not permit abortion on any grounds, even in cases of rape, incest or threats to health. The law states that:

"Any physician, surgeon, or any pharmacologist who shall point out or administer such means of miscarriage, shall, in every case where miscarriage shall have ensued, be condemned to Penal Servitude."

Article 235 of the Penal Code states,

"Whosoever, by any food, drink, medicine or by violence or by any other means whatever, shall procure the miscarriage of any woman quick with child, or shall supply the means of procuring such miscarriage, whether the woman be consenting or not, shall be punished by Penal Servitude not exceeding ten years. The like punishment shall be pronounced against any woman who shall procure her own miscarriage, or who shall have consented to make use of the means pointed out administered to her with that intent, if such miscarriage shall ensue therefrom."

The term "*quick with child*" is not well understood. It is not known at what period a woman is "*quick with child*". Some religious leaders even talk of "ensoulment" of the foetus meaning a moment when a foetus is endowed with a soul. These concepts create confusion. The legal restrictions, however, do not deter women from having recourse to abortion. Indeed abortions would appear to have been very much a part of the reproductive health picture in Mauritius.

From interviews with doctors and other medical and para-medical it is clear that women had recourse to many forms of abortion. These varied from herbal medicine to exercise, crude forms of foetus removal were also believed to be practiced. As stated by E. Hanoomanjee,

⁶² Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, National Development Plan 1971-1975, June 1970

"there was little formal contraception in the 1950's when the Mauritius Family Planning Association (MFPA) was set up. Nonetheless, it would seem that non-scientific methods of family planning were in use - although there appears to be no records of them. The interviews held with older family planning volunteers indicate that abstinence and withdrawal were being used as methods of family planning by some segments of the population".⁶³

THE AGE STRUCTURE

The sudden increase in the rate of population growth had an impact on the age structure of the population. A special feature of the early 1950 was the youthful character of the population. Forty three percent of the population was under 15 years of age in 1957; the population in the age group 15 - 64 comprised 53 percent of the population and the above 60 years old made up only 3 percent of the population. The changes in the structure of the population will be further discussed in the next two chapters.

HEALTH CARE AND GENDER ISSUES

The developments that influenced the evolution in health care services during the Pre-independence decade was the Plan for the Development⁶⁴ for the Health Services and the recommendations made by Prof R Titmuss and his team on Social Policies, which included the health sector. The 1950's were quite turbulent for the health sector. Much criticism emerged with respect to the provision of health care services even though this was the period when Mauritius surfaced as a winner in its battle against Malaria, which accounted for the high mortality of the population in the earlier years.

The Ministry of Health was created in 1957 as the outcome of the Titmuss Report. Prior to the creation of the Ministry, health care services were the responsibility of the Medical and Health Department, which had been created in 1894. With the setting up of the Ministry, systematic improvements were made for the provision of health care.

Medical facilities were available to all; but it was not free for all. A differentiated system was in place whereby free service was available to only those who could not afford to pay or those who worked for the government. This is indicated in the Table below. Private pay beds were also available in government hospitals. Such a system performed a double function of containing health costs to the public budget while giving the poor and the rich the services they required. It is a system that is once again being considered in 2003 to help finance the ever-increasing health costs.

⁶³ The catalytic role of MFPA in the socio-economic development of Mauritius – Mrs E Hanoomanjee, Unpublished

⁶⁴ Titmus, R, Plan for the Development of the Health sector, 1955

TABLE III. 10
HEALTH SERVICES, 1968

Free health Care services	Paid (Private) Care
Govt Hospitals Services Provided free for Civil servants Police Labourers in Govt Paupers.	Doctors in Private Practice and Private pharmacies
Sugar Estate Services provision for Sugar estate workers NGO and Government Maternity and Child welfare Services	Private Hospitals Fee Paying patients in Govt Hospitals

TABLE III. 11
HEALTH FACILITIES, 1968

Public Hospitals (Number)	Private Clinics (Number)	Hospitals Beds (Number)		Doctor Population Ratio
		Govt.	Sugar Estate	
11	06	2393	308a 255b 12c	1:4,500*

Note: **a – males**
 b – female of which 34 maternity
 c - children

*Source: * Government of Mauritius, Management Audit Bureau 1988 and Health Sector Review, 1988 and R.Titmuss Report on Social Welfare*

Some details on the health infrastructure are contained in the above table. The structure for health services had already been laid down with regional hospitals and smaller sugar estate hospitals to cater for less serious health cases in the rural areas where the majority of the population lived and worked. Private practice was concentrated in the urban regions. The system encouraged greater collaboration between the public and private sectors in the provision of health services.

The fundamental issues in health care during the 1960's according to Titmuss were

- Shortage of trained medical staff and insufficient infrastructure.

Ever since the beginning of the twentieth century, there existed a shortage of doctors, nurses and trained attendants. The post war situation of high number of unemployed persons who ended up seeking welfare relief on

grounds of ill health and poverty made additional demands on the services of the health personnel.

- **Poverty and Anaemia**

The report of the WHO team in 1959 reported that anaemia constituted a major health problem, being as high as 50% in some groups of the population. This was a factor responsible for the low productivity among the labour force.⁶⁵

- **Problems of Infectious and Parasitic Disease**

According to the data available for the 1960's on the major causes of death, parasitic and infectious disease accounted for one third of the deaths, followed by disease of the digestive system. The prevalence of traditional toilets (pit system) and inadequate footwear aggravated the rate of infestation, particularly among the poorer rural communities who could, as Prof Titmuss put in, "ill-afford to share their poor dietary intake with the parasites."

- **High fertility and inadequate ante- natal and postnatal care**

Most births took place at home. The facilities of antenatal and postnatal care was poor. Besides the high fertility, there also existed the problem of risky illegal abortions, high rate of infant and child mortality and stillbirths. The maternal and child health was hence an issue of grave concern.

Professor Richard Titmuss was assisted by Prof Brian-Abel Smith and Tony Lynes in his study on Social Policies. They emphasized on a health service aimed at the prevention of ill health and not on the curative aspects of health only. This marked a change in health policy.

Prof Titmuss and associates were also very critical of the functioning of the paying and non-paying services. People who could well afford to pay, ended up with a free service while it caused extreme hardship for those who could not afford to pay. Thus recommendations were made for the setting up a free National Health Service to be financed out of taxation.

BOX III. 4
HEALTH CARE

⁶⁵World Health Organization, Iron Deficiency Anaemia: Report of the Study Group. WHO Technical Report No. 82 of 1959.

“It is clear from the evidence we have received that the present system of charges is not operating in the way it was intended to work. Many patients who should pay charges are receiving a free treatment. For reasons given above, it will be extremely difficult and costly to operate any system of administration that charges from all those who ought to be paying them. Thus we recommend that the Government Medical service be available to anyone who wishes to use it without any examination of their means.”

The establishment of a Free National Health Service was an outstanding development in Health care in the pre-independence era.

The consultants (Titmuss and others) found that the doctor population ratio was unfavourable compared to many countries. In addition to recommending the recruitment of doctors from overseas, they recommended the development of a strategy to train Mauritian doctors and nurses in particular to increase the number of scholarships be made available to young Mauritians including women. They even stated that

*“a certain number of scholarships should be reserved each year for women students.”*⁶⁶

Recommendations were also made to develop a National Family Doctor Service through a system of health insurance and social security and to improve preventive and curative services and focus on the needs of women and children.

Prof Titmuss attached great importance to Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services and noted that the expansion of MCH services was included in the government plan for the reorganization of health care services. Data on births and deliveries at the outset of the 1960's decade also indicates the poor facilities.

TABLE III. 12

PLACE OF DELIVERY OF BABIES, 1960

Place	No. of birth
Government Hospitals	3,146
At home, with qualified midwife	10,022
At home, without midwife and doctor	5,449
Unknown	7,686
Total	26,303

Source Titmuss R Report on Social policies, Page 185.

Only about fifty percent of women received antenatal care and even fewer women were reported to follow postnatal care.

⁶⁶ SPPG. Titmuss, R. Page 203

“ We think it is important that the next generation of Mauritians should be better cared for in childhood and achieve greater earning capacity in adult life, this can only be secured if better nutritional and health care services are provided for mothers and children.”

Professor Titmuss urged for the provision of family planning services within reach of all the parents, offering a wide choice of methods, provided without compulsion.

This what they had to say.

BOX III.5

HUMAN FERTILITY

“It may be that many measures will have to be taken to prevent the harm now being done by the practice of illegally induced abortions by the use of toxic abortifacients by Catholics and non Catholics alike. Social, biological and medical research will certainly be required on attitudes to family planning, on the efficacy of different contraceptive practices, and on the scientific aspects of human fertility among different ethnic groups.”⁶⁷

Professor Titmuss cautioned against the use of force and compulsion in promoting family limitation. The right to refuse the service must be safeguarded. “The tolerances and courtesies of a liberal society must be practiced all.”

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME OF THE TITMUSS RECOMMENDATION?

The report of the consultants was favourably received and the one immediate major change was the establishment of a free health service. Government continued its plan of expansion of health care services, including a decentralization of health care services. The issue of the Family doctor Service was not taken up because of economic and technical constraints.

The government also made plans to improve the infrastructure through the construction of additional dispensaries, construction of a new hospital to serve the population in the north of the island, and the modernization and extension of the hospital buildings for Civil and Victoria Hospitals. The plan included a new hospital for Rodrigues and the construction of a new hospital for tuberculosis.

⁶⁷ Titmuss, R; Social Policies and Population Growth in Mauritius– Page 187

It was not only government and its consultants who were concerned with health issues. Social workers, doctors and trade unionists were also interested in the health of the population. As mentioned earlier, politicians such as Dr. Ramgoolam were first and foremost drawn to politics through health and other social issues. There was considerable NGO activity in this field as well. The Maternity and Child welfare Society (MCWS), a voluntary Organisation came into existence in 1916 through the donation made by Dr E.L Chazal for the creation of a maternity ward at the hospital and for the training of midwives. The midwives were trained and placed in sugar estate hospitals. The society also set up Maternity and Childcare clinics. By 1935, there were seven such centres and the expansion of the services continued. With the creation of the social welfare centres, maternity and childcare services were further expanded, covering the rural population. By 1959, there were 24 centres all over the island, nine run by the MCWS operating in the urban areas and the remaining by the department of Social Welfare. The Mauritius Healthy Babies Society had been created in the 1950's to help disseminate information on childcare in rural areas. It held baby shows regularly with the collaboration of the Social Welfare centres.

The concern for maternal health initiated through the efforts of the MCWS in 1916 was taken up by the social welfare department. Professor Richard Titmuss also emphasized the need to consolidate and strengthen maternity and child welfare services. The emphasis on family planning had a gendered impact on the health and well being of women, as did the free health care services. In a poverty stricken patriarchal society, health care needs of women, particularly poor women are relegated to a secondary position, if not simply overlooked.

EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

As stated in the 1951 Report on Mauritius,⁶⁸ In October, 1950, the estimated number of children in Mauritius, between the ages of five and 14 years (Inclusive) was 102, 000 and the total number admitted to primary schools in December 1951, was 58,810. This gives an enrolment ratio of 57 percent. It took another decade for universal primary education to be attained in the 1960's. Although free primary education was available, girls did not always complete their full primary school programme due to the exigencies of the extended family. Girls continue to be withdrawn from schools for various reasons even today although this problem has dwindled and the reasons are no longer purely economic. All primary schools have been mixed since the 1950's.

In terms of educational facilities at the secondary level, there was only one government school providing education for females in the 1960's. There were also three Loreto schools, which catered mainly for the children of the rich Franco Mauritian population, and some families of the General Population. Enrolment of

⁶⁸ Colony of Mauritius, Report on Mauritius 1951, Government Printer, Port Louis, 1952

girls at the secondary level was less than 20 percent and the four elite schools catered for only a small minority of the school age population.

The majority of girls went to the "*large number of private secondary schools of which nine are approved, i.e. recognized and aided.*"⁶⁹ These schools were mainly concentrated in the larger rural areas and the urban areas. There was a marked difference in the quality of education provided in the different types of schools. The demand for education was high and most educational entrepreneurs were willing to put up schools to meet this demand, not always caring to ensure quality or relevance.

Primary patriarchal societies have tended to overlook the importance of education for women. When women remained confined to the home and the man was the sole bread earner, the need to educate boys took priority over educating girls. Social norms and values strengthened this position. Formal schooling and literacy for girls was considered futile. Functionally literacy enabling them to read religious texts and to acquire the ability to write letters and do household accounts was all that was adequate. For women from poorer backgrounds, education was considered to have even less relevance.

The '*baitqas*' and '*madrassas*' were the religious schools run for girls of the Hindu and Muslim communities respectively which served a very useful function in instilling a degree of literacy and social and moral codes of behaviour in young women. These schools were started by the communities themselves and were found in most of the villages and towns throughout the island. They were active and dynamic. Leadership for the learning of Hindi was provided by the Hindi Bhawan in Montagne Longue and the girls of the families which founded the Hindi Bhawan, for example, had a good education in Hindi and also in French and English. Similarly, girls of Muslim families were instructed in the religious teachings of Islam in the schools run by the mosques of the area.

Another important consideration was the subjects taught at school. In the 1960's, the curriculum in all schools was highly academic, and probably of little relevance to the future life of the girls attending these schools. The only technical school, which had been started in Curepipe in the 1950's, was not very popular. Secondary education was fee-paying except for children who won the Junior Scholarships awarded by government to the best performing pupils at the 11 years plus or standard VI examination.

Many of the institutions, which are familiar in the educational system, did not exist in the 1950's. Instead of the Mauritius Institute of Education, there was a Teachers Training College. There was little curriculum reform because the subjects taught, the textbooks and the examination system were based on the British model. Mauritius did not have a local university in the 1950s and the few

⁶⁹ Ibid, Report on Mauritius 1951

that did pursue tertiary education did so at the prestigious universities in the UK and France. Scholarships were limited to the best performing students at the Higher Secondary School level - the English Scholarships. India and France began offering scholarships to Mauritians immediately after Independence in 1968 and each year some 50 18-year-olds of all communities went abroad to study subjects as varied as Law, Medicine and the Humanities. Four scholarships were awarded to boys as compared to one for girls. Equality in educational opportunities and scholarships came much later.

The setting up of the University of Mauritius in 1965 as a development university saw a further democratisation of education at the tertiary level. For the first time, children of middle income and lower income groups were able to consider sending their children for tertiary education, although for many years the University of Mauritius offered only diplomas and certificate level programmes.

IMPACT OF EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

Education for girls has inevitably led to empowerment.

Box III.6

What is the rationale for educating women, other than the fact that it is endowed as a basic human right?

Briefly, we may argue that education facilitates knowledge and awareness in the individual, which benefit both the individual and society. Knowledgeable and alert individuals enjoy greater self-esteem and self-confidence. Educating or training women improves their knowledge and skill levels, which they will use at home and in the place of employment ensuing healthier families as well as higher incomes for themselves and their families. Research has shown that educated women have fewer children; give their children a head start in life by providing them with better education. Raising happy healthy children contribute to individual and society's welfare. Education can enhance the status of women and provide for upward mobility. The individual, family and society benefit from the education of women who then serve as role models. Education is essential to improve the status and life of women. It is education more than any other factor that has enabled women to move out of the continent of the home and has placed them on an almost equal footing with men in the world of work. Education has been the liberating factor. Has education played the same role in Mauritius?

In Mauritius as in most other countries, it is the focus given to education that had led to the improvement in the health levels for men, children and women themselves, and increase in the general welfare of the family. Education has empowered women to share in decision-making, which has led to a reduction in the size of families, greater prosperity as well as political participation of women. One may attribute much of the improvement in the quality of life experienced in Mauritius to the better educational level of women. Although the advantages of educating girls seems so obvious today, the situation in most societies is that women have been given less education than men as a result of which the majority of a country's illiterates worldwide are women.

Mauritius has been no exception to this international feature and in the 1950's, there were marked educational inequalities in terms of gender.

The stated reality from one of the women who were interviewed is as follows:

Box III.7

SCHOOLS IN THE 1950'S

When I was a child, most of the girls of my age in the village, did not go to school. Yes, we went to the Baithka, where we were taught 'Bhasha' (Hindi and Bhojpuri). I was married at the age the thirteen, and when I got my daughter, there was no school nearby for my eldest daughter. The Arya Samaj was in those days urging parents to send their daughters to school. Then I became a widow, and I was married to my second husband who agreed to accept my daughter. I moved to Plaines Wilhems and there was a school there. So, I could send my children to school. But being poor, I could not afford to send my children to secondary school. Only my youngest child (son) studied up to form V (SC)"

Another women for whom education really made a difference was Jayantee.

JAYANTEE'S LEGACY

The life and career of Jayantee Devi Moti, the first woman to serve as Labour Officer in Mauritius, well illustrates the fact that the empowerment of women can only be achieved through education and economic independence. At the same time, her evolution demonstrates the development of a Mauritian identity among second-generation descendants of Indian indentured immigrants.

It seems rather apt that this 'born fighter' was born in 1914, the year that saw the beginning of the First World War. She used to say proudly that her name,

Jayantee, had been given to her by Swami Swatantrananda() and that it meant 'victorious in the end'. This of course became a family joke like her love of martial tunes! Much of her later success stems from her fighting spirit to overcome her way through mounds of prejudice, administrative muddles and social oppression. She married while still a teenager, became a widow after a year of marriage when her baby daughter was only four months, and struggled to get a job for economic reasons. She was among the few Hindu women who entered the Teachers Training College in the 1940's.

The glass ceiling was shattered not only for her but also eventually for many women like her who became gradually aware of possible alternatives to passive acceptance of poverty and a widow's fate. On completion of a Domestic Science course followed by one on nutrition, she joined the Public Assistance Department and worked with Dr. K. Hazareesingh, setting up the first Social Welfare Centre at Camp Fouquereaux with voluntary help from Mrs. Harford and Mrs. J. Koenig. In 1960, she obtained the job of Lady Labour Officer - a job which had been created in the 1950's after much trade union agitation over the conditions of work of sugar industry labourers. One of the conditions for permanent appointment was the wearing of a uniform as her British bosses thought that this would give her more authority and ensure her security. After much soul-searching, she sought advice from her guru, Swami Swatantrananda, who, to her great relief, told her to go ahead. Of course there was much criticism from the fundamentalists but family and friends supported her. She had a great sense of humour and would relate different reactions like that of a sugar estate manager who *remarked* "*Mais qui vous a affublée de la sorte? Ah! Ces Anglais!*" (But who has made you dress so standgely, ah! These English!) She learned to drive at the age of thirty-six, this time with much encouragement from relatives and colleagues. She had at that time a great capacity to concentrate on her goals totally ignoring all mockery and derision.

Through her field-work, she got to know the whole island, visiting sugar estate camps, factories, shops, settling disputes and representing the Labour Department at the Industrial Court. She was generally hailed as, "*une grande conciliatrice*" (great mediator) in her ability to bring practical solutions to problems between the labourers and managers in the sugar industry. This was in line with her conviction that "*Un arrangement bancal vaut mieux qu'un bon proces.*" (*A practical solution is better than a process.*)

Later on, she was given responsibility to train young recruits but it was considered that she lacked supervisory ability. Could it have been a case of gender myopia? How can you train without supervising or vice versa? Anyway her former trainees still speak affectionately of her.

The life story of Jayanti is at Annex 1.

Her only daughter, Medha Devi Moti, retired Chief Technical Officer at the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research and Chairperson of the Childcare Accreditation Bureau has this to say of her mother.

BOX III.8

FIRST FEMALE LABOUR OFFICER

"My mother who comes from a family of jewelers in Piton. Her father who was a staunch Arya Samajist and was inspired to educate his daughter after his visit to the Kanya Maha Vidya laya - an educational institution for girls in Lahore. Since then he became firmly committed to the cause of women's education in spite of state indifference and socio-cultural resistance. My mother brought a human, maternal touch to her work even when professional competition in post-Independent Mauritius deprived her of the chivalrous regard she had had earlier on! The concept of gender-bias was unknown to her and she did her best to cope in her own way with its manifestations. What mattered to her was that she could support her family and provide for my education.

It is clear from the interviews with women of other communities that the sentiments felt by women in the period were the same.

Among the women who played an important role in Mauritian social life in the 1960's, one of the best known to all radio listeners was Marguerite Labat. As early as 1947 that she went on air in an improvised studio in the attic at the Municipality of Curepipe. She read a message from General de Gaulle directed to Reunion and Madagascar for rallying troops for the Freedom Fighters for France. The Mauritius Broadcasting Services was born and continued to play an important role in providing music, news and comedies, free to listeners. She has seen the birth of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and many of the major events in the country till the 1980's, when she retired. *"The political parties have changed, directors succeed each other, but I am always there, the bad weather has not prevented me."*⁷⁰

Women from all communities felt the need to assert their rights in one way or another and although we know in retrospect that education is a great equalizer it was far from common knowledge in the mid - fifties.

We must also realize that men who were colonized and brow beaten for more than a century themselves were leading an unequal battle for independence and progress and for women who were their partners they had a long way to go before attaining self -emancipation.

⁷⁰ Translated from French from Jeanne Gerval Arouff, Iliennes 20⁰ Sud, Des Femmes Mauriciennes, Espace Multipliants, 1993

Another woman equally interesting but with a very different story is Ganga Gannoo. She was married off at the age of 9 years and lived with her mother-in-law who suffered from Parkinson's disease. It was a fright for the young Ganga to see her mother-in-law's head keep shaking all the time. When she became 12 years, she was considered old enough to share her husband's bedroom. He was 18 years. When she was pregnant at 13 years she attributed her growing stomach to worms and was almost surprised when hearing a "tic, tic" in her stomach she felt something coming down her thighs. She was having her first child. Slowly she learned the miracle of life and she breast fed her babies for almost three years each time and each time she stopped breast-feeding she started a new pregnancy. She has matured since those early days. Now over 70 years and a great grandmother," she will not capitulate against anything. As Ganga says herself, 'No one can annoy this head. I know the Treasury, the bank----' Undoubtedly, there is always time to assert oneself."⁷¹

Another interviewee belonging to the General Population had this to say on educational opportunities in the 1960's

Box III.9

MISSED SCHOLARSHIP

I studied up to standard six and was even awarded a scholarship. But my mother strongly objected to my going to secondary school. So I had to stay at home, more so because I was the eldest and had to help my mother with bringing up the many children in the family. I have always resented this lack of opportunity. That is why I am making sure that my daughter completes her university education. I still have a desire to study and I have started studying again now. "

It was interesting to note that among the women interviewed, many stated that they were trying to catch up on the education that they have lost out on in their childhood. Data obtained from the focus group discussions also indicted this pattern. Generally it has been found that among the higher socio economic groups, women had a better chance of continuing their education. However, whatever the status, a good marriage was always given higher priority. And educational inclinations were followed only if they fitted in with the family obligations. This theory has been proved in a research undertaken in 1999.⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid, Gervail Arrouf, Jeanne

⁷² Ghookool, Premila,

It was not only among the Hindu and Muslim population that discrimination and backward ideas were held about the education of girls. The other communities also had taboos on what girls should do. Ms. X now aged 70 years belongs to the General Population. She had her School Certificate in 1920. The Quote in Box will exemplify the point more vividly.

Box III.10

GENTEEL PROFESSIONS

I had my SC but in my time, it was not considered right for girls to go for higher education. My family felt that I should have a 'genteel' profession like working in a 'Library instead of procuring a career in the civil service which was dominated by men. I could have been a Permanent Secretary today, if I had been permitted to enter the civil service then."

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST – WAR YEARS

Some improvement in the social conditions began to take place in line with gradual political empowerment. As politicians began to clamour for better working conditions and a share in the profits of the sugar industry, government was also inclined to provide some social infrastructure. A Social Welfare Division was created in 1950 together with several women's associations. These organizations were created with a view to encouraging women to meet some of their needs in a collective manner and also as a strategy, for reaching out to women for social education and welfare programmes. The Women's Associations were effective in taking information on issues like nutrition, maternal care, home economics, family planning and welfare to other women.

THE NGO SECTOR AND WELFARE

The early 19th. century also saw the birth of several associations of working for the upliftment of other women and children. The Arya Samaj Movement was based on the teachings of Maharishi Dayanand who stressed on equal rights in marriage for both men and women. The first Arya Samaj organisation was founded in April 1911 in Mauritius by Dr Bardwaj, a medical practitioner and Sanskrit scholar as soon as he arrived in Mauritius in 1911. He was assisted by his, wife - Mrs Sumangli Devi who became a mentor and pioneer to many women. She spoke in public and ran classes for girls. She founded the first

women's association in Vacoas. However, it was only in 1965 that the Arya Mahila Sabha was officially registered as an association.

With the coming of the Arya Samaj – Hindu women began to participate in social activities with their husbands. As already described, before the coming of Arya Samaj Movement, the position of Hindu women was entangled in the web of old taboos, low status and poor education and discrimination, *“living in abject condition, they had become physically and psychologically weak.”*⁷³ Early marriage and child marriage were universally prevalent among the Hindus. Many women had to face early widowhood and life of poverty.

The Mauritian Arya Samaj movement launched a campaign against early child marriages and advocated for the education of girls. It denounced dowry and popularized Vedic marriage systems which are simpler and less expensive.

Women from other communities also began to group themselves into associations and work for their community and their families as from the 1940's. Among these early associations to be formed was the Mauritius Muslim Ladies Association (MMLA) *“which was founded on February 2, 1940. It was one of the first women's organizations in Mauritius. It was led by Begum Hoorbai Rajabally,”*⁷⁴ who was married to the first Muslim dentist.

"Begum Rajabally, more than anybody else in Mauritius did pioneering work for the cultural and social uplift of the Muslim women --and indeed, of all Indo-Mauritian women - in Mauritius. She founded the Muslim Girl Guides in Mauritius. --- In 1942, she created quite a stir and raised quite a few eyebrows in the community when she took the stage to address a trade Union meeting in the village of Goodlands which was attended by a large crowd of workers --mostly men."⁷⁵

During the 1950's, voluntary organisations like “Société St. Vincent de Paul” was set up which provided services for the poor and destitute. Some other examples are Les Ecoles Ménageres, Arya Mahila Sabha, Women's Self Help Association, Mauritius Mental Health Association, Mauritius Society for the Welfare of the Deaf and the Red Cross.

In 1965, the Mauritius Council of Social Service (MACOSS) was created as an umbrella organisation at the request of Government.

⁷³ Reference G.D.Cowreea, “Social contribution of the Arya Samaj in Mauritius 1985. Project for Diploma in Social Work, 1985” University of Mauritius

⁷⁴ Ibid, Emrith , Moomtaz

⁷⁵ Ibid, Emrith, Moomtaz

The objectives of MACOSS are to:

1. stimulate and promote the economic, social and cultural activities for the advancement of the community.
2. assist in the planning and to co-ordinate the activities of member organisations
3. organise or join in organising workshops, seminars, conferences and training courses

Box III.11

ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN'S POSITION (BY A SOCIOLOGIST)

What is the assessment that can be made about the situation of women during the pre-independence decades? Social security data reflects that

- The fact that women were abandoned in fairly large numbers is indicative of a low status of women both socially and legally.
- Pregnancy, child raising and the housework that large families entail is indicative that for a married woman, life was a constant drudgery of childcare and household activities.
- The fact that the economy was depressed is indicative that employment opportunities for women were very limited. It was mostly in the agricultural sector and domestic services that jobs were available for women with poor levels of educational achievement. Few women made it to secondary and tertiary education. Thus there were relatively few women also in professional and administrative positions.

The social safety nets that existed rescued women from the harshness of extreme poverty. This was through the public assistance services. The public assistance officers were usually young male officers and without training and who would thus have projected judgmental attitudes in the process of the enquiry. It must have been very hard and humiliating for poor women to seek assistance from male officers through a process that demanded that they reveal personal information about themselves in order to qualify for the assistance. Petty resentment from the community often made it harder for women to justify their request for public assistance. An elderly Hindu woman now about 80 years of age stated,

“when I first became a widow (she is now a widow second time) and asked for assistance, there were jealous people in the community who went and reported to the officers that I was

rich and that we had expensive furniture in the house. We were refused help and I had to sell the wardrobe and some other furniture that we had so as to appear to be poor enough to obtain assistance.”

- The development of the Social Welfare Centres and the Maternity and Childcare services provided free to the population, contributed significantly to the reduction of fertility and relieved women from the oppressive burdens that high fertility entails. As a result of the services provided through the social welfare centres, as the 1960's decade drew to a close, significant drop had already been achieved in fertility, thus averting the possibility of a pessimistic forecast of high population growth and its impact on the economy.
- Public assistance data showed a decline in the number of unmarried mothers assisted by public assistance. One explanation given for the change is that family planning services made available through Action Familiale, Mauritius Family Planning Association (MFPA) clinics and Social Welfare Centres was instrumental in reducing unwanted pregnancies among unmarried women.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RELIEF TO UNMARRIED MOTHERS

TABLE III. 13

Year	Unmarried Mothers as 0% of Public Assistance Recipients
1961	8.8
1962	10
1965	10.1
1966	6.3
1969	6.1
1970	3.1

*Source of Data: Annual Reports of the Ministry of Social Security, 1961-69,
Government of Mauritius*

- The grant of universal old age pensions provided a safety net for men and women aged 60 plus. At the outset, the age of the retirement was 65 for men and 60 years for women. The old age pension raised the status of both men and women in the extended family system.

Box III.12

VIEW OF A HINDU WOMAN NOW IN HER 80'S

“My mother would save almost all her old age pension. Her savings were of great help when my daughter was married. All women did that. I also tried not to use too much of my pension from the government and save if for the children. My son is looking after the household expenses now, but my savings will be a way to reward them. Also, so far all is going well, but if things change, then at least I have something to fall back on,” The fact that many women did not work or had temporary work meant that if there had been not basic pension, women ran the risk of having no access to any form of income in old age.

The pre-independence decades have been described as a period of slow growth and economically, a difficult decade for the economy. What was the effect this reality on the lives of men, women and families? What were the safety nets and their gendered impact?

Social Security and social welfare services saw an expansion and growth as from the 1950's decade. Following the Beveridge Report in UK, the British Colonial Development and Welfare Act was passed in 1945. This led to the development of the Ten Year Development Plan for Mauritius. The priority of the plan was, "an attack on the Mauritian people's two great handicaps- ill health and inadequate education".⁷⁶

The Social Security system prevalent during the 1950's emanated from the Poor Law legislation which was first enacted in Mauritius in 1902. Under the Act, provision was made for the setting up a Poor Law Department in the Government headed by the Poor Law Commissioner. The commissioner was entrusted with the responsibility of poor relief and was required to establish infirmaries and control the administration of poor relief. The 1902 Poor Law Ordinance continued to govern poor relief until the passing of the Social Aid Act in 1983. Persons in financial need could be assisted through a system of indoor relief and outdoor relief. The indoor relief category is recipients who are admitted to an institution and provided with board and lodgings. Outdoor relief beneficiaries are usually those who are granted assistance in cash and sometimes kind. Persons eligible for relief covered the followings categories.

⁷⁶ Colonial Office, 1951. "British Islands in the Southern Hemisphere" HMSO Cmd 8230, as quoted in Domen E and Domen B, Mauritius, An Island of Success. Pacific Press. 2000.)

- “All persons who through advanced or tender age of infirmity of mind or body were incapable of working for their livelihood and had no liable relative to support, would be entitled to relief.”⁷⁷
- “protection care and instruction could be granted to destitute orphans and children whose parents are paupers”
- A deserted woman could be eligible to public assistance, subject to recovery from liable spouse.
- Public assistance could also be given temporarily to cover incapacity to work due to illness, accidents and other causes.

Between 1909 and 1950 a series of reforms and amendments were made with respect to the management and administration of poor relief.

The 1909 Royal Commission proposed a scheme of land settlement for the unemployed and their families. The Poor Relief Enquiry Commission of 1927 recommended the appointment of full time officers for poor relief. In 1938, a system of full time visiting officers was introduced to conduct inquiries for applicants seeking public assistance. The year 1939 was a peak period for economic recession and the poor law department was shifted to the Labour Department. In 1947, the Poor law commission became known as the Public Assistance Department. In 1950, a woman, Miss Mary Darlow, from Britain was appointed as the Public Assistance Commissioner and Social Welfare Advisor. In 1952, an outdoor relief committee was set up which came up with a uniform system (scale rate) for the assessment of public Assistance. Boys above 12 and girls above fourteen were considered as adults under Poor Law regulations.

The Social Welfare Department was created in 1953. The objectives of the Social Welfare Centres was ‘to promote the well being of the community “. Dr K Hazareesingh was appointed as the first Social Welfare Commissioner. It was in 1948 that Dr K Hazareesingh sent a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary stating that “*Public Assistance with its scope of work, which for the present is only concerned with relief of destitution, does not provide any effective help to those whose financial situation is so precarious that they cannot use it for other purpose than to ensure a bare subsistence.*”⁷⁸

On the 13th of May 1948, the memorandum was approved and the first Social Welfare Centre was set up in Montagne Longue. The social welfare centres have played a crucial role in the upliftment of the quality of life of the rural women. It was instrumental in proving women with education and information on health, family planning and nutrition; it also provided a venue for women to meet and organize themselves as groups for mutual aid. Extended education programmes

⁷⁷ Poor Law Ordinance, Mauritius 1902

⁷⁸ Hazareezing, K. Memorandum of Welfare, 19002

for girls after primary schooling were organized in these centres. It is stated that the social welfare centres have provided services from the cradle to sometimes, the grave. Family Planning, Maternity and Child care services, Home economics classes and adult education programmes, services for youth, support for women's activities, services for the elderly were all organized in these centres. It provided a venue from which a host of services could be provided to the rural community. Incidentally, four women have held the position of social welfare commissioner. There were Miss Mary Darlow, Mrs S Ruhee, Miss K Parathian and Miss B Budory who is the current Commissioner.

The system of Public assistance provided for relief against destitution and extreme poverty. The number of 1961 to 1969 outdoor relief beneficiaries is given in the Table below:

TABLE III. 14
OUTDOOR RELIEF

Year	TOTAL BENEFICIARIES
1961	16,039
1963	16,027
1965	17,305
1967	18,183
1969	17,985

Source. Annual Reports of the Ministry of Social Security. Govt of Mauritius.

Outdoor relief covered a variety of categories catering for almost every type of poverty and mishap. These included categories such as persons who were chronic invalids and the disabled; persons suffering from Tuberculosis, those with temporary disabilities and widows, orphans and abandoned women.

An analysis of the categories reflects that essentially the beneficiaries of public assistance turned out to be members of women headed households. The system of public assistance (the scale rate) was not designed to provide an adequate income to meet the cost of living. It provided for only partial relief.

When professor Richard Titmuss and Brian Able Smith surveyed the community in 1960 they found that there was widespread poverty among the families visited. They noted acute shortage of petty cash in the family. They also observed that the large size of the family (high fertility) further aggravated the problem of poverty. A Family Allowance scheme was proposed, to be implemented with immediate effect which would provide some support to families with children. It was limited to cover up to three children under the age of fourteen years. The three children limit was incorporated to promote the small family norm. This measure however modest did assist families in meeting some of the needs of their children; as borne out by the views of a woman now in her sixties.

BOX III.13

MONEY A RARE COMMODITY

“ When I was a child and later on also as a young married women, money was a very rare commodity. If we got a rupee, our immediate reactions was clutching it close and hiding it for safe keeping. It was so rare to see money. We valued money greatly. Today things are so different. The immediate reaction of children and young women is to spend the money as soon as they get it. No one even bothers about coins.”

(Extracts from an interview with a rural Muslim woman and her family)

Another women (Hindu, in her late fifties) speaking about her life in the sixties had this to say.

TABLE III.14

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN THE 1960'S

I got married in the sixties. My husband used to be a planter in those days. But the brothers in law demanded their part of the inheritance and my husband was without work. Then the children came. Government used to give a pension for three children in those days. It was very useful. I often bought socks, hankies and things for school with that money.”

OLD AGE PENSIONS

In 1950, a non-contributory old age pension was introduced. At the outset it was means tested and provided to old persons aged 65 years and above and blind persons over the age of 40 years. The means test was abolished in 1957. The flat rate pension provision was not adequate to enable elderly persons to live in financial security in old age. Thus a Ministerial committee was set up to study the feasibility of a system of social insurance to cover sickness, old age, widows and, orphans pension, unemployment and industrial injuries benefits. In 1960, Prof Richard Titmuss recommended the introduction of

- A wage related pension scheme

- A sickness and unemployment scheme
- A fire disaster cover
- A family allowance scheme (already mentioned in previous section)
- Sickness and unemployment benefit

The social safety net rescued women from the harshness of extreme poverty. But the process of getting assistance was not easy. The public Assistance officers were usually young male officers and often untrained for the job. They would thus have adopted a judgmental attitude in the process of enquiry, making it very hard and humiliating for poor women to seek assistance through a process that demanded that they reveal personal information about them selves in order to qualify for the assistance. Petty resentment from the community also often made it harder for women to justify their request for public assistance. An elderly Hindu woman now about 80 years of age stated:

TABLE III.15

A WIDOW'S PLIGHT

“When I first became a widow (she is now a widow second time) and asked for assistance, there were jealous people in the community who went and reported to the officers that I was rich and that we had expensive furniture in the house. We were refused help and I had to sell the wardrobe and some other furniture.”

Pensions were also paid to those who had been in employment for a minimum period of time. Pensions were paid to all men over 65 years and women over 60 years and blind persons over 40 years without any contributions being made by the beneficiaries. These pensions were started in 1950 subject to a means test but some years later the means test was removed and all those who had crossed the age limits were entitled to receive pension payments.

Mauritius was one of the first British colonies to introduce Workmen's compensation legislation in 1931. This ordinance provided for the payment of compensation to a workman who had been a victim of an industrial accident. The basic principle underlying the Workman's compensation ordinance was that the liability of the employer is not limited to cases where it could be shown that he has been guilty of negligence. It was enough that the accident, which caused the injury, arose out of and in the course of the employment.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL POLICY

The development of the Social Welfare Centres and the free provision of Maternity and Childcare services to the population contributed significantly to the reduction in fertility, relieving women from the oppressive burdens that high fertility entails. Women also were ensured of some financial supporting old age. The 1950's and 1960's saw a major expansion in social welfare in Mauritius. As a British colony, many of the social security provisions, which were being introduced in England, were also introduced in Mauritius. Thus, several provisions were made in the nineteenth century to protect immigrant Indian labourers under the Poor Law Ordinance of 1902, for outdoors and indoor relief. So all those who were unable to earn a living, in short, the poor and needy were given state support. The British also introduced a system of medical care consisting both of hospitals and of dispensaries. Parallel to these public services, planters were required by law to provide medical care for their employees.

With Independence these provisions have continued to expand. A whole ministry was created as from 1968 to be responsible for all forms of social assistance. Indoor and outdoor relief and pensions continue to be provided to all those over 60 years of age. The quantum of assistance for pensions and relief has been increasing in line with the cost of living. In 1977, the National Pension scheme was introduced for all those working in the private sector. This is a contributory pension and now reaches those employed in most large establishments and some of the medium and small establishments, as well.

This chapter ends with an interview with one of the most loved and respected of Mauritian intellectuals who has retained scientific rigor with a deep sense for humanism and concern for preserving the pride of motherhood among women. She is Monique Dinan, President of the Movement for assisting Motherhood (MAM).

“I came from a lower middle income family of 11 happy and noisy children. My father had a white-collar government job. Although I did not earn a scholarship when I completed primary school the 1950's, I was sent for secondary education - which was very unusual at that time for a girl. So although I did not come from a well-to-do family or a scholar I was among the few girls who continued with secondary education. I am grateful to Sister Patrick who gave a soul and sense of belonging to the Loreto Convent of Rose Hill of which we were the first students.

Since I did not win a scholarship at the end of the secondary school either, I decided to embark as a self - financed foreign student in a University in the UK. I traveled to the UK in a cargo ship and after much adventures and hardship of home sickness (our only link being the regular weekly letter), my financial means, the long winter walks to save on transport, vacations spent giving French tuition

to members of various families to save on lodgings, I graduated. I worked during the summer holidays to save money: I did extra work in offices and spent some time working in a hospital in the Isle of Wright. Luckily later on, I obtained a Commonwealth scholarship to do my Masters in Canada.

Monique has some interesting views on what Mauritianism should be,

“ One of the salient aspects of the time I spent studying for the HSC was attending thinking sessions about Mauritianism. As far as I can remember, this initiative can be credited to Father Souchon. These were public meetings where HSC students were invited to react to ‘exposes’ talks by four young people – a Hindu, a Muslim, a Creole and a Chinese – on what separated us and our vision of the future.

It is from those thinking sessions that I understood how little we knew about each other’s lifestyle. We could be classmates, study from the same textbooks and yet ignore everything about one another. When I came back to the country, I tried hard to work towards fostering a better knowledge of the elements of our society and respective cultures. I started coordinating the activities of a group that was writing articles in a page entitled ‘Nous Les Jeunes’ in Le Mauricien. Modern journalism was still in its infancy and we wanted to make ourselves heard outside the framework of political questions. We were a group women: friends and colleagues coming from various ethnic groups. We used to gather in turn in our family homes to talk about our respective lifestyles, food and important cultural and religious activities. Such initiatives, however small scale helped us broaden our horizons.

This later encouraged me to write a series of articles to explain our cultural diversity in the Week-End where I was responsible for a weekly chronicle. The research work that had to be carried out to write the articles helped me personally to better understand the complexity of Mauritian Society. We had to respect all that was important for the other. We had to let go of our prejudices. We had to believe firmly that the real wealth and future of our country lay in its religious and cultural diversity. I have published a book which is my very personal contribution to Mauritianism. I wanted to understand the origin and composition of the ethnic and religious groups of the country and to share among others what I had found. “The Mauritian Kaleidoscope – languages and religions” remains a reference work that explains the diversity of the population, based on census figures.

I still believe in Mauritianism, even if like so many others I realize the extent to which this wealth of our rainbow society remains its Achilles’ heel. While divisive forces promoted by political parties are more than ever at work in the country, it is the women’s task to organize activities to ensure that the social fabric does not worsen any further. One had to learn to act and react as Mauritians instead of being ghettoized in one’s religion or culture.

We still have much more to learn from one another rather than to take refuge in prejudices."

CONCLUSION

By the end of the 1960's, women had completed one stage of their struggle for a better place in Mauritius. They had walked a long distance on the road - whether from slavery, hard labour or total dependence to a new world which gave many of them some education, a chance to earn a living and to stand on their own feet if they had the guts to do so. But as shown from the Surveys undertaken as part of this study, most of the older women interviewed stated that in the end of the 1960, when they were still in their youth, life was difficult and very restricted yet not without its humour. The survey results clearly show that life is easier to bear materially speaking in the present times. It also shows that greater independence could also have made women more arrogant today than they were in the earlier years. On the other hand, it would appear that domestic violence was less prevalent. In fact, little has been recorded about violence in the family in the 1800's or 1900's. Is it that the violence existed but was not reported or has independence for women provoked more violence? Times have changed and the position of women has improved or has it only become more onerous with additional responsibilities being thrust on them? Let us read on to the next two chapters to better understand the evolution of women over the ages.

Annex 1

The life of Jayanti Moti - the first woman Labour Officer

Jayantee accordingly went to Piton Government Primary School where she was the only 'Indian' girl. She enjoyed school and had many friends, most of whom were daughters of artisans on the Beau Sejour Sugar estate. She recalled only one experience of prejudice and would say that the girl who had insulted her was quarrelsome anyway! Her teachers loved her as she was a bright extrovert, confident enough to correct pronunciation mistakes of young teachers!

On the basis of her scores at the Junior Scholarship Examinations for the first time, her teachers encouraged her to sit again but the head teacher had forgotten to enter her for History and Geography. So she was not allowed to sit the exam despite representations made by her father at the highest level. How conveniently administrative errors sealed the fates of subjects in those days!

Undeterred, my grandfather used all his resources to pursue Jayantee's education. With the help of private tutors, correspondence courses and the midnight lamp, she passed the Junior Cambridge Examination at the age of fourteen and was ranked among the ten best candidates, quite a feat for a private girl student from Piton. Once again, by administrative error, she had been entered among male candidates, probably by some clerk who assumed that no girl from a rural village could possibly sit for the Junior Cambridge exam. She recalled with emotion how she forced her way to the Rector's office at the Royal College of Curepipe and got one of her tutors to attest that she was in fact the candidate and was subsequently allowed to sit the examination. She would also relate how, when the results were out, her uncles had brought some friends from Rose Hill to show off their clever niece. One of them looked at her and said '*Ou pas tia donne li sa, Hein!*' Like many women, she was felt that this kind of treatment hurt much more than injustice which you can at least do something about.

This foretaste of success was followed by almost a decade of setbacks: she nursed her mother who suffered from rheumatic heart disease for the next five years, trying to study on her own for the Senior Cambridge School Certificate and the London Matriculation Examination, looking after her younger sister after her mother's death for another five years and being confined to the house like most unmarried young girls of her milieu-socially almost non-existent. She was married off at twenty-four, late for a Hindu girl in those days. Her husband Gurudutt Moti, son of Moti Master, was seen as a promising young man of 25 and my mother was considered a suitable match only by virtue of her education and my maternal grandfather's Arya Samajist convictions. However, the religious marriage was not backed up by a civil marriage, an indignity under which my mother smarted all her life. The civil marriage was performed after my birth. Decades

later, when I told her about the legal recognition granted to religious marriages and what a great step forward this was for women, she just looked bored and far away.

The in-laws' place or Shwashuraar was an education itself. By now, her spontaneous, extrovert nature had been considerably dampened and adaptation to a large, disciplined, extended family was tough for a girl who had managed her father's house for the past five years. She gradually lost all self-confidence but the one positive thing she later recalled was: *"One was free to sing there. Father-in-law did not mind."* The birth of a child was both a joy and a disappointment. She used to say: *"My first thought was that I'd brought into this world a girl who would go through the same kind of hell I'm going through and I wept over that inconsolably."*

My father's death in 1939, four months after my birth, and widowhood brought further trials in their wake. Had it not been for the loving support of her father, brother and sister and for the soothing atmosphere of the village community, it is unlikely that she would have survived. With their help and caring, she triumphed over disease and depression, took up her studies again, obtained the Second Class Teachers' Certificate and joined government service as a primary schoolteacher in 1942. It took her three years to regain control over her life. From that point, my mother became the pillar of the family, looking after her ageing, financially ruined father, her younger sister and myself.

This was a time of social unrest on the sugar estates. Engrossed as we were in our own struggle for survival, rumours still reached us about trade unions and strikes and new structures that were to be put up for the welfare of workers. When she heard that a Female Labour Inspector would be recruited, my mother immediately wrote to the Labour Commissioner and got the usual polite reply that the post did not exist. Seven years later the post was advertised... Meanwhile she was selected for the Domestic Science Course for women teachers that the Training College had just introduced. There was much prejudice against this course and the six trainees were even disparaged as *'bane domestiques'*! Mother was totally indifferent to such remarks. Once again she was the only Hindu woman in the group. Her vegetarianism was scrupulously respected by her British tutors- an object lesson in respect for other people's customs and traditions, which she appreciated and assimilated. She still wore her widow's weeds- the white sun-bleached coarse shirting saree. The competition was tough but she enjoyed the exposure to English, to other cultures and values and to knowledge that was of practical use. It was at this time that a cousin of hers, Rampersad Neerunjun, came to our rented two-room home in Clairfonds, on one of those dreary public holidays while she was drudging away at the chores that are the lot of working women on such days and said to her, *'Je croyais que tu étais devenue une grande jeune fille gagnant beaucoup d'argent!'* The effect this had on mother's self-image was profound. The glass ceiling was shattered not only for her but also eventually for many women like her who became gradually aware of possible alternatives to passive acceptance of poverty and a widow's fate. On completion of the Domestic Science course followed by one on nutrition, she joined the Public Assistance Department and worked with Dr. K. Hazareesingh, setting up the first Social Welfare Centre at Camp Fouquereaux with voluntary help from Mrs. Harford and Mrs. J. Koenig.

In 1949, the post of Female Labour field Inspector was advertised. She applied and obtained the job although the competition was again stiff with various lobbies pushing their candidates. She used to say how grateful she felt when Miss M. Mamet told her: *“Je retire ma candidature”*. Her reply was *“Merci, cela me donne plus de chance.”* Such gestures may well appear extraordinary to the younger generation! One of the conditions for permanent appointment was the wearing of a uniform as her British bosses thought that this would give her more authority and ensure her security. After much soul-searching, she sought advice from her guru, Swami Swatantrananda, who, to her great relief, told her to go ahead. Of course there was much criticism from the fundamentalists but family and friends supported her. She had a great sense of humour and would relate different reactions like that of a sugar estate manager who remarked *“Mais qui vous a affublée de la sorte? Ah! Ces Anglais!”* She learned to drive at the age of thirty-six with much encouragement from relatives and colleagues. She had at that time a great capacity to concentrate on her goals totally ignoring all mockery and derision.

She was the only woman at the Labour Department and she was treated with special courtesy and consideration by her British bosses with the result that her Mauritian colleagues followed suit at least until Independence. She used to do a lot of field-work, and came to know whole island, visiting sugar estate camps, factories, shops, settling disputes, representing the Labour Department at Industrial Court. Thus she met Mauritians from all backgrounds and would mention many of them later on, employers and employees alike, with affectionate respect. I remember an injured docker saying to her in her office: *“Ou comma mo Mamma”*, while a sugar estate manager remarked, after an arduous dispute settlement, *“Vous êtes une grande conciliatrice”*. This was in line with her conviction that *“Un arrangement bancal vaut mieux qu’un bon proces.”* She brought a human, maternal touch to her work even when professional competition in post-Independent Mauritius deprived her of the chivalrous regard she had had earlier on! The concept of gender-bias was unknown to her and she did her best to cope in her own way with its manifestations. What mattered to her was that she could support her family and provide for my education. She was sent to attend a Labour Inspector’s course in Britain in 1953-Coronation Year. She totally enjoyed this experience and came back with a broadened vision of industrial relations and the welfare of women workers. However her suggestion that sugar estates be encouraged to provide crèches for children of women labourers met with scepticism. Come back in fifty years’ time! She was appointed Temporary Labour Officer in 1960 and confirmed in 1963. Later on, she was given responsibility to train young recruits but it was considered that she lacked supervisory ability. Could it have been a case of gender myopia? How can you train without supervising or vice versa? Anyway her former trainees still speak affectionately of her. She retired in 1973 and the silver-plated tray, her retirement gift, says: *“With kind thoughts from your colleagues.”*

Retirement brought its own satisfactions, particularly the freedom of doing what she called “men's fantasies”. She had at last liberated herself from the constraints and pettiness of a world that had been both kind and unkind to her, as this world goes. Does it really matter? In her own way, she had won, in the end, against all odds.

CHAPTER IV

**THE GENDER CONTEXT IN
POST INDEPENDENT
MAURITIUS
1968 - 1990**

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CHAPTER IV

THE GENDER CONTEXT IN POST INDEPENDENT MAURITIUS, 1968 - 1990

SETTING THE STAGE FOR WOMEN IN INDEPENDENT MAURITIUS

The objectives of this chapter are to describe developments that took place on the political and socio- economic scene in the first two decades of independent Mauritius. Given the economic structural transformation that took place during this period and which impacted on the social scene, it has been more convenient to undertake the analysis under two separate headings - the pre- Structural Adjustment period and the post-Structural Adjustment period. The focus of the whole analysis has been on women and their role in the development process; nonetheless the exercise has been taken in the context of the overall socio-economic development of the population.

A. INTERNATIONAL/INTERVENTIONS ADVOCACY

The years 1975 – 1985 were declared the UN Decade for Women and Development which gave an important international advocacy impetus to government to focus on women in development planning. Mauritius heeded this call when as from the second development plan, covering the period 1980 - 1985 a chapter was devoted to issues pertaining to women in all the National Socio-Economic Development plans prepared by government. This is indicative of the inclusion of women's issues in national planning. Maybe, the detailed techniques for streamlining gender were not fully understood and the planning exercise was no more than a ritual followed to the letter by an economist who were not gender-sensitive. But on the other hand, it was recognised that women could not be ignored because they were becoming a force, albeit, in the background.

B. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

One of the biggest political victories for Mauritius has been gaining independence in 1968. The fact that 'Independence' as an issue was so strongly contested made it an even more important victory. As stated in the last chapter, 44 % of the electorate opposed Independence and yet abided by the wishes of the majority once the initial

'bad blood' was shed and frustrations given vent to. It may be added that there has been no single issue on which the electorate has been so divided, since then.

Life as an independent nation began on thorny grounds. Although the first Prime Minister prophesied that Mauritius "*will emerge within the wider framework of sovereign and independent countries in this new partnership, Mauritius will be in a more advantageous position with all the problems that it has now to face*"⁷⁹, the Labour Party found that it had to join hands with other parties to make any headway. The Labour Party's term of office was expected to come to an end by 1972, but given the lack of progress that was made in resolving many of the issues which had been purging the country since Independence, Parliament's life was extended from 1972 to 1976. The non-holding of elections was meant to give breathing space to the coalition government, joined by PMSD (led by Sir Gaetan Duval) upon the Independent Forward Block's departure, so as to concentrate upon national development.

In the meantime, a new political opposition was crystallising around a group of young Marxists who founded the Movement Militant Mauritian (MMM) in the 1970's. It began as a workers' party determined to fight against the local "*bourgeoisie*" and the established middle and upper classes. Surprisingly, many of the erstwhile followers of the PMSD (with a large majority from the General Population) who had become disillusioned with the Labour Party as well as many Hindu followers of the Independent Forward Block of the Bissoondoyals, joined the MMM. This gave a national colouring to the MMM and an enormous following. As was expected an MMM candidate - Dev Virahsawmy - was able to win 72 percent of votes a supposedly safe seat of the Labour Party at the 1971 by election.

In the wake of Independence, the country found itself in an economic abyss and confronted "*with communal turmoil*".⁸⁰ The priority of government was thus to bring the various factions of Mauritian life together in social harmony. For this to happen, government soon realized there had to be national reconstruction. The Labour unions became very strident and wage claims and strikes became frequent. Government was forced to take some popular measures. The political masters feared a disintegration of the new nation and elections at the national, municipal and village levels were put off. An important political step taken was the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1974 and the granting of 'free education' at all levels in 1976. These measures were expected to pacify the very vociferous and militant groups, many of which had voted against Independence, as well as others which had supported the Independence movement.

Elections were finally held in 1976 instead of the scheduled 1972. The Labour party won 38 % of the electorate and with the support of two other parties (CAM and PMSD) retained leadership at the Assembly, while the leader of the MMM - Anerood Jugnauth (Later made Sir and referred to as SAJ henceforth) won 39% of the electorate and 30 seats becoming the Leader of the Opposition. The wave of

⁷⁹ Ibid, Dukira, Chit

⁸⁰ Ibid, Dukira, Chit

discontent against the Labour Party continued to snowball and in the next election of 1982, the MMM party was victorious gaining all 60 seats in the Assembly. SAJ became Prime Minister in 1982 and continued to be Prime Minister till 1995, although there was a splinter in the party and he created a new party the Mauritius Socialist Movement (MSM) in 1983. As for the Father of the Nation, as Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, came to be known as, was made Governor General in 1983 but passed away in 1986 at the age of 86 years.

WOMEN AND POLITICS

Women played their role in the political awakening of the country which led to Independence in 1968. One of the women who entered active politics during the struggle for Independence was Mrs. Radhamanee Poonoosamy. As she herself stated in an interview in 2000.

Box IV.1 - INTERVIEW OF MRS R POONOOSAMY

"I was requested by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo to attend a meeting of the Labour Women's League (LWL) which had a quite significant number of important members. The first President of the Labour Women's League was advocate Mrs Laure Pillay who owing to professional reasons, was unable to attend the meetings regularly. I was elected President of the Labour Women's League after which I went about establishing the Labour Women's League on a sound footing, with the co-operation of its members. I must pay tribute to Mrs Prêle, who assisted in a big way in the recruitment of new members. As the patron of the league, Lady Sushil Ramgoolam also helped the movement considerably.

I recall very clearly the 1967 elections. Together with a few women agents, we toured the island, canvassing women and holding private meetings, which gathered great momentum. The spirit of co-operation was well present in these house meetings. I was soon elected member of the executive committee of the Mauritius Labour Party and also rose to be one of the Deputy Presidents. I continued to be very active in the 1967 election for Independence and because of my new position in the Labour Party, reached out to more women explaining to them the challenges facing the country and the importance of women exercising their right to vote and thereby on their participation in forging the destiny of the country. To show his commitment to the cause of women, SSR took the bold decision to select a woman to stand as a candidate for the 1967 elections and I was the first lady candidate who was offered a ticket. I stood for the crucial Independence election in 1967 in the constituency of Belle-Rose – Quatre-Bornes which unfortunately elected the opposition candidates."

After the 1967 elections, which brought Independence, recognition was given to the role of women in the socio economic development of Mauritius. Mrs Poonoosamy was asked by the party to serve on several Boards, namely the Mauritius Family Planning Association Board, the Film Censor Board, the Price Control Board; the last Board had been set up by government following the Annual Labour Congress of the Labour Party. She continued with her political activities and in 1969 she was elected member of the Municipal Council of Quatre-Bornes as Deputy Mayor and on two occasions assumed the post of Mayor on an interim basis. In 1970, she was delegated by the labour Party to attend the International conference of the Social Democratic Party of Madagascar and in 1971 she was the official delegate to the Women's conference held in Dar-Es-Salaam.

Her entry into the Legislative Assembly was made possible in 1975 through the Best Loser system. She was then appointed the first female minister and was given the newly created Ministry for Women's Rights, Price Control and Consumer Protection. Immediately following her appointment, she headed the Mauritius delegation to the First International Conference on Women held in Mexico in June 1975.

The main issues that were tackled by Mrs Poonoosamy were the Age of Consent for marriage and the legislation of the Hindu Marriage Act. Since the Hindu religious marriage was not legal because it was not registered, the practice had been common enough among Hindu men to marry more than one woman under Hindu religious rights. Girls were often forced by their parents into marriages without first ensuring that the man was not already legally married. It then became difficult for women to disentangle themselves from the misery and degradation of being the second or third non-lawful wife. All these gender issues received the full attention of the Prime Minister who from a very early stage took cognisance of the problems facing women in Mauritius.

Although the stay of Mrs. Poonoosamy as Minister was short from, she made an impact on the lives of women both through her role as Minister of Women as well as the Minister responsible for Consumer Protection. Her ministry took steps to maintain some degree of price control especially of essential food items, fuel and basic commodities. Minimum prices were introduced for these commodities and Enforcement officers went round to check that the prices were strictly observed.

A page in the political history was turned when the elections of 1982, brought in a much younger party which had been only *"founded in 1969 under the impulse of its Secretary - General, Paul Raymond Berenger, and the Parti Socialiste Mauricien (PSM)."*⁸¹ The later was *"fathered in 1979 by Harish Boodhoo, a former school teacher with involvement in social work. Anerood Jugnauth as President of the MMM became the Prime Minister in 1982."*

Shirin Aumeerally Cziffra, a barrister-at-law, who had been an active and vocal fighter for equal rights for women was one of the founder members of the MMM. With its coming into power, she was automatically given the ministerial portfolio for Women's

⁸¹ Dukira, Chit, Grassroots democracy for national development, Editions de L'Ocean Indien,

Rights in 1982. She was Minister till 1983, when at the General Elections she lost her seat. She had been one of the first women to introduce the 'feminist dimension' in Mauritius. As she herself proudly states, *"I was often considered to be an extremist in the days when feminism was looked down upon in Mauritius, I campaigned incessantly to forge a consciousness about women's rights which has gained in momentum thanks to the internationalisation of the struggle by women in other countries, at the same period. The move for equal rights for women is at least irreversible - if not won. I also did everything in my power to forge solidarity amongst women and women's groups so that it was possible to lobby efficiently to bring change."*

When asked to assess her achievements, she pointed out that:

Box IV.2 - MRS AUMEERALLY CZIFFRA - A FEMINIST

"I was among the first women in Mauritius to engage in basic awareness programmes both at grassroots levels (under trees, in baitkas, in small verandas, garages or other meeting places). I was able to carry on with the work of advocacy in the place of work in the classroom and finally in the municipalities and the National Assembly. I was very proud when I could project women's needs and their rights in Cabinet i.e. where power lies."

Although a ministry had been created earlier, it had other responsibilities and could not concentrate fully on women's issues. With her energetic approach, Mrs. Cziffra was able to convince the Prime Minister on the need to have a full-fledged Ministry for Women's Rights, with a separate budget, and an independent administration. As she herself confirmed *"I was given only half a ministry as women's issues had been combined with price fixing and other issues in the earlier days. I was instrumental in ensuing a fully-fledged Ministry for Women. There is another important 'first' attributed to Cziffra. I am proud of the appointment of the first woman ever to hold the post of Permanent Secretary at the head of a ministry. I saw to it that Mrs. L Dubois who was the Principal Assistant Secretary in my Ministry was upgraded and appointed as the Permanent Secretary."*

Since then the need to have a separate Ministry for women has been accepted by successive governments. Thus the Ministry has remained and has grown in importance in terms of its personnel, portfolio and budget.

In terms of the “other first”, Mrs Cziffra had this to say *“But let me point this out to you that after almost 20 years (Mrs. Dubois was appointed in 1982), we still have only two female Permanent Secretaries and two Acting Permanent Secretaries in the whole civil service.”*

Mrs Cziffra was indeed fortunate in being both a lawyer and an active politician. As she herself said, *“The fact of also being Attorney General (first woman in the Commonwealth) gave a lot of credibility to the position and to the image of women in general.”*

Another important woman in Mauritius political life was Mrs Sheila Bappoo. Mrs Bappoo played an important role in government being the Minister of Women Affairs during a difficult period of the life of the country - between 1983 and 1995. For her getting into politics was not particularly difficult. As she stated,

“However, overall, I must say that my political career has not been too difficult a process. I have not felt that I have been humiliated as a woman. (As a political person perhaps - there are bad moments - but these bad moments exist in all aspects of life). My political career was comfortable. But as my competence grew, I sensed that my political colleagues treated me as a threat and attempted to “put me up in a ghetto”. “Women are not allowed to get too powerful in politics”.

“The commitment to Women’s Empowerment is a weak one, the results are there before us”.

Mrs Bappoo had a long career as a Minister during a particularly difficult period. We will have more to say about her.

There was generally a reticence among Mauritian women to enter politics. In fact, women moved into the municipalities before they entered national politics. So Madam Sharifa Damoo was the first Municipal Councillor at Port Louis. Since her time several other women have held similar positions in the other municipalities. These were Madam Shirin Aumeeruddy - Cziffra, Miss Joceline Minerve, Madam Marot and Madam Auleear. Each of them addressed the needs of women and children in their own locality.⁸²

On the other hand, political representation of women at elections and at party meetings has been a little less restrained. As the historian Moutou mentions, (translated from French)

“their presence has remained mitigated in a crowd which has been predominated by the masculine element. The grand pre-electoral labour meetings of the sixties meetings were characterised by a crowd which were from the rural and semi urban regions not marked by the female presence. The M.M.M., which inherited the P.M.S.D. followers, on the other hand had the capacity of mobilisation the feminine wing, which was not to be underestimated.”⁸³

⁸² Moutou, Benjamin; L'Ile Maurice: Vingt-cinq leçons d'histoire (1998 - 1998)

⁸³ Ibid, Moutou, B

Again according to Mr. Moutou, statistics show that women in the working age are more motivated to perform their civic duty and go to vote than men. Although as they become older, their enthusiasm to go to vote is reduced and fewer older women take the trouble to vote.

Another area where women have also entered is the diplomatic cadres. But this only happened at a much later stage. The first lady ambassador was Madam Shirin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra when the MMM government came back to power. She was replaced by Madam Ghislaine Henry who belonged to the PMSD party. Both ladies were ambassadors to France with residence in Paris over the 1985 to 1990 period.

GROWING GENDER AWARENESS AT THE NGO LEVEL

Several women's organizations came into existence during the 1968 – 1990 period. Without discrediting any of these important associations, two of them which reflect a wide range of interests have made an impact on public opinion.

The Mauritius Alliance of Women started as a direct result of the then government's decisions to send 10 Mauritian women to attend the UN International Women's Year Conference in Mexico in 1976. The members of the delegation represented prominent women social workers and leaders from all communities. It was on 8 March 1978 that some of the NGO representatives decided to organize a forum to celebrate the International Women's Day. More than 100 women participated in the discussions on health, education civic rights and so on. A remark made by the person giving the Vote of thanks.

How comforting it is to see such a dynamic gathering reflecting solidarity for women which could be an ideal start for a Mauritius Alliance of Women⁸⁴ (MAW) was applauded spontaneously by the audience and the MAW was born. Several consultative meetings followed and the rules and regulations of the MAW were adopted at a Special General Assembly held on 21 April 1979 and the organization was legally registered in 1979."

The organisation has grown and has many firsts to its credit. It is the first national women's organisation to bring together many other organizations from all walks of life. It was the first to set up a Women Centre, a Centre for the elderly, a Documentation Centre on gender and to organize leadership courses for women with the collaboration of the University of Mauritius.

The Women's Self Help Association (WSHA) began a few years later with the objective of enabling women to make their contribution to the revenue of the family and in so doing to improve the standard of living. The Association had a big impact as it gave free training to hundreds of young girls in the villages.

⁸⁴ Baguant, Mrs Sheila; President of the Women Self Help Association

The Women Self Help Association started in 1969 in a village to help ex-trainees of Government Vocational Centres and Social Welfare Centres, who had undergone training in hand-embroidery, dressmaking, basketry, leather craft could hardly develop their skills due to lack of funds or contact and no proper guidance, thus defeating the very objective of the vocational centres.

As stated by one of the founder member:

“We were hardly a year old when we were faced with a big order of embroidered and sewn blouses, table clothes, individual place mats, dresses etc. we accepted the challenge, although at that stage we were quite worried too. Some of us worked really hard, getting the girls working in groups under our supervision. We had to comply with deadlines. Also it meant travelling to different corners of the island. On the eve of a delivery few of us had to give the finishing touches to the items, iron and pack them in plastic bags till two o’clock in the morning. We knew for sure that in order to succeed we had to persevere. We also had the bright idea of having an official handing over of those articles which gave us publicity

Initially, the members gave orders to the girls to make small articles but as the quality of these products improved, it became a thriving concern. A full time manager was recruited to be responsible for the orders, purchase of material and the marketing of the products. Soon it had its branches and the Women Self Help Association own sales outlets including one at the airport – more details are given in Annex I.

Another important movement that emerged at the same time was the radical “Liberation of Women” or the popularly known as ‘*Muvman Liberasyon Fam*’ which was born in 1976. The birth of the MLF also came after a whole year of lively debate on the subject of “women’s liberation”, in the context of the International Women’s Yea⁸⁵. The bargaining position of women in the home, in particular, had strengthened in the 1970’s because while many women were being employed in the Free Zone, there was much unemployment among the men. This was also the time when the MMM was on the ascendancy and began its own feminine wing called the “*Ligue Feministe*”. The feminist movement also took on a class struggle dimension and the ‘*Lalit*’ a Marxist group developed into another political party gradually.

Basically, women were fed up with having to be under the domination of men in the private sphere of the family and also being ‘teased’, abused and ‘taunted’ in public. It is as a reaction to all this that a group of women came together to fight for equality for women. While in agreement with the demands of most international women’s group, the MLF was in conflict with the Mauritian Marxist feminists on the issue of getting quotas for women in politics.

Many of the demands of MLF have been obtained over the years but the MLF continues to be at the helm of progress and improvements for women. The current

⁸⁵ Muvman Liberasyon Fam, The Women’s Liberation Movement in Mauritius, December 1988

items on the MLF agenda are better housing for female heads of families in the lower income brackets and the legalisation of abortion.

C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The approach taken to solving economic problems in independent Mauritius was pragmatic. As stated by the Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam in the preface of the first Development Plan⁸⁶, *"The achievement of independence on March 12, 1968, gave Mauritius the opportunity of determining her own destiny in social and economic fields. The publication of the National Plan for Social Economic Development is the most significant event in the history of Mauritius since independence. Our major social, economic and political problem is unemployment and our greatest asset is our people."* Economic Planning became a part of the economic life of Mauritius henceforth for more than two decades after which a long-term stance was adopted. During the 1970 to 1990 period, four development plans were prepared which set out the broad objectives for the economy. Starting with employment creation as the top priority, planning objectives have moved to more productive jobs and greater equilibrium in the economy, improving the balance of payments position and reducing government budget deficits.

The specific plan objectives of the various plans are at Annex II. The 'people-centred' aspect of Mauritian planning is evident from the very first plan which focussed on 'employment creation' instead of economic growth and increasing Gross Domestic Product. The Prime Minister, SSR stated in the foreword to the first plan, *"Under the present circumstances, economic and social development in Mauritius will be meaningless unless it means the creation of productive employment opportunities for our youth. The plan attempts to do this."* This was inline with the development objectives of the UN Second Development Decade, which was work and incomes for all. The Plan goes on to state that "it is matter of social priority that the entire labour force must share in the productive activity of the country. Those who cannot find an employment now cannot wait until the end of the decade before they can find work. It was seen that to create some 130,000 jobs within a ten - year framework - so as to attain 'full employment' the economy had to be restructured. In addition to increasing efficiency in the sugar industry and the diversification out of sugar into other crops and livestock, provision was made for the creation of a new sector, manufacturing exclusively or principally for external markets.

The Second Development Plan, which covered the period 1975 to 1980, continued the basic objective of employment creation but focussed on 'quality jobs'. The need to increase productivity and output per person was emphasized. Unfortunately, the employment efforts were not very successful and unemployment continued to rise. Several measures were taken in the social field, which continued to place a burden of the public budget. For example, social security provisions continued to increase, and free secondary education was introduced in 1976. Unemployment levels reached the

⁸⁶ Government of Mauritius, 4-year plan for Social & Economic Development, Vol 1- General Analysis and Policies, 1971

unprecedented rate of 20 % of the labour force. Social tensions began to rise and the economy was truly in the doldrums by the mid 1970's and early 1980's.

In the light of the worsening economic conditions, the focus of the third and fourth development plans covering the period 1980 to 1982 and 1984 - 1986 was on bringing the economy into 'a state of equilibrium'. The Prime minister said in the 1984 - 1986 plan *"In this plan period, the country is expected to start moving out of the quagmire. In the process, the population has been made to bear quite some pressures, be it on the extent of its purchasing power, the thickness of its pay packet, the level of subsidies on basic foodstuffs and essential services or all the good things to which the population has been used to."*

After a period of expansion in the economy, the latter half of the 1980's has been a period of adjustment, in the words of the PM himself, *"Government is already taking the lead in improving the management of the economy. It is bringing the budget deficits to a more sustainable level"*. He continued to sound the alarm bell on the need to bring budgetary deficits to a more sustainable level by restraining from taking some socially desirably measures, which is the price for economic redress. Increasing foreign exchange earning through the export processing zone was key to the success of these programmes. An analysis of the main sector while focusing on the role of women is given in the paragraphs, which follow.

AGRICULTURE

The agricultural sector was on the wane not because output was decreasing but as a result of the shift in focus. The total quantity of sugar produced has remained around the 650,000 mark although land under sugar cane has been declining gradually as more land has been diverted for the tourism industry, for housing and roads and other development associated with the increasing urbanization. Simultaneously, steps were taken for improving cane yields as well as the extraction rate of sugar from cane. The shrinking of land under sugar cane production was accelerated during the 1980's as many erstwhile agriculturists and the sugar plantocracy diversified into industrial and tourism activities. Several other problems also hit the industry; they were the lack of water for irrigation, the decline in the profitability of the industry, the need for closure of factories and the mechanization of field operations.

Marketing has been an important aspect of the sugar industry. After the introduction of the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement in the 1950's, Mauritius successfully renegotiated favourable terms for the export of its sugar with the European Union under the Yaounde Convention followed by the Lome Convention in 1975. Thus not only the market for but also the price of Mauritian sugar has been guaranteed since the 1970's.

AGRICULTURE AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

The agricultural sector has provided the only employment outlet for many women for the greater part of Mauritian history:

"From pre-independence until the early 1970's, Mauritius was a mono-crop economy depending on the production of sugar for its national output and income. The backbone of the Mauritian economy was supported by a very; large female labour force - indeed about 68 % of the total female labour force was employed in the agricultural sector in 1968 reaching a peak of 73 % in 1970. The women did most of the manual work like cleaning of fields, weeding and so on. Working conditions were hard and the women had to start working from 5.30 in the morning to end at about noon."⁸⁷

TABLE IV.1

EMPLOYMENT IN LARGE ESTABLISHMENTS BY MAIN SECTOR AND BY SEX, SELECTED YEARS

Sector	1975 ⁸⁸		1980 ⁸⁹		1990	
	No. Employed/ (% share of Employment)		No Employed/ (% share of Employment)		No Employed/(% share of Employment)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total	134,003 (77.5)	38,811 (22.5)	144,461 (73.5)	52,180 (26.5)	272,367 (69.2)	120,967 (30.8)
Of which Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	47,590 (73.8)	16,879 (26.2)	44,032 (72.4)	15,988 (27.6)	46,273 (74.0)	16,274 (26.0)

Source: Central Statistical Office. *Digest of Employment - Earnings*

Although a large number of women worked in the agricultural sector, few of them rose to positions of authority or entered the sector at the technical level. In fact, as far as the agricultural labourers were concerned, even the opportunities for becoming "sirdarines" or 'foremen' shrunk during the 1980's. This was because over the years some educational qualifications were required to become 'foremen'. As the women who were working in the sugar industry as agricultural labourers generally did not possess much formal education, their chance for becoming 'foremen' diminished. Thus as from the 1980's there has been only two or three women who were "sirdarines" out of the 20,000 women who were agricultural labourers.

Another important phenomenon is the advancing age of the labourers in the agricultural sector. The reason for this is simple. With the setting up of Export

⁸⁷ Chinen, Ms Shirley; Senior Economist, AREU, The contribution of Mauritian Women in Agriculture, in Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development, WOMAN, International Women's Day 99

⁸⁸ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Central Statistical Office, Digest of Employment & Earnings, several years; August 1981

⁸⁹ Ibid Ministry of Economic Planning & Development, Central Statistical Office

Processing Zone (EPZ) industries in the 1970's, younger women flocked into the numerous textile firms in Port-Louis and Coromandel and in later years, throughout the island. Working in the EPZ presented a totally different type of work experience and social value than being agricultural labourers.

Women also made an important contribution to the livestock sector especially at the household level. It was usually the women who were responsible for gathering fodder and grass for the cows and other animals, milking the cows and often also cleaning the sheds and the animals. In the livestock sector as in crop production and agro-industry, the contribution of women was unrecognised, not financially remunerated and often under valued. The contributions they made in the livestock and vegetable production sectors were part of the unpaid labour provided by women to the family economy and indirectly to the national economy.

MANUFACTURING

The birth of the export - oriented manufacturing sector occurred with the establishment of the Mauritius Export Processing Zone in the late 1970s. This was preceded by the introduction of development certificates for the facilitation of import substitution industries. A package of incentives, tax exemptions and subsidized infrastructure was provided to attract Mauritian and foreign entrepreneurs to set up industries in Mauritius. And the "baby boom" of the 1940s provided the labour force, needed in the 1970s and 1980s, in particular female labour, for the industrial sector.

The Mauritian industrial sector took off with garments and textiles, which still dominate the industry, although some diversification into related products has taken place. While the early growth of the Export Processing Zone was largely due to the inflow of capital from France and the UK, and the technological and marketing expertise that came with it, the boom of the EPZ in the 1980s was the result of the influx of flight capital from Hong Kong. Local capital has also played an important part in the development of the EPZ.

Another factor which aided the growth of the sector is the favourable entry terms that Mauritian garments have into the European Union markets through the Lome Convention. Similarly, under the Multi-Fibre Agreement, Mauritian exports had favourable entry into the US market.

The industrial sector has itself experienced a transformation over the past two decades. From producing a range of basic, low-design garments, some segments of the industry have moved on to higher quality products. Mauritius has also become one of the biggest knitwear exporters in the world since the mid 1990s. More recently, the cost of labour in Mauritius has increased; inducing some of the more established industrialists to move to Madagascar and other mainland African countries, where labour is still cheap and abundant.

The population dynamics of the 1950s to 1970s has often been referred to as the Mauritian miracle because within a short span of years the population growth rate was brought down from 3.12% in 1962 to 1% by 1980. The "population miracle" of the 1960s has helped Mauritian industry move into a new stage of economic development where the emphasis is on quality and the use of modern capital intensive methods of production. Several measures were taken to give a fillip to industrial development. These included improving the administrative arrangements for the granting of export incentive certificates, the reform of the tax structure and the setting up of the export credit guarantee scheme. In addition double taxation agreements were signed with other countries. The manufacturing sector, particularly the EPZ enterprises, responded positively to the new policy environment. Value added of the EPZ sub-sector (in constant prices) increased. The share of EPZ in total manufacturing investment increased to around 28% in 1980. From only 9 firms in 1971, a maximum of 586 existed in 1991. Employment has followed the same trend – increasing from 600 in 1971 to 90, 800 in 1982 and 120,000 in 1990.

The attainment of 'full employment ' by the 1990s was only made possible through the development of the EPZ. It was the major instrument in reducing the unemployment level from the highest ever peaks of 21 % in 1982 to the low of around 4 % in 1990.

Several institutions have been set up since 1970 to promote the industrial sector. The most important has been the Mauritius Export Development and Investment Authority (MEDIA) which has played a key role in bringing in investors and finding markets. MEDIA has been supported by other institutions such as the Export Processing Zone Development Authority, set up in the 1990s, the Mauritius Standards Bureau (existing since the 1970s) and the Small Scale Industrial Development Organization. Among the non-governmental organizations, the most important has been the Mauritius Export Processing Zone Association.

WOMEN AND THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

The role and contribution of women to the success of the EPZ has been left unsung. The setting up of the EPZ in 1970 offered the first opportunity for most women to enter the formal labour market in large numbers. Up till then, most women were agricultural workers which meant that women with little formal educational qualifications, in the urban areas had few employment opportunities except as maids or cleaners. The alternate was the informal sector. So it was no surprise that from 430 female employees in 1971, the number soon rose to 13,700 in 1976 and stood nearer 100,000 in 1999. It may even be said that the EPZ has truly democratised the playing field for women.

It is through the EPZ more than any other sector that the increase in the female labour participation rate has taken place. As already stated, while in 1970, only some 28 percent of women in the working age group were actually employed or were seeking

for jobs, by 1990, this percentage had gone up to 38 percent. This had been possible because of the EPZ.

"However, this evolution in the betterment of the financial status of women was to be achieved at a price. The jobs held by women were low wage jobs and until 1984, labour legislation presented a differential between the wages of males and of females. Minimum wages for women was less than the minimum wage for men performing a similar job."⁹⁰

This made it more profitable for employers to hire women instead of men and hence in 1984, when the male unemployment rate stood at 21 percent, the unemployment rate for women was much lower, and women accounted for 81 percent of the EPZ employment. It is no surprise that the policy makers realized the impact that the wage differential was having and went about to correct it "So the Government Notice (GN) of 14 December 1984 was introduced which brought about a major change. It stipulated minimum wages only for females. The discriminatory measure was removed"⁹¹ and wages for male EPZ workers were liberalized. "This led to a readjustment in the gender distribution and the unemployment rate fell to 6 percent. The abolition of the minimum wage for men had indeed improved the chances for male employment.

*The GN 65/1987 of 3rd July 1987 marked another major milestone in the EPZ: henceforth, males and females were indiscriminately referred to as 'factory workers' in the labour laws and were therefore considered as being at par."*⁹² Laws have thus played a part in bringing about some parity between men and women workers in the EPZ. But as pointed out by Jose Poncini, a well known industrialist and father of the EPZ, (translated from French)

"Women can play a major role in our entry into the modern world - a world difficult to predict but we already know the tools which will fashion this world. These tools need more spirit (intelligence) than muscles. The mechanics, electricians, engineers --- will have the same keyboard, the same screen of the computer as the screen used by secretaries, the managers, housewives and so on. It is through the democratisation of the universal tool of control (viz. the computer) that will lead us inexorably towards the equality of the sexes."

Nothing could be truer than this. Women have moved up the occupational hierarchy in the EPZ. From being predominantly *'in the production level as machinists or helpers [they are now engaged] in jobs such Human resource Managers, Financial Controllers, Production Managers, Designers, Stylists, Marketing Managers,.....'*⁹³

⁹⁰ Narod, Oomme The EPZ and its innovative lead in the role of women, appearing in Ministry of Women, Family Welfare & Child Development, Woman, 1999

⁹¹ Ibid, Narod, O

⁹² Ibid, Narod, O

⁹³ Poncini, M. Jose; From myth to reality, appearing in Ministry of Women, Family Welfare & Child Development, Woman, 1999

The increasing number of women working in this sector had a considerable effect on the Mauritian economy. In a Satellite Broadcast programme organized by the Mauritius Export Processing Zone Association (MEPZA) on "Women's Millennium", one of the most influential management gurus, Tom Peters, admitted, *"I am stunned ... at my blindness. This woman thing is unmistakably in the EPZ. It is ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY NO 1 for the foreseeable future."*⁹⁴

We should never forget the contribution of women to the Mauritian Miracle, which is epitomized in the EPZ. How do we help these women to continue to shoulder the responsibilities of the economic success with the multiple other roles that they play in the family and the community? This is a question to which a solution may emerge through more dialogue and insights into the new genderised paradigm of development now emerging in the 21st century.

TOURISM

The tourism sector, which was non-existent in the 1960s, was aggressively promoted in the 1970s. Attracting tourists became a stated objective of the Government and a ministerial portfolio was created for tourism in the 1970's. A multi-pronged approach was adopted. In addition to the physical arrangements and infrastructure expansion, air access policy was reviewed. Incentives were made available for the construction of hotels. The Government Tourist Bureau was re-structured as the Mauritius Tourist Authority - a public/private sector venture.

Amongst other factors, the expansion of Air Mauritius to various destinations such as Rome and Paris, and the aggressive stance taken by tour operators in Mauritius as well as in tourist - generating countries contributed to this expansion. The national airline has been continuously expanding over its thirty years of existence. From a two-country destination airline in the 1970s, it now spans much of the globe and the majority of its passengers are tourists.

In addition, Government strengthened its promotional efforts in Europe. Promotion has focused on high-spending tourists and on cultural and eco-friendly tourism - although it has been difficult to preserve the environment with tourist arrivals increasing to more than 400,000 by the 1990 from less than 1,000 in the 1960's. The spurt in tourist arrivals was after 1973. There has also been a change in the content of Mauritian tourism. From essentially focussing on "sun, sand and sea", an attempt has been made to promote the multi-cultural aspects of Mauritian society.

As a result of these efforts, the tourist sector has enjoyed growth rates, which have exceeded that of the economy as a whole. That growth is illustrated by the increase in the number of hotel beds from less than 200 in 1970 to near 6,000 in 1986 making the sector increasingly important to the national economy.

⁹⁴ Napaul, Moheene; The Future of Women in the Mauritian EPZ, appearing in Woman, Ministry of Women, Family Welfare & Child Development, Port Louis 1999

The sector has also been an important provider of employment, jobs increasing from 3,200 in 1976 to 12,000 in 1990. The employment created in the sub sectors and activities, such as transport services, food and beverages, handicrafts and entertainment linked to the tourist sector, has also been substantial.

WOMEN AND THE TOURISM SECTOR

The tourism sector has been important for women. It has provided an avenue for employment for women in the coastal areas where there has not been much industrial activity. Few EPZ factories have been set up in the coastal regions of Mauritius. In the early years of tourist development, women were only employed as chambermaids and cleaners in the hotels. It was comparatively easy for married women to work in the hotels as well as continue to look after their homes and children. There were in 1990 more than 10,000 women employed in the hotels with a few performing clerical and middle level management jobs.

GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT

In terms of employment, the labour force participation rate of women has been on the increase over the past four decades. From accounting for around 15 % of the female working age population in 1952, the rate increased to 33 % in 1983 and to nearer 40 % in 1990. In absolute terms, this has meant that there was a female labour force of 124,900 in large establishments out of a total working population of 393,334 in 1990. The increase in female employed labour force has been from 25,854 in 1972 to 53,539 in 1980. A detailed breakdown of women employed in the formal sector by group is given below:

TABLE IV.2

WOMEN* IN EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY GROUP (PERCENTAGE)

Industrial Group	1972	1983	1990	2000
Agriculture	37.3	23.2	-	
Manufacturing	10.1	30.3	49.6	
Community, Social, Personal Services	42.6	34.4	22.7	
Total (Numbers)	43,563	66,826	124,013	

**Population aged 12 years and over*

Source: Census data, selected years

The share of women in the working population has been increasing from 22.5% to 26.5% and 30.8 % over the years 1975, 1980 and 1990. Women represent about 25% of the labour force in most sectors except manufacturing where they account for almost 50%.

WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The first time that there was a chapter, devoted to “The Role of Women” was in the second post-Independence Plan the 1975 – 1980 Plans. Although the first plan took into consideration the welfare aspect of development, including the cause of women, it did not devote a chapter to women for the simple reason that gender awareness even at the international level was still in its infancy stage. The International Women’s Conference in 1975 in Mexico was instrumental in bringing the ‘role of women in the process of economic and social development’ to many developing countries. Thus the first time that a chapter was devoted to ‘The Role of Women’ was in the 1975 -1980’ development plan. As stated in the same plan, *“The principal aim is to make fuller use of the contribution of women in all spheres of economic and social activity. Steps will also be taken to redress the social and institutional factors which discriminate against women”*. Even though women were not mentioned in the earlier plan, the policies of government had taken into account the needs of women as homemakers and carers of the young and the aged. Thus by the 1970’s

“The falling infant mortality has made a significant contribution towards the improvement of the quality of life of women. The spread of family planning and the increasing effectiveness of Government’s policy in this area made it possible for the greater majority of women to be relieved of many social burdens, thereby enhancing the disunity of women. The provision of a wide range of social services such as maternal health, child care and community services has also helped to liberate women from traditional chores and has ensured their fuller and more meaningful participation in the economic life of the country”⁹⁵

The 1975 – 1980 plan also recognized that giving women an equal role with men in all walks of life was not a peripheral issue in development. Provisions were therefore made for equal opportunities for girls at secondary level education and vocational training. In terms of legislation it was stated that *“Legislation, in relation to women’s rights, has been inherited from the past and a comprehensive review has been undertaken to ensure that every vestige of discrimination is removed especially in the area of civil rights. The constitution provides for equal political rights for men and women.”*

The Plan provided for the setting up of a Commission for Women’s Affairs under the aegis of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Prices and Consumer Protection with the objective of working for the integration of women in total development efforts. The Commission was also expected to study ways of effecting changes in the traditional attitudes of women and encouraging the participation of women in positions of leadership, policy-making and decision-making.

Development planning efforts were not left in the lurch. Regular reviews were prepared to show the nation the successes and failures in attaining the plan objectives. Although a chapter was not devoted to women in the 1977 – 1980 Review⁹⁶, the issues

⁹⁵ Ibid, Mauritius 1975 – 1980 plan

⁹⁶ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Mauritius Economic Review 1977 – 1980, Government Printer, 1981

of concern to women were dealt with. For example, in the health chapter, the infant mortality rate was monitored and it was stated *"The mortality rate per thousand among children (deaths in hospitals expressed as a percentage of admissions) aged 1 to 4 years has also decreased from 4.5 thousand in 1971 to 4.1 per thousand in 1975 and 2.4 per thousand in 1980."* It was also stated in the same document *"Maternal mortality rate, however, has not followed the sustained downward trend as the infant mortality rate because of deaths due to complications of abortion."* Another important issue raised in the same chapter was the deterioration in the nutritional status of expectant and nursing mothers, school children and women working in the Export Processing Zone industries. Given the impact of low nutritional levels among mothers as being the cause of neo natal deaths because of immaturity of the foetus, steps were taken for extending the nutritional service and the health education unit of the Ministry of Health".

It is interesting to point out that the collection of disaggregated data was not yet accepted as standard procedure. Most educational data was therefore given in aggregate terms and did not show any gender distribution. The only exception was the intake into the Mauritius College of Education where the male/female distribution of the General Purpose Teaching and Oriental Language teachers (OLT) was given. It showed that while in 1975 some 60 (165) percent of male GPT were trained as compared to female (107) GPT, by 1979 the male/female percentages were almost equal. (128 male to 127 female)

In terms of Oriental Language Teachers (OLT), females caught up and overtook males in the numbers trained – 50 males and 38 females in 1975 as compared to 73 to 111 in 1979.

Although there was little gender focused sports and leisure programs, some training on the role of women in youth work was conducted as from 1979. It is clear that more opportunities were being opened for women but gender disaggregated data collection was not the norm yet.

The next development plan, the 1980-1982 plan for economic and social development envisaged an even greater role for women in the development process. The female labour force participation rate was expected to increase from an estimated 23 percent in 1978 to 25 percent by 1982. The female labour was 22.9 percent of the labour force and was expected to increase to 23.8 percent by 1982. Most of the other data – educational, sports and so on were still treated in the aggregate form only.

However, many of the specific gender needs were identified. For example, it was stated that, *"an increasing number of women is finding employment in the industrial and service sectors of the economy. However, despite these achievements, women have generally lagged behind in so far as their representation in decision-making levels is concerned."* The need for educational and employment facilities in rural areas was highlighted. This required putting in place a wide choice of vocational programs of all types accessible to both sexes. It was interesting that the needs for training of women who could not aspire to work outside the home because of socio-cultural traditional and attitudes were also

taken into account. The objective was to set up training programs to relieve the monotony and drudgery of household chores and to develop other interests with the minimum of disruption to their day-to-day activities.

Self-help schemes were also put in place to help raise family incomes. With the same objective, cooperative activities were to be dovetailed to meet women's needs.

Another important area of concern was the nutritional level of women and children. It is proposed *"to lay emphasis on educating women on the nutritive of local foods and discourage the irrational use of processed foods. Measures will be introduced to discourage the extensive diffusion of commercials on non-essential foods and on items for which local substitutes are available."*⁹⁷

The creation of child-care facilities was another important area where government intervention became vital. With the increase in female labour force participation, employers were to be encouraged to provide childcare facilities and one balanced meal to their employees to promote healthy food habits. An important legal provision, which was to be amended, was as regards the contribution of women to the Pension Fund. Up to the 1990's the contribution of woman to the Pensions Fund could not be claimed by husbands and children and recognizing this anomaly, the Plan provided for several legal reforms. These included:

- Reviewing regulations concerning government and national pensions schemes to minimize irregularities and entitle men to benefit from the same pension rights.
- Presenting legislation to ensure women have the same civil rights as men.
- Raising the age of marriage from 15 to 18 years to ensure that girls/women enter into marriage only with their free and full consent.
- Providing legal provisions to ensure that women and men exercise equal rights to acquire, administer and dispose of property acquired during marriage, irrespective of the matrimonial regime under which they choose to marry.
- Introducing the Hindu and Muslims Marriage Acts to legalise religious marriages and thus prevent abuse.

The 1984 – 1986 Plan started by acknowledging that in Mauritius, the explicit recognition of the contribution of women in family welfare is not given by the public at large. In 1982, in line with the UN Plan of Action, the Ministry of Women's Rights and Family Welfare was created to further the cause of women, to eradicate all discrimination and to ensure that they were given equal opportunities to play their role in nation building on the same footing as their male counterparts.

⁹⁷ Ibid 1980-82 Development Plan

The various changes that had been made to the civil rights of women were mentioned in the Plan document. The new provisions that had been made were:

- (a) The status of the spouse (legal recognition of religious marriages)
- (b) The exercise of parental control and authorities
- (c) Matrimonial regimes (provisions for equality in property).
- (d) Amendments made to the law governing divorce and judicial separation as well as the law relating to the surname to be borne by married women, and
- (e) Amendments to laws relating to Immigration and Deportation and extending the provisions of the law to women as well.

The specific objectives as set out in the document were:

- (a) To legislate so that any remaining discrimination on grounds of sex is removed.
- (b) To ensure that equal opportunities and treatment are given to women as regards health education.
- (c) To launch campaigns designed to change attitudes with a view to eliminate sex discrimination and discouraging the proportion of stereotyped images of both men and women.
- (d) To prevent the exploitation of children.
- (e) To initiate action with a view to providing adequate care facilities for children up to pre-primary school age.

A network of women's centres were programmed to be set up in different parts of the country to serve as meeting places for women and where legal counselling, day care facilities and core services were to be provided. The 60 social welfare centres had been taken over by the Ministry of Women from the Ministry of Social Security and refresher courses for officers were organized. A rational approach was adapted to the management of these centres for the benefit of women and other partners. Although women were entering in a wide range of occupations there were still tasks in which women were discriminated against. The objective was to reduce such inequalities and to make the tasks less tedious.

THE STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES PERIOD

Notwithstanding the well conceived development plans, many of the targets proved to be quite elusive. The path between planning and implementation was fraught with difficulties as the early planners soon found out. So while the plans provided the broad framework for action and assisted in putting in place the various institutional organizations and measures that were required, only a few of the sectoral targets that were set were attained within the expected time frame - although they were attained in the longer term. For example, full employment was not reached in 1980 as originally set out in the 1971 - 1975 Development Plan but by 1988, Mauritius attained full employment levels mainly because of the success of the export manufacturing strategy

which was itself due to unexpected inflows of flight capital from Hong Kong and the general health of the world economy.

TABLE IV.3

GROWTH OF THE ECONOMY

Item	Unit	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
GDP at 1992 prices	Rs million	5,700	7,500	14,244	24,693	44,822
Average annual growth rate of GDP for period	%	-	2.8	6.6	5.7	6.1
Investment (GDFCF) in 1992 prices	Rs m	830	1,530	1,847	5,670	13,520
Average annual rate of GDFCF growth in 1992 prices	%		6.3	1.9	11.9	9.1

Source: Central Statistical Office, *Digest of Statistics*, several years

Thus, the employment problem of the pre-Independence period was partially solved in the 1980's with the re-launching of the EPZ. The Lome Convention which provided free entry of Mauritian goods to the EU was the main attraction for European and Asian entrepreneurs to choose the Mauritian EPZ to base their operations. Nonetheless, much of the initial weakness of the economy remained. And the country found itself in the doldrums, as were many other developing countries as a result of the world recession, stemming from the oil crisis. Mauritius was spared the full impact of the first oil crisis in 1973 by the 400 % increase in the world market price for sugar in the 1972 - 74 period. Mauritius enjoyed a corresponding increase in the price of the sugar it exported to the European Union. Money rolled into the country and the full impact of the oil crisis was not felt. But the second oil price shock in 1979 weakened the economy although the success of the EPZ enabled the country to solve its unemployment problem.

The pro-people approach, with the focus on employment creation and investment in social capital, adopted by government partly contributed to the near collapse of the economy in the 1970's. There is no magic formulae to determine how much of the Gross National Product and investment should be in purely income generating activities as compared to the percentage that could be invested in the non - income generating sectors - albeit social investment is necessary to improve the health and standard of living of the population.

In the 1950's and 1960's, Government investment was mainly in the provision of roads, development of water and electricity sources and the reconstruction of housing, which became a necessity after the extremely strong cyclones that hit Mauritius in 1960. With Independence, an expansionary policy of improving the quality of life of the average Mauritian was adopted. Provision of schools, one new hospital in the

north, the building of health centres and dispensaries throughout the island took up a larger share of investment funds. Public investment was also increased in response to rising unemployment as government launched a major programme for social reconstruction. Another important programme, which began to eat up more and more of public sector investment funds was the provision of low cost housing for the lower income groups. There were also upward adjustments in cost, prices and wages throughout the economy, all of which contributed to the budget deficits.

The impact of the factors discussed above was almost immediate. There was a rapid deterioration in the balance of payments and the depletion of the reserves leading to a 30 % devaluation of the rupee in October 1979. It became necessary for government to introduce measures for putting the economy back on the rails and this took the form of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) which the government negotiated with the World Bank and loans obtained from the International Monetary Fund for keeping the economy afloat.

The lack-lustre performance of all three sectors by the late 1970's was due to a variety of factors, also contributed to the collapse. Sugar production had reached its technological limits and further expansion was not possible, the EPZ was facing strong external competition and the tourism sector needed greater promotional support.

The SAP necessitated actions on various fronts. The most important of this was the need to bring about a substantial reduction on public and private expenditure and a redirection of investment to more productive sectors. The IMF was adamant about reviewing pay policy and the policy for compensation of employees for increases in cost of living. From a policy of full compensation the move was a policy of partial compensation only. The economic recovery programme meant a cutback on many of the social services like health, education and welfare provisions which were being provided free and the substantial subsidies on staples such as rice and flour and on water and electricity.

The SAP has brought a new orientation to economic thinking and the general awareness of the weakness of the economy. This facilitated the introduction of unpopular measures, which were necessary to reduce purchasing power and the level of food subsidies. A spirit of discipline, which is a *sine qua non* for bringing the economy back on the rails, was established.

Starting with a 30 % devaluation of the Rupee in 1979 the government with the support of the World Bank and the IMF implemented successfully five successive stands - by arrangements and two structural adjustment operations between 1980 and 1986. And Government also embarked on a programme to revitalize the main economic sectors.

The Mauritian success with the implementation of the Structural Adjustment programmes was of particular interest to all developing countries because in Mauritius the SAP were negotiated with the World Bank and IMF and not imposed by the

international organizations. Mauritius did not give in to the suggestions of the two organizations to introduce fees at the health and education sectors as a means to ensure cost effectiveness or to remove subsidies on the basic food items, which would have caused immense hardships to women and the poorer segments of the population. It would also have been political suicide to do so. Government even continued to provide low cost housing to the poorest of the poor during this period. The only change being that with the SAP, it was through loans rather than through building houses for the poor, that they were helped.

In addition to being successful, the Mauritian experience with the SAP was exceptional. Even though fees were not introduced and subsidies were reduced but not removed entirely, the SAP programme was completed in toto. In fact, the last IMF loan, which had been negotiated, was not taken because it was unnecessary. Mauritius was also one of the few countries, which has honoured all its loan repayment commitments to international agencies without any rescheduling being necessary. Few countries, even among the wealthier, could boast of such exemplary performance. It is not surprising, therefore, that the World Bank found that *“Liberalization of the trade and exchange regimes, improved resource mobilization, restricted credit expansion strengthened institutional capability all of which contributed to building a solid foundation on which the country was able to build to take advantage of the favourable developments in the international economy.”*⁹⁸

GENDER AND THE STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES (SAP)

WOMEN IN ADVERSITY

Mrs. S. Bappoo (Born Sheila Rama) was the Minister of Women's affairs (1984-1995) who saw Mauritius through the period of structural adjustment. What has her contribution been to *“Keep adjustment with a human face”* in Mauritius? Considerable, if we are to assess by results.

She belonged to a modest family, which owned sugar plantations in the south of the Island. But there were some professionals among the extended family. On her father's side, the family was well educated. Two of her uncles had studied in the UK (first group of Indians to study in the UK.) Her parents always felt she was special, given that she was born so many years after their fourth child. In Hindu belief, a fifth daughter is often auspicious. Hence as Sheila Bappoo stated in the interview *“Father always felt that my birth under such circumstances heralded a special mission for me to perform. I*

⁹⁸ World Bank, Managing Success, 1988

had to perform the mission during the period when we were struggling for economic freedom after our struggle for political freedom ".

Her greatest contribution has been in whatever influence she was able to bring within Cabinet so as to ensure that the needs of the poorest segments particularly women and children were protected during the period of structural adjustment

Several studies have been undertaken of the impact of the SAP's on women. To quote one study,

"The essence of women's distinctiveness lies in the multiplicity of their roles. Inequities in fact typify gender differences. As has been pointed out in the literature on the UN Decade for Women, women account for half the world's population, perform two-thirds of the hours worked (though are recorded as working only one-third of those hours), receive one-tenth of the world's income, and have one-hundredth of the world's property registered in their name.

These asymmetries mean that women almost always face more severe constraints and harsher choices in the use of their time than do men, and this difference has been magnified by economic recession and structural adjustment. With falls in individual and family incomes, women are obliged to devote more time to their role as producers, i.e. to earning incomes in cash or in kind. This in turn requires an intensification of effort by women in other directions, because their other roles have to be carried out in less time and often becoming more difficult to accomplish."⁹⁹

In many other countries, such as Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe,

"the stabilization and adjustment programmes undertaken have generally reduced access to basic goods and services, through the rises in prices, especially of food, that have accompanied devaluation, fewer price controls and diminished subsidies; and through decreasing expenditure, and sometimes raising charges, on health and education services. These changes, which have increased women's problems as home managers and mothers, have sometimes had devastating effects on health and nutrition. Any policy towards women as producers which help sustain household incomes will also improve access to basic food and services. Policies to maintain prices of basic goods, especially food and fuel, at a reasonable level are also needed, as are policies to improve access to social services."¹⁰⁰

In Mauritius,

"The implementation of the SAP had a differential impact on men and women. The factory closures in the EPZ were offset by new factories. Total EPZ employment rose very gradually between 1979 and 1983. The package of incentives given to the EPZ was not challenged, they were rather reinforced while the EPZ as a priority export sector was exempt from the credit restrictions

⁹⁹ Commonwealth Secretariat, Engendering Adjustment for the 1990's, Report of a Commonwealth Expert Group on Women and Structural Adjustment, Commonwealth Secretariat, London 19989

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, Commonwealth Secretariat, Engendering Adjustment for the 1990's

under the IMF conditionally."¹⁰¹ As pointed out in the same report, the SAP had a more adverse impact on men than women because with the decline in the construction, transport and storage and sugar sectors, more men found themselves unemployed than women. Employment in the public sector also virtually reached a plateau during this period. *"The upshot was that between 1978 and 1984, total employment of women increased from 49,469 to 61,641 in large establishments while total employment of men fell from 148,966 to 138,989."*¹⁰²

The Household Budget surveys in Mauritius also indicated the deterioration in living standards between the pre and post SAP period.

The experience in Jamaica has shown a new trend in women's employment with the changes in economic policy and the introduction of the SAP.

*"The importance of agriculture as an employer of female labour has declined by 7 per cent since 1985 due to increased emphasis on large scale export-oriented agricultural production. Structural adjustment is thought on the other hand to have stimulated increased informal sector activity with 30 per cent more women entering the distributive trades between 1980 - 1987 and many others moonlighting. It has also led to the emergence of a new and very lucrative occupation for women that of the "informal commercial importer", probably as a result of the dismantling of entry barriers with changes in regulations. The distributive trades have ended up being the greatest source of income equalization in the 1980s and women are extremely active in this area."*¹⁰³

The same phenomena could have taken place in Mauritius although it is difficult to obtain comparative data for the pre-SAP and post SAP periods. But looking around one can observe that the weekly open fairs that are held throughout the island are dominated by women who seem to specialise in clothing, toys and small articles. In the Mauritian case, such operations are largely conducted as family concerns and it is probably the male members of the family who take charge of the importation of goods and perform whatever paper work that is required. The female members of the household then undertake the actual vending. Under these circumstances, it is unclear whether women are enjoying higher incomes or greater financial liberty.

But from discussions with traders, it is clear that small commercial vending operations are becoming an important outlet for widows, unmarried female heads of families, both among lower and as well as middle income groups to earn a living or to augment regular income, especially during the end of the year holiday season and other festivities.

¹⁰¹ Kothari, Uma & Nababsing, Vidula; Gender & Industrialisation, Mauritius, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Editions de L'Ocean Indien, Rose Hill, 1996

¹⁰² Ibid Kothari, Uma & Nababsing, Vidula

¹⁰³ Commonwealth Secretariat, Women and Structural Adjustment, Selected Case Studies Commissioned for a Commonwealth Group of Experts, Commonwealth Secretariat, October 1991

However, at this stage, helping women to embark themselves on entrepreneurial activities on a sustained basis has not been developed. Women were entitled to assistance from the various schemes of the Development Bank and the Small Scale Industry Development Organisation, but in practice women found it quite difficult to have access to these schemas for various reasons.

We had to wait for almost a decade for the introduction of schemes, which were dedicated to develop female entrepreneurship. This included the micro-credit scheme to help women who were not crediting worthy, of the Ministry of Women.

What upheld women and families in general during the hard times of the Structural Adjustment period was the joint family system. Although the size of the family was falling and more families were nuclear in formation. Nonetheless, most families held strong linkages with the rest of the members in the larger family union.

So the general conclusion made on the impact on women of SAP by the Commonwealth study could apply to Mauritius.

"While women's position in formal employment may not have been specifically disadvantaged by adjustment, they have been subject, along with men, to increases in recorded unemployment {not true in Mauritius} at relatively higher rates and they seem to have taken on extra work in the informal sector in many different country settings. While there is no direct information in any of the studies of the intensification of women's labour efforts, nor clear evidence of an increase in total hours of work, such increases can be inferred as a consequence of this pincher effect: on the one hand increased time demands for family welfare have fallen on women as public services and subsidies have been cut, and on the other hand, women have met constant or greater demands on their producer function for falling or constant returns. Women's role as producers has become more important during adjustment, while demands on them in their roles as household managers and as mothers have also increased."¹⁰⁴

As stated by the Minister Bappoo,

"My major achievements as Minister for Women were creating understanding and awareness and bringing about a change in attitude towards women. They have moved from a secondary citizen status to a more egalitarian and empowered position."

She also added that economic policies have facilitated greater participation of women in employment and thus women have achieved greater economic self-reliance which has contributed towards growth and evolution. Sustaining free education has broadened access to employment of women in diverse fields. Educated and qualified girls are able to get better positions in the world of work. She emphasised that there is a big shift in their status. Women had made remarkable progress in their position from the pre-independence decade to the 1970's.

¹⁰⁴ Commonwealth Secretariat, Report October 1991

Sheila Bappoo's words paint the social and political. Picture clearly and aptly.

Box IV.3

MINISTER'S VIEWS ON LEGAL REFORMS

"As a Minister, I initiated many legal reforms and provided for legal literacy - awareness of rights and entitlements. When I took over as Minister, women were very ignorant about their status. However, the term "Rights" was also perceived as a very threatening term. There were suggestions to dispense off with the term Rights. But I was able to maintain my stand on the grounds that **"Rights are an entitlement to protection and development"**.

However, the process of making women aware of their rights and entitlement was not easy. There were statements hurled in the spirit of ridicule - such as *"does rights mean that women will now fight against men?"* ... The message that she was able to get across was *"that women too are human beings and entitled to participate in progress and benefit from progress"*.

Thus it was possible to enact legislation to give equal status to women which purported to end discrimination against women. This has been an uphill task. The efforts bear fruit only after much time and it took some ten years for the results to be visible. This has been acknowledged even internationally and today Mauritius is cited as a leading country for progress made in gender relations.

Box IV.4

MINISTER BAPPOO'S VIEWS ON A BETTER PLACE FOR WOMEN

"I have succeeded in giving women a better chance and status - and creating a better place in society for women. She has to now prove her worth and take up the opportunities available. The status of women has improved across the board - at all levels - be it as a girl, child or a senior citizen. Further improvement is in the hands of women's themselves."

Mrs Bappoo had the distinction of being both the Minister of Women's Rights and the Minister of Labour during the 1985-1990 period. As Minister of Labour, the just woman to hold this position, she made it a point to visit the factories and see for herself the working conditions of the many women who were employed in the textile

and clothing sector. By 1990, they were almost 60% of the work force in the manufacturing sector.

The 1980's was a period when many improvements were made to the working conditions of women. Various labour laws were adopted offering better working conditions to women. Women working in the factories were given maternity benefits and allowances including time-off for breast-feeding their babies. The system of early retirement at age of 45 was made optional for women. Women were also protected from having to carry loads and do heavy work and pregnant women were to be given lighter work.

Mrs Bappoo stated:

"It is a great pride for me to hold the office of Minister of Labour and Industrial Relation in 1988, the year of the Golden Jubilee of the Labour Services in Mauritius... Fifty years ago, workers had to shed tears and blood to be recognised as human beings... Today, the worker has his legal right and dignity recognised"

In 1975 the Labour Act was passed which codified previous laws and new elements. The fundamental rights of the worker as well as the process for their enforcement was recognised. In 1980, comprehension legislation was made to provide health, safety and welfare at all workplaces.

An important development that Mrs Bappoo was directly involved in was bringing the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund under the responsibility of the Labour Ministry.¹⁰⁵ The fund is financed by contributions from workers and employers of the EPZ and is managed by a tripartite committee. Representatives of the Ministry of Women and other ministries, the trade union and employers sit on this committee. The fund has been very beneficial to women workers as loans for the purchase of household appliances, education and other purposes have been made available to them.

Something new that started in the 1990's was the worldwide consensus to give women a priority place in the agenda of governments - e.g. donor agencies incorporated gender equality and equity into all their programmes and as part of their lending/grant procedures. Thus, to achieve this, the national machinery had to become more functional and assertive.

"My role as Minister was to give this policy for gender equality a push and direction. This was achieved through the development of a national machinery to plan the process of gender equality and equity and to co-ordinate the gender issue at the multi-sectoral level - mechanisms were created to spearhead, monitor and evaluate progress."

¹⁰⁵ Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relation, Women Rights & Family Welfare

Analysis by a Sociologist

Strengths-the presence of positive push factors. Sheila Bappoo's father was a strong mentor for her. Parental support Expression of trust, belief, facilitated the development of self-confidence and ambition. The father nurtured her capacities for social interaction beyond the confines of traditional set-ups of close family and friends. The father's repeated assertion that 'Sheila was Special' would have impacted upon her self-perception as an individual and her mission in life.

Basically, I feel that the men feel threatened by powerful women. "We are still living in a strongly patriarchal society even in the year 2000." "Just see – we are in year 2000 – why just one woman minister? And that too women's affairs. Are women not capable of handling other issues?" Yes, women could be given other ministries, but here they confront a very powerful lobby from men – complicated further by cast and ethnic factors." (Being in charge of ministry for women – is no competition for men).

"Truly, the belief and commitment to equality and women empowerment is superficial. It is essentially a cosmetic commitment not a deep profound commitment at national level. One senses that the leaders, because of the international factor, have to show commitment to women empowerment."

As stated in the National Development Plan 1992 - 1994¹⁰⁶, "Occupation wise, women were mainly employed as:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| • Plant and Machine operators | 33% |
| • Workers in Elementary Occupations | 28% |
| • Clerks | 12 % ¹⁰⁷ |

Although the penetration of women in the labour market has been a positive development it would appear that women have been facing erosion in their family and social lives. The objective of this study is to paint a more realistic picture of the gains as well as the losses suffered by women in their march towards modernity and gender equality.

G. WOMEN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL SECTORS

The period 1968 to 1990 falls neatly into two phases in terms of the provision and organization of social services. The first phase between 1968 to end 1970's was one of expansion in the provision of social services for the population, which was followed by a period of 'cutting back' and adjustment. Development in the social sectors followed the development that was taking place in the economic sectors. As already mentioned in the first part, after a period of economic expansion, the country was forced to accept the International Monetary Fund/ World Bank dose of structural

¹⁰⁶ Ibid Ministry of Economic Planning 5

¹⁰⁷ Ibid Ministry of Economic Planning 5

adjustment. This meant the introduction of cost effectiveness in the provision of social services and its financing. Thus there was a definite cutback in social services as from 1985 onwards.

DEMOGRAPHY

The period 1950 to 1990 is the period of the demographic transition. After reaching the highest population growth rate of 3.12 % during the 1952 to 1962 period, fertility levels began a downward trend as from the 1960's. The Mauritius Family Planning Association played the key role in sensitising policy makers and the people themselves on the need for population planning and the introduction of some form of family planning in the country. In the face of opposition from all quarters - the church, some politicians and the press, the Association struggled on to bring contraceptive technology to the people and the perseverance of the MFPA had results when the fertility rates began to fall. Thus, as can be seen from Table 4 below, Crude Birth Rates have seen a decline throughout the 1972 to 1990 period.

TABLE IV.4

BIRTH AND DEATH RATES IN MAURITIUS, SELECTED YEARS

Period	Population at mid period	Crude Birth rate	Crude Death rate	Infant Mortality Rate	Marriage rate
1972	1,024,571	21.3	6.7	19.9	22.0
1983	1,087,343	18.2	6.7	19.6	19.2
1990	1,024,08	16.7	6.8	19.4	18.9

Source: *Digest of Demographic Statistics, several years*

While family planning has played a role in reducing the rate of population growth, other sociological factors have also contributed to this decline. Among the most important of these factors has been the upward trend in the age of marriage. As in many other developing countries, the tendency has been for girls to postpone the age of marriage. The mean age at marriage for boys and girls has been on the increase. The rate for girls went up from around 22 years in the 1970's, it has gone up to 25 years in 1983 and 1990. For boys, the mean age has remained at 30 years since 1983.¹⁰⁸

Another factor has been the drop in the marriage rate. As will be shown in the next section, the 1980s were a period when the largest number of women entered the labour market. This new gained financial independence and a certain amount of modernization that the country was undergoing meant that more women were in a position to withstand

¹⁰⁸ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, National Development Plan 1992- 1994, Programmes and Policies, Government Printer, 1993

traditional perceptions and social pressure and remain unmarried. Thus the marriage rate declined over the 1972 to 1990 period. The drop was from 22 % to 18.9 % over the 1972 - 1990 period. The decline in the Crude Birth rate was accompanied by similar declines in the Age specific Birth rates.

TABLE IV.5

AGE SPECIFIC BIRTH RATES, SELECTED YEARS

(Births per 1,000 women in age group)						
Year	Age group					
	15 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 29	30 - 34	35 - 39	40 – 44
1972	50	188	190	130	88	32
1973	47	176	166	119	73	25
1980	61	172	159	105	58.	19
1985	37	119	116	73	39	12
1986	40	116	116	70	35	12
1990	44	147	138	80	38	11
1995	39	135	129	80	33	8

Source: Central Statistical Office, *Digest of Demographic Statistics, Several years*

It was in the early years that the major declines in fertility occurred. Although by the end of the 1960's the downward trend in the crude birth rate was well established, the transition to lower fertility levels had not set in as yet. Although there was a decline for all the age groups, it was the decline in the fertility levels for women in the 25-29 age group and the 30-34 age group which were reduced by half, which had the biggest impact on the reduction on the birth rate; this was because of the large number of women in these groups. It was also the period when government had not fully entered into the provision of family planning services. Government began its subvention of some of the activities of the MFPA and the 'Action Familiale ' an organization set up with the consent of the Roman Catholic Church for the dissemination of family planning services acceptable to the church - as from 1964. But it was much later, viz. it was only in the beginning of the 1970's, more specifically in 1972, that the 98 clinics of the MFPA together with the staff and equipment were transferred to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry assumed its new title of Ministry of Health and Population Planning. Table IV.7. gives the number of family planning acceptors by type of contraceptive in 1990.

TABLE IV.6

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF USERS BY METHOD, SELECTED YEARS

Year	1972		1983		1990	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Oral Pills	29,471	10.28			29,471	10.28
Rhythm method		6.96			19,952	6.96
Barrier methods		7.57			21,692	7.57
IUD		2.01			5,770	2.01
Depo-Provera		2.45			7,027	2.45

Source: Ministry of Health

This shows that it was the women more than the men who took family planning as a means to reduce family size were. In the 1970's and to date, it is the women's methods of family planning that are more prevalent. Unlike many developed countries, where men have contributed to the decline in the crude birth rate by adopting either abstinence, 'coitus interruptus' or sterilization as a method of family planning, in most developing countries, it is the women's methods that are more commonly used.

TABLE IV.7

AVERAGE ANNUAL PERCENTAGES DECLINES IN AGE SPECIFIC FERTILITY

1955 - 1972 AND 1973 - 1985 AND 1986 - 1995

Period	Age-Group					
<i>Decline from</i>	<i>15-19</i>	<i>20-24</i>	<i>25-29</i>	<i>30-34</i>	<i>35-39</i>	<i>40-44</i>
1955-1972	-6.05	-2.32	-2.01	-3.3	-3.27	-3.28
1973-1985	-1.97	-3.12	-2.94	-3.99	-5.09	-5.93
1986-1995	-0.28	1.69	1.19	1.49	-0.65	-4.40

Source: Calculated from Table 4. Above.

The average annual rate of decline has also varied for the different age groups over the three periods. (Refer Table II.4 above). The highest annual rates of decline were experienced for all age groups in the first period, 1955 to 1972, when the MFPA started its campaigns. The decline was as high as 6.07 % for the age group 15-19 years with a low of 2.01 % for the 25 - 29 year's age group. In the next period, the highest decline was 5.09 % for the age group 35-39 years. While the decline continued during the three stages for some age groups, there has been a slight increase in fertility rates for the three age groups between 20 to 39 years in the 1986 to 1995 period. The fertility decline was reflected in a similar movement of the Gross Reproduction Rate, which is the rate at which the population replaces itself, from 2.9 in 1962 to 1.7 in 1972.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

One of the main features of the family structure during the period was the reduction in the size of the family as shown in Table 8. :

TABLE IV. 7

NO. AND SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS

CENSUS YEAR	No. Households	Household Size
1962	138,368	4.9
1972	155,232	5.3
1983	199,712	4.8
1990	236,635	4.4

Source: Central Statistical Office: Housing and Population Census Reports

The household comprises several persons, normally sharing common cooking arrangements, each of whom performs a predetermined role. Thus, each has a role based on some preconceived norm of how a dutiful son; wife, daughter, husband ought to behave and what they should do. In the traditional society described in the previous chapter, the assigned roles of each member of the household was not only clearly delineated but also relatively easy to accept. There were also few alternative arrangements which were feasible given the restrictive socio- economic situation.

As from the 1980's with the changing economic structure resulting from the setting up of the EPZ, it became more difficult for people to abide by or stick to traditionally expected behaviour. It is often felt that it was only those in the lowest income and social levels who find it difficult to attain these ideals, but this can be disputed. The choices presented by modernization and development, especially for people with means, it has been relatively easy to give up traditional life styles.

As families were becoming more modernized with the spread of education, gender bias between boys and girls could have been expected to diminish, if not disappear. This however has not happened as most families continue to place a higher value on boys than on girls. This has been more pronounced for Hindu families, as was seen from the focussed group discussions. In the Hindu Community a differential value is placed on sons and daughters. This lack of equal treatment for boys and girls in the family has had many ramifications. One of the most important is that inequality has a pervasive impact extending to relationships outside the family, in the work place and in society. Thus it leads to a perpetuation of the unequal situation. As is often stated, it is mothers themselves who are the culprits in terms of differential treatment between boys and girls.

During the 1968 to 1990 period, women and girls enjoyed greater freedom as they had almost equal educational chances and were entering the labour market in greater numbers. But in terms of family responsibility, there was little change.

Thus, greater empowerment has not been an unmitigated blessing - either for the individual or for the family. The balance between greater individual freedom for the female as opposed to the male and the need to compromise personal freedom for the welfare of the family is an issue which has not been discussed openly in Mauritius because of the strong cultural undertones which permeates society. But the struggle between the individual freedom and the well being of the family goes on within the woman herself and between herself and her spouse. This struggle colours many relationships in the family and in society generally. On balance, one may conclude that Mauritian society was still family and child-centred in the 1990. The degree of intensity for the family versus the individual probably differed from one ethnic group to another and between social groups and to some extent, on the education and the earning capacity of the woman herself. Although, inadvertently family interests could have been sacrificed for personal interests or advancement, the survey conducted as part of this study results show that few women would have vouched in the 1980's that their individual interests were paramount to the interests of the family.

As stated in the Situation Analysis of Women and Children,

"Gender relations have gone through very significant transformation recently--- but these changes are not without strain and friction. Most studies that have been carried out show that there has been very little change in gender role responsibilities in the home in spite of the fact that women have now taken on wage earning responsibilities outside the home. Women are still largely responsible for housework, childcare responsibilities and household management. The difficulties of juggling household responsibilities lead to considerable fatigue and mental stress and strain which inevitably affect children who become the escape goats in situations of tensions between parents."¹⁰⁹

As shown in Table IV.8, the majority of women and men were married - although the percentage married was slightly lower for men. The percentages of single men and women were increasing while the percentages of divorced and consensually married women were actually declining. This could mean that the taboos against divorces remarrying have been gradually reducing.

¹⁰⁹ UNICEF, Invest in Children: Securing Rights in a Changing Society, October 1998

TABLE IV.8
STANDARDIZED PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION
AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER BY SEX AND MARITAL STATUS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS, SELECTED YEARS

	Percentage			
		Male		Female
Marital status	1983	1990	1983	1990
Single	36.6	39.4	26.0	26.3
Married	57.0	55.3	54.8	55.5
Consensually married	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.1
Widowed	1.9	1.8	13.1	12.5
Divorced and separated	1.4	1.5	4.0	3.6

Source: Central Statistical Office, Census Reports, several years

One significant change is the decline in the proportions of females marrying before the age of 15 years.

TABLE IV.9

PROPORTION OF CURRENTLY MARRIED FEMALE POPULATION, SELECTED YEARS

AGE GROUP	1952	1962	1972	1983	1990
15-19	39.90	27.80	12.40	10.5	10.83
20-24	72.30	58.20	49.90	47.90	49.33
25-29	82.90	83.10	76.00	70.80	72.28
35-39	81.80	83.90	84.20	79.10	78.99
40-44	76.50	78.50	80.00	78.90	75.93
45-49	69.00	71.00	74.40	75.00	73.82

Source: Central Statistical Office, Census Reports, several years

It is clear that girls did not marry at an early age. Many were still in school till the age of 20 years. One salient feature, which came up during the qualitative surveys, is that men of all communities are seeking girls who are working and have a secure position in the place of work. This phenomenon which began to appear in the 1980's would appear to have become a standard requirement in the current marriage market. As a result, parents are themselves encouraging girls to work towards securing a high paying job as soon as is possible, even before embarking on a search for suitable partners. Although some form of informal arranged marriages were in place in the 1980's, especially among the Asian families, the need for having an employment to rely on, was already surfacing in the last decade.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

The one fundamental change that the three decades of Independence, has brought to women, and which differentiates the younger generation of women from the women of previous generations is EDUCATION. As already pointed out earlier, education was given a high place by the early politicians and in particular by SSR. 1970 was

proclaimed by the UNDP as the International Education Year. In line with the international agenda, there was much progress made in providing 'education for all' and in particular for girls and women Mauritius.

The majority of the new generation of women of 1990's was educated and this had given them the confidence needed to assert themselves and take advantage of the multiple choices that were available to them. Education provided them with the means for personal development, which enabled them to acquire the basic skills, required to enter the labour market. They have been able to fully participate in the economic activities of the country, although there was enough evidence of the frustrations that they felt in coming up against the 'glass ceiling', and hence attain self-fulfilment.

There has been a continuous improvement in the literary levels of the population and by 1990, the literacy rate had reached 81.4. The male and female literacy rates were 86.3 and 76.6 respectively. But the White Paper on Women stated that

"Girls' schooling still suffers from a lack of technical and adequate science education which so far has effectively reduced the potential pool of scientists and technologists by half. Besides, childhood socialization and gender stereotyping at school continue to reproduce poor motivation in education and, later in career orientation."¹¹⁰

In absolute terms, the numbers enrolled at the primary level continued to increase over the 1968 to 1983 period but declined slightly for boys and girls reflecting the decline in the population growth rates of the mid 1980's. Enrolment at the primary level was universal and few students drop out except at the end of the Primary level. It has been a matter of concern that less than 50 percent of the Standard six population - end of the primary cycle and only 55 to 60 percent follow through into the secondary level. The drop out at this stage has been slightly higher for girls although the percentage continuing with secondary education has been improving. As a result of the high investment made by government in the social sectors, there has been an increase in the numbers of government schools in the primary level as compared to private schools. Some data on primary school enrolment is given in Table IV.11 and Table IV.12

¹¹⁰Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, White Paper on Women in Development, March 1995R

TABLE IV.10

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS - PRIMARY SECTOR, SELECTED YEARS

		1984	1990
Schools		271	278
	Government	219	223
	Aided	48	48
	Non-Aided	4	7
CPE Passes		15,228	16,525
	Boys	7,389	7,711
	Girls	7,839	8,814
CPE pass rate		53.2	59.2

Source: Mauritius Examinations Syndicate

There has been a similar improvement in the educational levels of girls at the secondary level. Not only have more girls been attending schools but they have also been performing better at the two main examinations at the secondary level. The pass rate for girls and boys at the School Certificate were 67.1 % and 58.7 % in 1990 as compared to 43 % and 43.6 % in 1984. At the Higher School Certificate level, there has been both an increase in the number of girls sitting for the examination as well as an improvement in the pass rate. It is also encouraging to note that in 1990 almost half the number of girls who sat for the SC examination sat for the HSC examination, whereas in 1984, the number was less than a third. So more girls were continuing with their secondary education right up to the HSC level, particularly, during the 1984 - 1990 period.

"The maintenance of free education has certainly had unintended benefits for Mauritian society, particularly for women. --Education has contributed to the emancipation and empowerment of women. If education was to become fee paying again, girls run the risk of being marginalized still more. Despite progress over time, Mauritius remains a relatively patriarchal society. If economic conditions worsen, parents will more than likely privilege their sons who are regarded as future breadwinners."¹¹¹

Another issue raised by the same author is the need for scientific and technical expertise. Women have unfortunately shied away from scientific and technical subjects. This will mean that they are less equipped to meet the needs of the labour market of the future. Due to a variety of factors which includes stereotyping and socialization in early years, girls at the primary and secondary levels appear to be reluctant to take up mathematics and the other science subjects. As far as the technical subjects are concerned, part of the difficulty arises from the segmentation of the labour market, which means that it is difficult for women to obtain technical jobs.

¹¹¹ Bunwaree, Sheila; Education in Mauritius since Independence: More Accessible But Still Inequitable, in Consolidating the Rainbow, Independent Mauritius, 1968 - 1998, edited by Marina Carter Centre for Research on Indian Ocean Societies, CRIOS

TABLE IV. 11

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS - SECONDARY SECTOR, SELECTED YEARS

	Year	
	1984	1990
Schools	122	122
Government	219	23
Private	48	99
Pupils	76,440	76,440
State schools	15,151	15,227
Private schools	7,839	61,213
SC passes	6,293	5,966
• Boys	3,332	2,912
• Girls	2,961	3,054
HSC passes	1,651	2,226
• Boys	922	1,144
• Girls	729	1,082
HSC pass rate	49.7	56.1
• Boys	43.0	54.8
• Girls	47.0	57.6

Source: Central Statistical Office, *Educational Statistics Secondary year*

There has been an improvement in the number of girls going in for tertiary level education as well. However, girls have tended to crowd the Faculties of Law and Management and Social Sciences. A much smaller number of girls enrol for the science or technological subjects.

Facilities for primary, secondary and tertiary education have been gradually improved over the past two decades. The focus has been on the improvement and refurbishment of existing schools or institutions and building new ones only when warranted by changes in population location or the need to introduce new technologies. There has also been an expansion of government school facilities leading to a change in the distribution of pupils between government and private schools at the three levels.

Several new institutions were also set up during the 1970 to 1990 period which were designed to make the education system more effective and efficient as well as to cover areas where local facilities were non existent. One of the most important in terms of educational infrastructure has been the University of Mauritius. It was set up in 1965 as a developmental university. After mainly catering for diploma and certificate level programmes in the initial years, the University launched into degree courses as from the mid 1985's.

The University has been important for making tertiary education a reality for girls. Thus, the setting up of the University of Mauritius in 1965 as a development university contributed to the further democratisation of education. For the first time, parents in the middle income and lower income groups were able to consider sending

their children for tertiary education, although for many years it was only at the of diplomas and certificate levels at the University of Mauritius.

Before the setting up of the University, girls were at a disadvantage because parents generally would have preferred sending boys to study abroad if they had to make a choice between their son and daughter. In the pre-Independence years, when the only avenues for tertiary education were found in France or UK, and later on in India, the number of girls who would have gone abroad to study was negligible. As from the late 1960's a trickle of girls began to study abroad. Their numbers grew especially after the 1974 sugar boom years when many planters, both the big and even small planters, began sending their children to India for higher studies. The reasons were affordability and the socio-cultural links which became stronger than ever before. The trend for higher education abroad was well established by the 1990's, Mauritian girls followed the boys to study in countries as widely dispersed as France, Pakistan, Madagascar and the USSR. Combined with these facilities abroad, the expansion of degree programmes at the University at home has enabled Mauritius to attain enrolment ratios at the tertiary level from less than 3 % to an estimated 5 % by 1990.

Since the 1970s, several other institutions were also been set up, such as the Mauritius Institute of Education and the Mauritius College of the Air. The former was set up specifically for curriculum reform and teacher training and the later for distance education. Another area where facilities had been inadequate to meet national requirements is the area of training. Given the strong ethos among Mauritian parents for academic education, there has never been a great demand for technical and vocational education. But as the economic structure underwent a transformation away from agriculture to manufacturing and services, the need for a skilled labour force became urgent. In 1988, Government embarked on a study for an Industrial Training Strategy.

As stated in the Industrial Training Strategy,

"Over the years a certain dichotomy has emerged between the education and training sectors. The view had gained ground that education was ennobling and respectable while training as such was meant to prepare the less gifted for lower level and less prestigious occupations. However in modern Mauritius, this dichotomy is being eroded. The objective of this study is to assist in the search for the ideal mix between education and training. And to assist Government in formulating an action plan for the development of skills at the professional, sub-professional and skilled and semi-skilled levels."¹¹²

A network of training facilities in a wide variety of areas was put in place based on the recommendations of the study. Based on data collected at the 1990 census, it would appear that some eight percent of the working population had some kind of training.

¹¹² Bheenick, Rundheersing & Hanoomanjee, Esther ; Mauritius : Towards an industrial training strategy, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Port Louis, December 1988

"From the point of view of training, the female working population had an edge over the male working population."¹¹³

The overall improvement in the educational level of girls over the past three decades is seen by examining the numbers of those who have not had the opportunity to attend school at all. The 1990 population census data shows that the educational profile of the population having "no formal schooling is heavily concentrated in the female population aged 60+, which indicates that when this group was in its schooling age, schooling was not considered necessary for girls. This was particularly true in the villages.

TABLE IV.12

TERTIARY EDUCATION

¹¹³ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, National development Plan 1992-1994, Government Printer, March 1993

TABLE IV.13

NO. OF PERSONS WHO NEVER ATTENDED SCHOOL BY SELECTED AGE GROUP AND SEX, SELECTED YEARS

Year	Age group	Male	Female
1972	5-9	3,717	3,976
	10-14	1,366	2,627
	15-19	2,061	5,008
	20-24	4,211	7,100
Total	5-24	9,555	18,711
1983	5-9	556	555
	10-14	581	700
	15-19	1,128	1,498
	20-24	1,406	2,131
Total	5-24	3,671	5,066
1990	5-9	541	574
	10-14	564	481
	15-19	760	784
	20-24	1,141	1,281
Total	5-24	3,016	3,120

The dramatic reduction in the numbers of women in the age group of 5 to 24 years who had no schooling at all between 1972 and 1990 is indicative of the improvement in the level of schooling among girls. From being almost twice the number of men who had never been to school in 1972, there were almost equal number of men and women who had not been to school by 1990. So there has been a gradual elimination of the discrepancy between men and women in terms of education. The total number of women who had never attended school dropped by to a fourth in 1990(6,136) of what it was in 1972(27,266). We are moving towards the stage when the whole population would have had some schooling.

1975 - Secondary Education made free
 1985 - Tertiary Education made free
 1990 - Expansion of Vocational Training

Source:

Children (H3)

*"The children of Mauritius were among the main direct beneficiaries of the welfare state developed in the 20 years after Titmus - particularly in the health and education fields."*¹¹⁴ Although this was true when measured in terms of the improvement in health, educational and material conditions of life, it is the children of Mauritius who have borne the brunt of the longer working hours and increased employment of women. The vulnerability of children to the negative impact of the rapid economic development began to be soon felt. That they needed to be protected from the nefarious effects of the being left on their own for long hours during the day when their mothers were working began to be soon felt.

On the institutional side, in 1986, the Ministry of Women's Rights took on responsibility for Child Development. Special programmes were put in place for children and steps were taken to launch programmes for the training of pre primary educational institutions. Although government did not want to take responsibility for providing free pre primary education as the educational recurrent budget had already reached around 15 percent of the total recurrent budget - a level which was deemed to be barely affordable, the objectives were to *"encourage voluntary help, in cash or in kind from individuals or local associations."*¹¹⁵ It will also help in a number of ways. For example *"all housing estates will have to make provisions for an infant school and land will be made available where necessary, the registration system will be increasingly used to improve standards, an individual health card system will be instituted to monitor health programmes and the school medical services will be progressively extended to the pre-primary schools, as part of a UNICEF supported programme for pre-school children."* Although the setting up of pre primary schools at industrial estates did not take place because they were not popular with the women for whom they were targeted, the other programmes were implemented with some success.

¹¹⁴ Dommen, Bridget and Edward; Mauritius:an island of success, A retrospective study 1960 - 1963, New Zealand, 2000

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Economic Planning and development, 1984-1986 Development Plan, Mauritius , Government Printer, 1994,

CONCLUDING REMARKS

What has been the impact of the socio-economic parameters of development of Mauritius on the daily lives of women? Although there has been a positive development, it would appear that women have been facing an erosion in their family and social lives as they accumulate ever-increasing responsibilities. The objective of this study is to paint a realistic picture of the gains, as well as, the losers made by women in their march towards modernity and gender equality. What has been the impact of the socio-economic of development of Mauritius on the daily lives of women?

Some salient features of the educational development are given in Box IV.5.

BOX IV.5

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Further their legal status was not acceptable. Married women were still considered as minors, and depended wholly on their husbands who had absolute powers over the minor children, their property as well as the property belonging to the community of goods if the couple had chosen that matrimonial regime. Most people were married by the community of good regime in those days out of total ignorance of the other possibilities.

In order to bring about a change, it is important that gender development be part and parcel of the whole development process so that both women and men can contribute positively and efficiently to further progress and be equal beneficiaries of development. This general principle applies to development at national, regional and international levels. It may be important to achieve greater gender balance to adopt some amount of affirmative action mostly by ensuring that quality education is accessible to girls of all social backgrounds and that training is also available in a variety of fields to both young men and women. As regards employment, there must be enough opportunities and avenues for both men and women. Other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights must also be translated into reality and not just remain as great principles that are enunciated in conventions.

Finally, as stated by Bowman:

“perhaps the most marked change since independence has been the role of women. With the change to an export-driven development strategy, women from all communities have been rapidly drawn into wage employment, largely as textile workers. This has given many women economic and social status and has provided new sources of income to tens of thousands of families. These developments, while widely observed, have been little studied. Far too little is known about how these new women's roles are affecting decisions to delay marriage, have fewer children, or marry outside one's group, and what the social consequences are in what has historically been a very patriarchal society.”¹¹⁶

Box IV.6

SIGNIFICANT DATES IN EDUCATION

1928 - School accessible to all
Development in Education - Post Independence
1944 scholarships awarded - 4 to boys
- 1 to girl
1947 - High school for girls

D. THE STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES AND SECTORAL DEVELOPMENT

The initial years after Independence were difficult because of the main prop of the economy the sugar sector had reached its technological production limits and there was a crying need to improve the living conditions of the people. Generating the economic growth required to meet the expectations of 'every man' was indeed a challenge that almost escaped the grasp of the early planners and political leaders.

A sector by sector critique and the main components of the Structural Adjustment programmes are described in the paragraphs that follow.

Agriculture: The output of sugar did not reach 800,000 tons as targeted in the early plans. In fact, the target was unrealistic as it has not been reached till today. The main irrigation projects in the northern plains and the western coast did not take off and the diversification of the agricultural sector was not adequate.

EPZ: The EPZ was constrained by the small size of the local market and the lack of natural resources. The rapid growth of the EPZ in the early years was due to marketing factors and to the corporate strategy of the South Asian enterprises. The

¹¹⁶ Bowman, Larry W; *Mauritius Democracy and Development in the Indian Ocean*, Westview Press, London, 1991

main advantage of Mauritius was the duty free entry into the EEC market. With the 'rapprochement' adopted by the Nixon administration some of this advantage to Mauritius was reduced as industrialists were building industries in other South Asian countries. Export /investment promotion was not adequately pursued.

When the NIC's, obtained access to the EEC, through the ASEAN, Mauritius was no longer attractive for investors. Competition from NIC's became so acute that in the late 1970's it became necessary to implement a series of measures to facilitate the provision of; local services for the MEPZ industrialists, to maximize local value added by promoting local sub contracting, to promote exports and investment on a professional basis comparable with what has been achieved in other successful NICs.

Tourism: Tourism development was also propelled by exogenous factors and had been left to market forces to a degree not conducive to policy formulation. The first major study on the tourism sector was undertaken in 1981 after tourist arrivals fell by 10 % in 1980.

The pro-people approach with the focus on employment creation adopted by government also contributed to the near collapse of the economy in the 1970's. There is no magic formulae to determine how much of the Gross National Product or investment should be in purely income generating activities as compared to the percentage that could be invested in the non - income generating sectors - albeit investment necessary to improve the health and standard of living of the population. The share of both Government and the sugar industry towards Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation were about 25 % each in the 1960s. In the 1970's, around 15 % of Gross National Product went towards building up the economy or Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation. (GDFCF) Half of private investment came from the sugar industry, which had a continuing programme for the expansion, rehabilitation and improvement of sugar production. The rest of the investment went into the newly emerging industrial sectors.

In the 1950's and 1960's, Government investment was mainly in the provision of roads, development of water and electricity sources and the reconstruction of housing, which became a necessity after the extremely strong cyclones that hit Mauritius in 1960. With Independence, an expansionary policy of improving the quality of life of the average Mauritian was adopted. Public investment was increased in response to rising unemployment. However, government launched on a major programme for social reconstruction. Provision of schools, one new hospital in the north, the building of health centres and dispensaries throughout the island took up a larger share of investment funds. With the free workings of a democratic system, another important programme, which began to eat up more and more of public sector investment funds was the provision of low cost housing for the lower income groups which were the largest, in numbers, and most vociferous.

The weaknesses in the economy were not evident in the early years when the economy was riding high on the crest of the wave generated by bumper sugar crops and

extremely good prices for sugar export while the nascent EPZ was beginning to make a dent on the unemployment problem. This resulted in an early spurt in economic growth of 10 % over the 1972 to 1977. Gross domestic savings increased and provided the capital necessary to accelerate the development of the manufacturing and services sectors, increasing employment at the same time.

Mauritius was spared the full impact of the first oil crisis in 1973 by the sugar of the 1972 - 74 period. When sugar prices rose by more than 400 % in the world market, Mauritius enjoyed a corresponding increase in the price of the sugar it exported to the European Union. Money rolled into the country and the full impact of the oil crisis was not felt until there was a 23 % reduction in sugar prices in 1976; this was followed by the second oil price shock in 1979.

There were also upward adjustments in cost, prices and wages throughout the economy, all of which contributed to the budget deficits. And it was clear by the end of the 1970's that the country could not afford to continue with the investment mix of the 1968 - 1975 period.

Some of these internal factors, which precipitated the economic imbalance, are given below. Consumption patterns rose as a result of improved wage levels. The sugar boom had introduced a new sense of optimism among Mauritians and with the salary increases in the 1972 and 1973 period, heralded in a spending spree among Mauritians. Thus public and private consumption as a % of GDP at market prices rose to 80.5 % in 1979 as compared to 75 % in 1976. Imports rose and exports failed to keep in step with the increased imports. As from the end of the 1970's, the Consumer Price Index reached double-digit figures. Some of the economic variables also became less acceptable e.g.

- Deficits in the recurrent budget reached a peak of 12.5% in 1981/82
- Investment at constant prices dropped in agriculture and manufacturing and as regards 'machinery and equipment'
- Saving as % of GDP dropped from 25 % in 1976 to 19.5 % in 1979
- The deficit in the current account of the balance of payments increased from Rs 243 million in 1976 to Rs 927 million in 1979
- The monthly level of foreign exchange dropped to Rs 54.5 million in 1979.

The impact of these adverse factors was almost immediate. There was a rapid deterioration in the balance of payments and the depletion of the reserves leading to a 30 % devaluation of the rupee in October 1979. It became necessary for government to introduce measures for putting the economy back on the rails and this took the form of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), which the government negotiated with the World Bank and the loans obtained from the International Monetary Fund for keeping the economy afloat.

The SAP necessitated actions on various fronts. .

- A substantial reduction on public and private expenditure
- A redirection of investment to more productive sectors
- A policy of partial compensation of employees for increases in cost of living
- Reduction of imports in real terms
- Promotion of exports of manufactured products
- Restriction of credit expansion on a selective basis.

The economic recovery programme meant a cutback on many of the social services like health, education and welfare provisions which were being provided free and the substantial subsidies on staples such as rice and flour and water and electricity. Construction projects were also expected to be scrutinized before inclusion in the capital budget and only projects, which were

- Viable
- Has low recurrent cost implications
- Use as little foreign exchange as possible
- Has short pay back periods
- Would create productive employment

were to be implemented. Cost effectiveness was an important criterion for project selection. By 1983, debt servicing on public and publicly guaranteed debt, exclusive of IMF repayments expected to reach 20 % of total exports of goods and services. This was expected to be reduced to 15 % by 1985 with improvements in the balance of payments position. Maintaining credit worthiness was an important objective. A policy of overall credit restraint was adopted to control imports. As sugar prices fluttered and sugar output fell due to bad crops resulting from droughts, cyclones and disease and the EP Z began to stagnate after its first flush of success, the strains of the economy assumed unbearable proportions.

The SAP has brought a new orientation to economic thinking and the general awareness of the weakness of the economy. This facilitated the introduction of unpopular measures which were necessary to reduce purchasing power and the level of food subsidies. A spirit of discipline which is a *sine qua non* for bringing the economy back on the rails was established.

Starting with a 30 % devaluation of the Rupee in 1979 the government with the support of the World Bank and the IMF implemented successfully

- Five successive stand - by arrangements
- Two structural adjustment operations between 1980 and 1986

The measures introduced to restore sectoral growth were as follows:

- **To rehabilitate the sugar sector** measures were taken to reduce taxes on the transfer of agricultural lands, altering the structure of the export duty and abolishing all restrictions on mill closures. The profitability of sugar industry particularly in terms of the sugar export tax was examined. The tea sector was reviewed. The need to make more land available for agricultural diversification and the introduction of an agricultural Development Certificate scheme, introduction of guaranteed prices for local production of ginger and other items and Improving local production of meat and fish were considered.
- **In industry**, an outward looking strategy was adopted which included elimination of quantitative restrictions on imports, initiating a programme of tariff reform, and encouraging foreign private investment in the EPZ. Double Taxation Agreements were signed with several countries. Capital from Mauritian residing abroad was encouraged. Diversification to non-traditional markets was emphasized. The Export Credit Guarantee scheme was established with the DBM. Studies for improving the incentive scheme and the setting up of an Equity loan Fund, the Mauritius Export Development and investment Authority (MEDIA), the Small Industry Development Organization were undertaken and the MEDIA and the SMIDO were set up in the 1980's.
- **In tourism**, measures were undertaken to promote Mauritius in select markets and a programme was designed to address issues relating to air access policy, hotel capacity and marketing strategy. The Mauritius Government Tourist office began participating at fairs and promotional programs in tourist-generating countries, the pricing policy of tourist hotels was reviewed so as to remain competitive, local handicrafts was developed and the use of local foods at the hotels was encouraged so as to increase the local spending of tourists.

Annexe 1

Interview of Mrs. Cziffra continued

Unfortunately, every thing has a price, and as she has stated,

" believe that at the price of being more concretely, even before becoming minister, as a member of the National Assembly, I was very active in bringing about legal reform, starting with the amendment of the Code Napoleon, then several other laws and culminating in 1995 with the final acceptance of the amendment of the Constitution to make discrimination based on sex illegal."

Hopefully, I am still a positive role model.

I am still very involved in the defence of Human Rights and gender is at the root of those rights. In 1999, I was an active member of the committee of the Ministry of Youth and Sports to mainstream gender in the National Youth Policy, which has been presented to the public. I find that (Not withstanding) the amount of energy that we have put in to building up the image of women, that image is still very negative. Take for example, the amount of violence that is gender-based which is enormous and which is hard to cope with despite the Domestic Violence Act, which was passed by the Legislative Assembly in 1996 and the later amendments.

I note that the political parties are including more women on their lists, which shows that they are very aware that this is important, but then women constitute a majority and it may be just be an electoral lure. If these women play important roles, and have some weight once they are elected, it will be a positive step. There are also more women getting up the ladder in the public sector, but in the private sector there is not a single woman Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Women are well established in small and medium enterprises but have yet to make it in big companies. However, I am convinced that we must encourage gender mainstreaming in all future development policies and that we must engender the budget, otherwise we will not move forward. We must ensure that the number of capable men and women in power who will adhere to the principles of social justice and equality is increased. However I fear that there are forces that are still active to prevent progress in this field.

I have been lucky in that my father was a very enlightened man who said to everyone when I was born that he did not mind having a daughter and that he was sure I would be "someone" one day. Indeed he gave me the education that opened up avenues for "me to be somebody". In addition I am fortunate in having a husband who is a great believer in equal rights and has no complex in working with women and is never impressed by 'macho talk and behaviour'. I also have some very good male friends who share the same views. On the other hand I have also had to work with males who strongly believe in their superiority even though some of them may pay lip service to the cause of women in a very paternalistic sort of fashion. All this must have

influenced me somehow either to become a feminist or at least to be tolerant of those who do not share my view.

I was once invited by an all-male group to speak on women's rights and it seemed that the men, who were sceptical before, were reassured by my views, as I did not indulge in men-bashing. Women's groups have of course given me a lot of support when I was a member of the National Assembly and Attorney General and Minister for Women's Rights and the Family. Occasionally, however, there have been the more conservative groups which feared to be associated with specially my feminist friends, and me as they saw us as being extremists; this was true before 1982. Further, like in any other field there are people, both men and women who are opportunists, and who espouse the feminist stand only for personal gain."

Annexe 2

Interview of Sheila Bappoo

Sheila's peers were her nieces and nephews since her own brother and sisters were already grown up. All of Sheila's siblings studied up to junior scholarship. It was a big achievement in those days. Sheila studied at QEC - the best and most sought after secondary school for girls till today - after her primary education.

Raised like an only child in a well to family, Sheila was doted upon by both parents, particularly the father and she was very close to the father. 'Although a girl, I think my father wanted to realize some of his hopes and achievements through me. My being a girl was not a problem. "So my education was a main concern for him. **My father has influenced me.** He has always supported me. My father was a Labour party man. He took me to attend meetings at a very young age, even when I must have been in standard three, about 9 years old. When I joined QEC, my horizons of life widened. I was exposed to people of different cultures and class. There were peers whose parents were in politics. This further nurtured by inclination towards politics.'

In the 1970's, around 15 % of Gross National Product went towards building up the economy or Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation. (GDFCF) The share of both Government and the sugar industry towards Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation were about 25 % each in the 1960s. Half of private investment came from the sugar industry, which had a continuing programme for the expansion, rehabilitation and improvement of sugar production. The rest of the investment went into the newly emerging industrial sectors.

In the 1950's and 1960's, Government investment was mainly in the provision of roads, development of water and electricity sources and the reconstruction of housing, which became a necessity after the extremely strong cyclones that hit Mauritius in 1960. With Independence, an expansionary policy of improving the quality of life of the average Mauritian was adopted. Provision of schools, one new hospital in the north, the building of health centres and dispensaries throughout the island took up a larger share of investment funds. Public investment was also increased in response to rising unemployment as government launched a major programme for social reconstruction. With the free workings of a democratic system, another important programme, which began to eat up more and more of public sector investment funds was the provision of low cost housing for the lower income groups which were the largest, in numbers, and most vociferous.

The weaknesses in the economy were not evident in the early years when the economy was riding high on the crest of the wave generated by bumper sugar crops and extremely good prices for the sugar export while the nascent EPZ was beginning to make a dent on the unemployment problem. This resulted in an early spurt in economic growth of 10 % over the 1972 to 1977. Gross domestic savings increased and provided the capital necessary to accelerate the development of the manufacturing and services sectors, increasing employment at the same time.¹¹⁷

The policy of improving the quality of life of the average Mauritian by the politicians who brought independence to the country meant that an expansionary policy was adopted. Public investment was increased in response to rising unemployment. There were also upward adjustments in cost, prices and wages throughout the economy, all of which contributed to the budget deficits. Mauritius was spared the full impact of the first oil crisis in 1973 by the sugar of the 1972 - 74 period. When sugar prices rose by more than 400 % in the world market, Mauritius enjoyed a corresponding increase in the price of the sugar it exported to the European Union. Money rolled into the country and the full impact of the oil crisis was not felt until there was a 23 % reduction in sugar prices in 1976; this was followed by the second oil price shock in 1979.

The impact of these adverse factors was almost immediate. There was a rapid deterioration in the balance of payments and the depletion of the reserves leading to a 30 % devaluation of the rupee in October 1979. It became necessary for government to introduce measures for putting the economy back on the rails and this took the form of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), which the government negotiated with the World Bank and the loans obtained from the International Monetary Fund for keeping the economy afloat.

The SAP necessitated actions on various fronts. .

- A substantial reduction on public and private expenditure
- A redirection of investment to more productive sectors
- A policy of partial compensation of employees for increases in cost of living
- Reduction of imports in real terms
- Promotion of exports of manufactured products
- Restriction of credit expansion on a selective basis.

Starting with a 30 % devaluation of the Rupee in 1979 the government with the support of the World Bank and the IMF implemented successfully five successive stands - by arrangements and two structural adjustment operations between 1980 and 1986. And Government also embarked on a programme to revitalize the main economic sectors. A brief overview of these measures is given in Annex 2.

¹¹⁷ Government of Mauritius, Mauritius: A Programme of Structural Adjustment, Port Louis, December 1984

TABLE IV.14

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS - PRIMARY SECTOR, SELECTED YEARS

		1984	1990
Schools		271	278
	• Government	219	223
	• Aided	48	48
	• Non-Aided	4	7
CPE Passes		15,228	16,525
	• Boys	7,389	7,711
	• Girls	7,839	8,814
CPE pass rate		53.2	59.2

TABLE IV.15

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF PASSES AT CPE EXAMINATIONS BY GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRICT AND SEX: 1993

Geographical District	Male		Female		Both sexes	
	Number examined	% of passes	Number examined	% of passes	Number examined	% of passes
Port Louis	2,575	55.0	2,425	61.2	5,000	58.0
Pamplemousses	1,452	45.4	1,495	53.0	2,947	49.2
Rivière du Rempart	1,621	44.7	1,457	51.6	3,078	48.0
Flacq	1,982	53.9	1,991	57.8	3,973	55.9
Grand Port	1,695	54.0	1,604	56.0	3,299	55.0
Savanne	971	51.2	896	57.0	1,867	54.0
Plaines Wilhems	5,117	65.6	4,777	72.6	9,894	69.0
Moka	1,003	52.5	976	57.1	1,979	54.8
Black River	576	29.0	589	40.1	1,165	34.6
Island of Mauritius	16,992	54.9	16,210	60.8	33,202	57.8
Island of Rodrigues	715	36.5	756	42.3	1,471	39.5
Republic of Mauritius	17,707	54.2	16,966	59.9	34,673	57.0

Source: Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, 1994

From: UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Women and Children

There has been a similar improvement in the educational levels of girls at the secondary level. Not only have more girls been attending schools but they have also been performing better at the two main examinations at the secondary level. The pass rate for girls and boys at the School Certificate were 67.1 % and 58.7 % in 1990 as compared to 43 % and 43.6 % in 1984. At the Higher School Certificate level, there has been both an increase in the number of girls sitting for the examination as well as an improvement in the pass rate. It is also encouraging to note that in 1990 almost half the number of girls who sat for the SC examination sat for the HSC examination, whereas in 1984, the number was less than a third. So more girls were continuing with their secondary education right up to the HSC level, particularly, during the 1984 - 1990 period.

"The maintenance of free education has certainly had unintended benefits for Mauritian society, particularly for women. --Education has contributed to the emancipation and empowerment of women. If education was to become fee paying again, girls run the risk of being marginalized still more. Despite progress over time, Mauritius remains a relatively patriarchal society. If economic conditions worsen, parents will more than likely privilege their sons who are regarded as future breadwinners."¹¹⁸

Another issue raised by the author is the need for scientific and technical expertise. Women have unfortunately shied away from scientific and technical subjects. This will mean that they are less equipped to meet the needs of the labour market of the future. Due to a variety of factors which includes stereotyping and socialization in early years, girls at the primary and secondary levels appear to be reluctant to take up mathematics and the other science subjects. As far as the technical subjects are concerned, part of the difficulty arises from the segmentation of the labour market, which means that it is difficult for women to obtain technical jobs.

¹¹⁸ Bunwaree, Sheila; Education in Mauritius since Independence: More Accessible But Still Indequitable, in Consolidating the Rainbow, Independent Mauritius, 1968 - 1998, edited by Marina Carter Centre for Research on Indian Ocean Societies, CRIOS

TABLE IV. 16

KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS - SECONDARY SECTOR, SELECTED YEARS

		1984	1990
Schools		122	122
	• Government	219	23
	• Private	48	99
Pupils		76,440	76,440
	• State schools	15,151	15,227
	• Private schools	7,839	61,213
SC passes		6,293	5,966
	• Boys	3,332	2,912
	• Girls	2,961	3,054
HSC passes		1,651	2,226
	• Boys	922	1,144
	• Girls	729	1,082

CONCLUDING REMARKS

What has been the impact of the socio-economic of development of Mauritius on the daily lives of women?

Although this has been a positive development it would appear that woman have been facing an erosion in their family and social lives. The objective of this study is to paint a more realistic of the gain as well as the loser made by women in their march towards modernity and gender equality.

What has been the impact of the socio-economic of development of Mauritius on the daily lives of women?

BOX IV.6

LEGAL STATUS

Further their legal status was not acceptable. Married women were still considered as minors, and depended wholly on their husbands who had absolute powers over the minor children, their property as well as the property belonging to the community of goods if the couple had chosen that matrimonial regime, and most people did in those days in total ignorance of the other possibilities.

It is important that gender development be part and parcel of the whole development process so that both women and men can contribute positively and efficiently to further progress and be equal beneficiaries of development. This general principle applies to development at national, regional and international levels. It may be important to achieve greater gender balance to adopt some amount of affirmative action mostly by ensuring that quality education is accessible to girls of all social backgrounds and that training is also available in a variety of fields to both young men and women. As regards employment, there must be enough opportunities and avenues for both men and women. Other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights must also be translated into reality and not just remain as great principles that are enunciated in conventions

Source:

TABLE IV. 17

CPE RESULTS OF PROJECT SCHOOLS 1991 – 1993

Schools	1991 %
MAURITIUS	
E. Anquetil G.S. (P. Louis)	14.5
La Briquetterie G.S. (Ste. Croix)	20.6
Marcel Cabon G.S. (Cité La Cure)	28.7
Nicolay G.S. (P. Louis)	29.5
St. François Xavier RCA (P. Louis)	19.1
Pointe aux Piments G.S.	17.3
H. Ramnarain G.S. (Terre Rouge)	36.0
L.S.Coutet G.S. (Tombeau Bay)	22.5
Ste Cecile RCA (Vieux G. Port)	15.2
Bambous G.S.	23.8
P.D. de Marigny G.S. (Canot)	14.3
Petite Rivière G.S.	29.2
Richelieu G.S.	24.7
Barkly G.S.	24.0
Colonel Maingard G.S.	17.8
L'Esperance G.S. (Quartier Militaire)	21.8
X. Christian Barbe G.S. (Pailles)	28.3
RODRIGUES	
Ste Thérèse de l'Enfant Jesus	36.9

Source: Programme for Project Schools, Ministry of Education, Jan. 1994, p.12.

TABLE IV.33

RATE OF ABSENTEEISM AMONG TEACHERS AND STUDENTS (%) BY DISTRICT – JUNE 1992

District	Teachers	Students
Port Louis	14.9	16.9
Pamplemousses	13.2	13.2
Rivière du Rempart	13.0	10.5
Flacq	11.9	14.5
Grand Port	13.5	12.2
Savanne	15.8	11.9
Plaines Wilhems	12.9	13.9
Moka	16.4	11.1
Rivière Noire	15.7	16.8
Rodrigues	10.9	13.5

Annex 3

The Association started by getting orders of specific items from friends and relatives. *"Then gradually the articles got so much appreciation that we felt the need of enlarging our field. The only way we could do that was to get enough funds to buy materials and threads on a larger scale in order to produce more."* Members started by holding films shows and other fund-raising activities, such as Bridge and Bingo sessions, bring and buy, lunches, dinner dances. The members were organising all these on a fully voluntary basis. When we managed to produce more, we were faced with the problem of sale. At first about 5 of us were keeping suitcases full of articles to be sold, it was like an itinerant shop-carrying our suitcases to different functions or even when visiting friends. We were also having customers calling at our homes at any odd time. We then realised that we could get into trouble with our husbands and the family! By then the demand became sufficient and it justified the opening of a shop. We realised that we needed to give a solid base to the association and recruited 50 full-time members and 200 associate members – those were girls, whom we trained in hand-embroidery, and one affiliate association in Rodrigues. We became a corporate body in 1974. While recognised by government we remain an autonomous body.

The Association made it a point for the girls and women working with the Associations to attend courses in home economics, family planning, childcare, hygiene, dental care, cookery etc. Opportunities were also given to them to attend seminars both in Mauritius and abroad on different topics of interest to them such as energy, food values, laws affecting them, education and health of their children.

As the Association developed more and more, it got the help and support of different embassies such as American, French, Indian, British, European Economic Committee, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Fund for Population and Church World Service was obtained

The founder Members included:

- Mrs A Jhowry
- Lady O Burrenchobay
- Lady L Ringadoo
- Mrs S Currimjee
- Mrs K Currimjee
- Mrs V Currimjee
- Mrs C Banymandhub
- Mrs D Purmessur (late)
- Mrs A Purmessur
- Mrs S Baguant
- Mrs D Bhageerutty
- The last three members are still active in the Association.

Annex 2**TABLE IV.18****PLAN TARGETS, 1971 TO 1990**

Plan and period covered	Main objectives	GDP growth	Employment target	Population target
First development plan 1971-75	Creation of employment as a means of creating incomes for workers Fuller utilization of labour force Improved productivity	7 % increase over the decade Agricultural output to grow by 4 %	130,000 jobs to be created to attain full employment	GRR to decline from 1.92 in 1969 to 1.20 in between 1980 to 1982
Second Plan 1975 - 1980	Creation of quality jobs Improvement in skills Attendant increases in productivity	6.5 % growth in GDP increase in output per person from Rs 7,100 to Rs 8,600	4.7 % growth in employment	Family Planning oriented to reduce 4 th and higher order births Target GRR by 1980 to be 1.1
Third plan 1980 - 1982	Interim plan to bring the economy into a state of equilibrium Improve balance of payments Reduce govt.'s budget deficit	5-6 % increase in GDP	Level of employment to rise from 280,000 to 308,000 by 1992 Unemployment rate at 9 %	Reduce drop outs of FP Reduce higher order births

CHAPTER V

THE PROCESS OF
ENGENDERING DEVELOPMENT
FROM THE 1990'S TO THE 3RD
MILLENNIUM

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CHAPTER V

THE PROCESS OF ENGENDERING DEVELOPMENT FROM THE 1990'S TO THE 3RD MILLENNIUM

THE NEW ETHOS

Chapters 5 traces the changes that have taken place since 1990 to today (2000). You have walked down the aisle of the history of Mauritian women as you read the last two chapters. This chapter brings you up to date with different facets of life which you can see as you drive past the streets of Port Louis or any other town - or for that matter - even the villages of Mauritius. This chapter thus presents a telescopic picture of the Mauritian women of today, giving the varying speeds at which the different pockets of society have adopted change and abandoned deep-seated traditions and customs. This means that you can still witness glimpses of past centuries - the 1700's, the 1800's and 1900's - peacefully co-existing. A further complexity arises from the existence of peoples of several ethnicities. It is all this which makes up the enigma of Mauritian society, complicating the task of researchers attempting to measure the impact of development on women's lives.

Making a judgment on women's position in society at present or over a period of time is a complex exercise also because it is difficult to assess society's own views on developmental issues. It is true that the social attitudes of Mauritian society have to an extent been coloured by the ubiquitous views of the 'man-in-the-street' or are derived from newspapers. However, the newspapers themselves are not unbiased and have the tendency to create stereotypes when there are none. There has been, for example, a dramatic fall in the fertility levels over the 1950 to 1970 period when the newspapers and many members of the Legislative Council were adamantly opposed to any form of family planning. That the public and from all creeds and faith accepted the family planning services so readily once they were assured that the methods were bonafide and there was little risk only vindicated the alleged "*stand of the people*" as projected in the Council or in the newspapers.

While the media is so important in creating public opinion, it is not itself totally objective. It reflects the views of the editors and all those to whom the media depends on for its financing. To a large extent the objectivity of the Press is based on the readers themselves, the overall ethos of society and its own agenda. The media has been largely responsible for stereotyping women as being 'pretty, lazy and ineffective' and women have to look towards the very same Media to refute many of the common epitaphs that they have been given.

This dichotomy between the reality and the image extends to what people do and what they say. Thus what they do is quite often in contradiction with the official stand which is deemed to be the collective wish of the 'people themselves'. Even opinion leaders may adopt a public stand

which may not be reflected in their own actions. So it is clear that in Mauritius as much as in most other countries, many of the opinions in popular circulation have little resemblance to the views of the individual.

A study on Values and social change in Ireland has shown similar contradictions in Ireland.

"One could list many other instances of complexity and internal contradiction in cultural attitudes towards family matters. (Apart from Divorce) ---strong adherence to traditional religious belief and practice among Irish Catholics has proved no obstacle to the widespread practice (and, it would seem, moral acceptance) of contraception and of sexual activity before marriage... Likewise, a conservative approach to many aspects of women's position (Pyle, 1900) sits side by side with the Irish electorate's claim to have been the first country in the world to elect a feminist (in the person of Mary Robinson) as head of state. In the legal field, strong support in statute and constitutional law for the 'traditional ' family has coexisted with decisive moves away from traditional legal concepts in order to accommodate to new patterns of behaviour in family life."¹¹⁹

Mauritian society exhibits some of the very same contradictions. Society has changed over the past four decades - at the level of the nation, local institutions, communities, the family and as well as the individual. The difficulty lies in measuring the extent of the change and the impact of these change and the benefits thereof. Change is often not visible or perceptible except to the outsider. So views of some Mauritians who have the advantage of having been abroad for a long period are of interest.

A comment made by a Mauritian who lives in the USA with her American husband but returns to Mauritius regularly to see her relatives is that *"During my stay, I notice that everybody is busy doing their own little thing, as abroad. No one has time any more.*

*The family spirit is dead. Values are being lost very fast. I see this happening on every visit*¹²⁰.

Another Mauritian who has seen the change taking place in Mauritius is Marie-Axelle Berthelot, who remarks that:

"It is a pleasure to see that Mauritian women are taking much care of their appearance. For example it is difficult to distinguish a factory worker from an officer worker. However, she points to some of the problems that girls face. There are fewer opportunities for girls who are not academically bent and do not wish to go for a university education. Parents continue to live for their children and are willing to sacrifice everything for them".¹²¹

This study is expected to throw some light on the changes that are taking place at the socio-economic level and on issues such as 'what should be the role of the spouse in today's home where the wife is overburdened with her several roles? As women are asserting themselves in the labour market and fighting to reach managerial positions, they have less time and or patience to cope with the home and its inmates.

¹¹⁹ Edited by Whelan, Christopher T; Values and Social Change in Ireland, Gill & Macmillan Ltd, Dublin, 1994 (pg 46)

¹²⁰ Ibid, Gerval-Arouff, Jeanne

¹²¹ Ibid, Gerval-Arouff, Jeanne

At another level it is women who could run the risk of being marginalized out of society as the competition becomes fiercer. Globalisation and the power of multi-nationals are believed to be contributing to the impoverishment of developing countries and in particular, women. How are Mauritian women faring in this new struggle?

Another interesting dimension is the timing of the interest in gender issues in Mauritius and also the rationale for wanting to assess the impact of the awakening of a struggle for greater gender equality. What are the reasons why many of the new issues on gender and equality which have remained carefully concealed under carpet all this time re-surfaced? It is partly due to the new-found freedom of women? Backed and or instigated by women in the rest of the world and international organizations, women in Mauritius are unwilling to remain passive partners of society and to maintain the status quo.

It is also part of the process of change. Changes are taking place in the economic, political and social spheres which are impacting on women. Change is needed but to be justifiable, it should be in the interest of the 'maximum number of people' but with the beneficial aspects of the 'status quo' being preserved. The eternal issue is whose 'interests' do we preserve and what do we qualify as 'good'. Should the quest for individual freedom take precedence over 'society's welfare' and if so how do we define, what is and who forms society? These are questions to which this report can provide some of the answers. The answers to these questions have to come from the society themselves - from men, women, children and opinion leaders. But we need to ask the questions. Many of these questions have been asked and we have received some answers these are in chapter 6, which contains the results of the various surveys carried out as part of this study.

What have women gained from their newfound liberty and from the efforts made to empower them? Has the quality of life improved for the average women? This chapter and the last two chapters (3 and 4) provide the necessary background data for the final evaluation, which is undertaken in Chapter 7. Chapter 6 sets out the views as expressed by some 530 men and women on these same issues. Thus, we will be in a position to assess the development of women from two angles: the historical and objective and the current subjective views as expressed by the people themselves. The final analysis can then be undertaken based on some internationally and locally accepted indicators that have been used in Chapters 3 and 4.

Within this framework, this chapter sets the scene of women in Mauritius today as they operate in the home, work place and the community. The analysis follows the model utilized in the previous two chapters. Developments have been broadly grouped into the political, economic and social cultural contexts. The first section sets out the political scene, the second section examines the economic set up and the third the changes, which have taken place at the family level, covering a whole spectrum of social issues such as family size, family income and the roles of the family members in the family and the social infrastructure in the education sector and the social support schemes in place. It also analyses the implications of the social changes highlighting some issues which need further discussion with socio-economic leaders. This chapter which is much longer because of the complexity of Mauritian society today and the new

issues which have arisen. In order to assess change as well as the improvements that have taken place, many of the tables contain figures for earlier periods as well.

A. INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS/ADVOCACY

The UN charter on Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948 and accepted by member nations seeks to promote equal rights for all individuals, irrespective of class, race or gender. There is a strengthening of international advocacy spearheaded and support by the United Nations system to end gender inequalities and eliminate all types of gender bias and discrimination. The argument in support of gender equality is based on both economic efficiency and from the Human Right Perspective. A series of United Nations International Conferences on Women such as the one in Nairobi (1994) and in Beijing (1995) have mandated participating countries to integrate and mainstream gender into national planning and development and eliminate all forms of oppression of women. The Nairobi Forward Looking strategies and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provide the basis for greater equality, development and peace.

The main areas of interest to Mauritius from these strategies are Women in poverty, Education and training of women, Women and health, Violence against women, Women and the economy and Women and the environment. These are some of the issues taken up in the 2000 National Gender Action Plan.

The organizations of the UN such as UNIFEM, as well as others, such as UNICEF and UNFPA which were not solely catering for women have included gender issues in their programmes. They are beginning to allocate more funds for specific gender related issues, such as promotion of women's access to health, to productive entrepreneurial activities, better schooling and technical education.

Another important development during this period is the interest of other international organizations in gender issues in Mauritius. For example, the Commonwealth Secretariat embarked on a programme of Women in Development programmes in the 1970's and on Gender and Development in the late 1980's for its member countries, and these efforts were intensified during the 1990's. The Commonwealth Secretariat was responsible for developing many of the frameworks for the more analytical monitoring of the engendering processes. The term 'engendering the budget' was itself coined by one of the consultants working for the Commonwealth Secretariat. These experts brought the new techniques to member countries. One of the most important documents launched by the Commonwealth Secretariat has been the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development which contains the Commonwealth vision *"which is to work towards a world in which women and men have equal rights and opportunities --- to express their creativity in all fields of human endeavour..."*

At the regional level, the 1990's saw a marked interest in women's issues. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) launched its programme for women and several issues such as Domestic Violence are discussed at meetings at the level of the Ministers of Women and gender development regularly. Two important declarations have been signed by member states namely on the political participation of women and on domestic violence. Mauritius has been a signatory to these Declarations.

B THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Since Independence in 1968, several political parties as well as splinter groups and coalitions have been formed. In addition to the Labour party in existence since 1936, the two most important of these are, the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) founded by Paul Berenger in 1969 and the Mauritius Socialiste Mauricien a splinter group from the MMM started by the MMM leader Anerood Jugnauth himself in 1983. These three parties have held power in various coalitions among themselves and other parties over the 1968 to 2000 period. The Labour Party came into power in 1968 but was ousted in 1982 (with a 60:0 defeat and losing all parliamentary seats) by the MMM led by Jugnauth and Berenger.

Notwithstanding its election success, the MMM could not complete its five-year term, falling out because of differences on several important issues between Jugnauth and Berenger. *'He [Jugnauth as leader of his splinter party - the MSM] successively triumphed at the three general elections in conjunction with the MLP and PMSD (in 1983 and 1987) and MMM (in 1991), with Sir Gaetan Duval as Deputy Prime minister between 1983 and 1990.'*¹²² The Labour party was led by SSR and as from 1986 by his son, Dr Navin Ramgoolam who became the leader of the opposition in 1991. Dr Navin Ramgoolam won the 1995 elections and came into power. The Labour party remained in power for one term only as the party lost to the MMM/MSM coalition, with Jugnauth as leader, in 2000.

WOMEN AND POLITICS

Has there been a change in the role of women in national politics? Their position - be it in terms of ministerial portfolios, number of women entering Parliament, the number being elected or the number obtaining tickets to stand for elections - has been weak. Mauritius is in advance of most developing countries of Africa as regards the political empowerment of women – all women having obtained voting rights in 1956 (but conditional voting rights in 1948) at the same time as Egypt. Two African countries where women had obtained voting rights before Mauritius were Niger (1948) and South Africa (1930).

¹²² Dukhira, Chit, Evolution of Democracy in Mauritius: Local & National, Article appearing in the Souvenir magazine to mark SSR's birth Centenary (1900-2000)

It is interesting to analyse how Mauritian women have utilised this 'power that they have had since 1956. At the superficial level, it would appear that although women have had voting rights as from 1956,

"Mauritian women have not made deep inroads into politics which has remained the well-guarded bastion of males. Even compared to Seychelles, a country with which Mauritius shares a common colonial history, Mauritian women have been tardy in directly exerting their political power. While Seychelles can boast almost 20 % female participation at all levels of political positions, Mauritius has a modest 12.6%."¹²³

The number of women who have stood for elections has never exceeded 10 at the national level in any of the elections. This has been around 10 percent of the total number of 60 seats contested. There was no special regional or geographical distribution of the women who have stood for elections. They have been both from rural and urban areas. The Table below provides some details.

TABLE V.1
WOMEN AND ELECTIONS, 1991 - 2000

Year	Municipal Councils		National Legislature		Village Councils		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1990	118	8	58(18)*	4(1)*	1,158	18	1,334	30
1991	119	7	60	2	-	-	179	9
1992	-	-	-	-	1,378	14	1,378	14
1995	-	-	56	6	-	-	56	6
1996	115	11	-	-	-	-	115	11
2000	115	11	58(24)	4(1)	1,435	41	1,608	56

Source: adapted from MAW and SADRC, *Beyond Inequalities, Women in Mauritius, 1997*, Pg 31
Mrs. Pramila Patten, Barrister - at -Law, Task Force Report, October 2001

+Figures in brackets refer to men and women in Cabinet

Although it is unclear why women have shied from politics,

"Statistics demonstrate a clear-cut attitude of deference to men regarding political leadership. ---- The system of primaries, adopted in the selection process of candidates by many parties, requires three things that women rarely have in abundance: money, public exposure and organization". The "rough and tumble of political life has also been quoted as a reason for discouraging women from entering politics"¹²⁴

Nonetheless, Mauritian women have been more than just a silent partner. They have voted massively. Voting has been around 70 percent at all elections and the proportions of women who have voted have almost been the same.

Since the time of Mrs. Poonoosamy in 1976, the first lady minister, each government has ensured that there has been at least one woman minister in government who has generally been the Minister of Women [the title of the ministry has changed from Ministry of Women's Affairs, and Consumer Protection to Ministry of Women's Rights in 1982 with

¹²³ Hanoomanjee, E; Political empowerment of women – an international comparison, in Ministry of Women, Family Welfare & Child Development, Woman NO.4 Political Empowerment of Women, 2000

¹²⁴ Boolell, Sir Satcam, QC; Interview recorded in Woman No.4 Political Empowerment of Women, 2000

Child Development being added in 1987. In 1995, it was changed again, this time to Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development. The appellation has remained the same as from October 2000 [when the MSM/MMM coalition took power] with Mrs. Marie Arianne Navarre as minister.

The 1990's began with Mrs Bappoo as Minister of Women's Rights. She had been a minister since 1982 and gained much experience in the political arena. The interview with Mrs. Bappoo is given in Chapter IV. She was minister for the first five years of the decade (1990 – 1995) and had the distinction of being both the Minister of Women and the acting Minister of Labour and Industrial relations for short periods under the Jugnauth government in the 1983 to 1995 period. Most of the other ministers have been Minister of Women only.

Much has been said in Chapter IV of Mrs Bappoo and her role during the period of austerity when Mauritius turned the economic corner with the Structural Adjustment Programme.

Another of her major achievements was the consolidation of social infrastructure for women under one central command. Here we are referring to her role in bringing the multi-purpose social welfare centres which were spread throughout the country under her ministry. These centres had been built under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Welfare and were used for providing a variety of services to the population at the grass root level. During the day, women obtained their Maternal and Child Health and family planning services and attended programmes on health education and other topics. The youth and men used the same facilities for educational, entertainment and sports at other times. In some villages, these centres became the hub of activities for all.

Since her term of office in 1982 as Minister, Mrs Bappoo has been firm in organising women into associations and encouraging them to develop their skills and to engage in income-generating activities. The merger of the social welfare services and entrusting the responsibility of the Sugar Industry Welfare Fund with the Ministry of Women in 1984, brought about by Mrs Bappoo led to a rationalisation of the services available to women. The Ministry was also reorganised into the Social Welfare, Women's Affairs and Planning and Research divisions and an appropriate cadre recruited and trained. Bringing the social welfare centres under the Ministry of Women was a big boost for women homemakers, in particular at the grassroots level. Educational, recreational and social activities were organised in the 52 centres and 110 community centres and women had acceded to computer literacy, handicrafts and commercial courses. Unfortunately, after more than a decade of development and service to women and the community, these centres were returned to the Ministry of Social Welfare in 1997.

Was it the undoing of the good work done for women? Removing the centres from the Ministry of Women has definitely reversed the process of co-ordinating the activities for women and children under one roof. The long-term vision of bringing women's concerns under one roof has had a set back. Unfortunately, the benefits from removing the centres are not evident as yet.

Mrs Siddaya, the Minister of Women in the 1995 - 2000 Labour Government did lose out on the Social Welfare Centres but she has much else to her credit.

The removal of the social welfare centres from the Ministry has left the 400 or so women's clubs and associations stranded, they were using these centres as their base. Local mobilization would have been an important asset and incessant administrative changes have made it more difficult to map a route to develop and manage gender issues with any degree of clarity and focus.

Among the many achievements of Mrs Bappoo as minister were the links established with the Commonwealth Secretariat on gender. These were started in the 1980's when she had taken up her ministerial portfolio for the first time. Several workshops were held with the assistance of consultants from the Commonwealth on gender mainstreaming. The system of Gender Desk officers who were trained to follow up on the integration of gender in government policy was set up and each Ministry appointed its own Gender Desk Officer.

Mrs Bappoo was instrumental in bringing about a very important legal amendment just before the 1994 International Conference on Women and Development on discrimination based on sex. The Civil Code was amended so that term "sex" was included among the list of discriminatory clauses such as race, colour in the administration of property and parental responsibility. A list of the amendments made over the 1990 – 2000 period is given in Annex 1 (Page 219).

Mrs. Indira Thacoor-Sidaya, Minister of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development for five years (1995 – 2000). She has been responsible for introducing many new activities and programmes for women. She also carried on with much of the work already started by her predecessors. Nonetheless, she has been quite a controversial figure – often criticized by the Press for some of her statements.

She explains that her joining Politics appears to have been inevitable.

Box V.1**MRS SIDDAYA – THE MINISTER WITH A MISSION**

I believed it was all written somewhere that one day or other I had to land in politics. My late father was a trade unionist and as you probably know, before the advent of the MMM, all trade unions were close to the Labour Party. My father was regularly elected as member of the Executive Committee of the (Mauritius Labour Party) and my father used to receive such Independence heroes as SSR, Sir Harold Walter, Sir Kher Jagatsingh etc. I used to listen bemused to the discussions that went on.

But in 1974 something important happened to me. I met the one who today is my husband Shiva. We were both studying in Delhi. He used to discuss politics with a common friend of ours, Rajah Bhadain.

Shiva had participated in the Independence struggle as an adolescent. He was a bit disappointed with the labour /PMSD Alliance which had created a vacuum filled by the MMM.

In 1982, Shiva was Labour candidate in Constituency no.4, Port Louis North/Long Mountain. I was accompanying him almost everyday in his political campaign sometimes, with our one year old son Amrish in my arms. If you remember it was a landslide victory for the MMM/PSM Alliance but during counting there was only one Labour candidate causing the Key Symbol to flash on our TV screen for sometime giving hope that after all it would not be a 60-0.

When in 1991, Navin Ramgoolam came home and proposed that I should accept, I finally did. The greatest encouragement had come from my husband who demonstrated that kind of abnegation rarely found. He has always been philosophical in such situations. *“The invisible hands of Fate have chosen you; you have no right to refuse. It’s the Shavian ‘immanent will’ so beautifully portrayed in Joan Of Arc”*, he said. It was in this way that I joined Labour. Later I had to make a choice between my job at Mon Désert Alma and active politics. On 30th December I was sworn in as Minister for Women, Family Welfare and Child Development. The deluge that occurred the next day on St Sylvestre was in my eyes a symbolical cleansing for a new era.....

WHAT WERE YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN BEFORE YOU BECAME MINISTER? HAVE THEY CHANGED NOW?

From my childhood I had seen too much of this passive attitude of women who themselves had become party to the patriarchal hold on society and for male chauvinism. Boys and girls were treated differently.

Since my childhood I wanted to change this attitude of apathy among women.

I am proud to come across women in the sugar cane fields or in the factories who can argue for the cause of women. For example when a labourer or a mechanic for instance tells his wife “ *You are my wife, you owe me obedience. When I come home my food must be ready and you must serve me*” and the wife answers, *when I know you are coming from work and you are tired it doesn't disturb me to serve you, but when your work is over at 6.00 pm and you reach home at 10.00 pm drunk, I do not think it is my duty to serve you. I am a human being and as such I have got rights and I expect you to respect that. I am your wife and not your slave*”, I am proud because I say to myself that the message is seeping through. When women of all walks of life I come across speak to me and tell me of their life experiences, I conclude that positive things are happening.

Her detailed interview is in annex 2.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

"North, South, East or west, in rich countries or in poor ones, women share a common problem: violence. Much, of the violence in society is directed against women: in the home, in the streets, in the workplace. It is violence that has been largely invisible, underreported, unrecorded and, to a certain extent, tacitly condoned."¹²⁵

The United Nation's decade for Women has helped to bring attention to the critical importance of women's activities for economic and social development. The issue of violence against women and the constraints it places on women's full participation in society has been raised by women's advocates. The official documents produced during the World Conferences on Women are powerful indictments of the discrimination that women face in all countries, regions and cultures, and provide a useful foundation to understood gender-related violence. Many of these agencies and countries such as India have put in place the necessary frameworks for dealing with the issue. An internationally acknowledged "best practice" in the field on domestic violence policy development, the Duluth, Minnesota model has been evolved which is multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary, and it maps out pathway for the coordination and cooperation of all services in the field. It has been adopted by several countries.¹²⁶

The Commonwealth Secretariat has been mandated by the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women' Affairs meeting in 1985 to study the issue so that a Commonwealth action plan could be taken to confront this abuse. The Women and

¹²⁵ Commonwealth Secretariat, Confronting Violence, A Manual for Commonwealth Action, June 1992

¹²⁶ Mendelsohn, Thea; Prevention of Violence against women in Mauritius, Report on Policy, Program and service Measures, February 1995,

Development Programme (WDP) assisted by the Legal Division held a seminar of specialists in the area of domestic violence and instead of producing a report produced a Manual which would assist all concerned with dealing with domestic violence. The Manual, which was revised in 1992, is for lawyers, health and media professionals, police and the judiciary. Primarily, the solution for the problems of both domestic violence and child sexual assault is usually seen to be in terms of legal intervention. Here, the role of the police has been regarded as crucial, it being the only agency offering a combination of the coercive power of the state and accessibility. *"Unfortunately the police, who are often the only service available to battered women apart from the accident's units in hospitals, the police response to domestic violence is inadequate. In the case of Mauritius, examples are often quoted where the police not only belittle the women who is abused but even go as far as to take the side of the wronging husband. It is true that the role of the police is ambiguous and difficult because of the conflicts within society itself. In order to make the police treatment of the case more sensitive and effective"* both so that the individual complainant can be assured of an appropriate and useful response and also so that societal attitudes towards activities of a violent nature can be shaped to the position that such activity is regarded as unacceptable, the Commonwealth Secretariat has prepared a Manual setting out the Guidelines for Police Training on Violence Against Women and Child Sexual Abuse¹²⁷. Generally, in cases of domestic violence, the tendency has been to under estimate and trivialize the abuses and to relegate them to the ragbag of "social problems".¹²⁸

Although domestic violence has probably always existed, writing about it is fairly recent. One of the earliest is *"Wife Torture in England"* which appeared in April 1878 in a contemporary Review, and it was not till 1971 that the British activist Erin Pizzey opened the first women's shelter in the UK.¹²⁹

As stated in the Manual,

"Violence against women is the product of the subordination of women. Short-term measures, such as protection orders and refuges, may have an immediate effect in the context of spouse abuse, but they will not address the root cause of domestic violence. In the long term, domestic violence will not be eradicated until there is a fundamental change in the social and economic structures that maintain subordination of women within marriage and society generally."¹³⁰

In Mauritius, a project on the prevention of violence against women in Mauritius was implemented under the auspices of UNICEF and Australia with funding from the UNICEF Assistance Bureau. The objective was to study the different aspects of violence against women, develop a coherent policy and programme implementation framework and strategy and to train local staff as well as prepare training modules. The study of the legal framework as well as the recommendations for a new set of legal and supporting

¹²⁷ Commonwealth secretariat, Guidelines for a Police Training on Violence Against Women and Child Sexual Abuse, London, Printed and published by Commonwealth Secretariat, 1988

¹²⁸ Ibid, Commonwealth Secretariat, Police Training

¹²⁹ Pizzey, E.; Scream Quietly or the Neighbours will Hear (London, Penguin, 1974) from Confronting Violence, Commonwealth Secretariat, 1988

¹³⁰ Ibid Commonwealth Secretariat

measures were also included in the project. As a result of this two year project a detailed report was prepared and many of the recommendations have been implemented. These include

- The enactment of a new law. The Protection from Domestic Violence Act was voted on 25 May 1997 and as a first step only Sections of the act relating to Protection orders were proclaimed on 15 August 1997 and thereby implemented. It was on March 1998 that the remaining Sections of the Act were proclaimed making the Act effective integrally. The Child Protection Act was enacted in 1994 which offers protection to children against all forms of violence and A Child Protection (Miscellaneous) Act, the Criminal Code (Amendment Act and the Criminal Code Supplementary (Amendment Act) were enacted in 1998.
- Several eminent personalities from Australia, India and the USA have visited Mauritius during the Domestic Violence week, normally held in August each year to support the IEC campaign.
- A support structure has been set up in the Ministry of Women for domestic violence cases. This includes the Domestic Violence Intervention unit, Legal Unit, Child Development Unit, a shelter and a Family Counseling Service. Data collection and proper training is being provided on a regular basis to all those involved with domestic violence cases. This is but the beginning of what could become a fool proof system for dealing with cases of Domestic Violence. At present, there are several inadequacies and appropriate training and infrastructure is needed to operate the mechanism, which has been set up.

The Protection from Domestic Violence Act (PDVA) in 1995 was one of the most important and controversial legislations passed during Mrs. Sidaya's term of office as Minister. Work on the legislation was started much earlier under Mrs. Bappoo and an Australian gender consultant had been invited to help in the preparation of the Bill. Mrs Sidaya's justification for the Act is as follows:

"It is rare to have a piece of law which is globally accepted by every one. The PDVA has according to feedback received by my Ministry been well received by women in general and by right thinking men. Some of them have even written about it in the press. Two years after it was voted in the Assembly, I realise that there could be practical problems in the implementation. No law is perfect. A revision of certain clauses is not ruled out after receiving more feedback from court magistrates and those involved in the implementation procedures.

Women suffered a whole lifetime of being battered and have accepted it as their fate. The law which I have introduced has removed this aspect of fatality in the life of women. I have told women that they have a personality of their own and that no one, absolutely no one, be it the father or the husband, has the right to aggress the integrity of their personality. I have told men that the woman they have chosen to be their wife is a human being and as such has her rights which must be respected. The paradox with men very often is that they court a woman who is their equal and expect to marry a woman who will be their slave. Education and access to information have created a revolution among

women which no one should underestimate. And that is what women ask for? They need love and respect.

We hope that if there is no taboo about domestic violence anymore, the younger generation will grow up in a new culture where battering of women will not be a private affair but a legal offence. They will grow up in a culture, which considers women as being equal to men. In some countries, namely the Scandinavian countries this has been already achieved because they are 20 to 30 years ahead of us in terms of emancipation of women. We have to bridge the gap now."

A study, which was conducted on domestic violence in Mauritius, indicated that violence usually starts during the first few months of a relationship and the degree of abuse intensifies thereafter. Most incidents occur at night or early morning and at home. One of the most prevailing reasons for women to put up with a battering relationship is cultural/tradition and/or religious pressure promoting the ideal of marriage as the only way to happiness and accomplishment for women.¹³¹

Mauritius is being acknowledged as one of the few countries, which has taken a comprehensive stand against domestic violence. It has borrowed from the experience of Australia and has also adopted the Commonwealth Model framework for an Integrated Approach to combat Violence against Women and the Girl Child. What is now required is proper evaluation and follow up of all cases of domestic violence.

And what about the amendment to the Criminal Code and the Civil Code?

Box V.2
LEGAL MILESTONES

"They are also milestones in the establishment of equality between the sexes in respect of the law of our country. Among other things it is now possible for a woman to seek redress in cases of sexual harassment but women should be bold and denounce men who make an abuse of authority by sexually harassing their women colleagues or subordinates. Men who leave their pregnant partners without any valid reasons commit an offence punishable by law. A woman today is not a non-entity in the administration of the goods of the community. She has the same right as her husband. If the husband is found to be placing the goods of the community in jeopardy the wife can appeal to a court to prevent it from happening. This is a leap forward in equality before the law.

¹³¹ Ministry of Women, Family Welfare & Child Development, Criminological research on domestic violence, Consulting March 2000

You have always said that economic emancipation is a sine qua non to the full emancipation of women. What have you done in this area?

1. It is to enable women to have economic emancipation that I introduced the micro credit scheme based on the philosophy of *Grameen*, for women at grassroots level. This scheme has known a resounding success. Women can today obtain a loan without the signature of their husband and without the form of guarantee usually claimed by banks. Many are the women who have obtained such a loan and their lives have changed. I have also introduced the National Women Entrepreneur Council Act to pave the way for an improved participation of women both quantitatively and qualitatively in the process of economic development
2. You have been given credit for one thing at least: Gender. Before 95 many people were ignorant of the meaning of this word whereas now it is part of our vocabulary. But what is Gender?
3. *"The modern sense given to the word gender is relatively recent. It is based on the premise that at birth we are male and female. It is our history, our culture, our religion, our traditions that make us men and women and which force us to adopt a certain behaviour which is accepted but which is not necessarily what Nature had decided. Let's take an example. Nature has decided that it is women who give birth to children. Agreed. But does Nature says that nurturing is the sole affair of women? When you study different cultures you understand that it is not always so. So is it in the world of animals where the male is also concerned with nurture. Why can't the husband also help in the household chores? It is said that the best chefs in the world are men. Why can they be good cooks in a restaurant and not at home? The notion of Gender calls upon us to review our age-old attitudes to life, to other members of the family as well as to a society which has maintained women in a state of servitude if not slavery. If we do not change our attitude, if we do not view women as equal partners we shall lag behind. The perception of women, their sensitiveness, their motherly view of life can help solve many problems and avoid others. That is why I am campaigning for a better participation of women at decision making levels."*

Yes, you have been talking of 30% reserved seats for women at the Assembly and elsewhere. Do you really think it's workable?

1. *"It has worked in some Scandinavian countries; at village level it has produced miraculous results in India. Mrs Vasundara Raje (State Minister of Industry from India) said it during her recent visit here and President Bill Clinton was so impressed by what he saw in a small village of Rajasthan that he told an elected woman member, "Stand as candidate anytime anywhere. You will be elected."* France wants to give it a go and even talk of "parité"; the Commonwealth has approved it; so has Southern African Development Community (SADC) in a convention signed by all Heads of State aiming at attaining 30% women representation by the year 2005 by all member states.
2. Do you think these people are mad to be recommending a reserved quota for women? Men have created a situation where they control every single piece of decision and now they talk of democracy and fair competition between men and women. I strongly believe that it's not possible to have a fair fight, as it's not an even playing field. And yet some lecturers on the subject pretend that women should get democratically represented at the Assembly and they should not expect any favours from men. Who is talking of favours? Who doesn't know that in 1993 I too held the view that women should compete on equal footing and get to the Assembly on sheer merit? I fought the 95 elections against men and topped in my constituency. But during these past 6 years I have evolved. I have understood that if the rules remain the same women will not come forward and we shall be missing their contribution at the level of decision-making. Let us not be fooled by seeing a few women Prime Ministers or Ministers throughout the world and even in Mauritius to conclude that if they have made it, so can others. Women politicians have to go through hell to make it to the Assembly. When you have gone through all that, do you think it's easy to pursue a political career? See what happened in France to Minister Dominique Voynet who has been shamelessly vilified in public resulting in an uproar of disdain and disapproval from women. It's not easy for women at all. And yet we need them. The best thing perhaps would have been to have Party Leaders to file 50% women candidates at all elections. But where is the guarantee? We know that in spite of an improved number of candidates from the Labour/MMM Alliance in 95 we had an Assembly with a low 10% women MLA's. Where are the champions of positive discrimination? That's what men and women from the many countries and regional blocks mentioned earlier are claiming for, not charity.

Please let's get back to Gender. Concretely what is happening at your Ministry to foster the Gender concept?

"A lot is happening. Since quite sometime now, we are having a Gender Bureau which is fully functional. We have been chosen by the Commonwealth Secretariat for a pilot project on Gender Mainstreaming Methodology. The objective is to systematically identify practices, which are discriminatory to women in all aspects of public and private life. Seminars have been held with officers in the public sector to familiarize them with the methodology and to enable them to recognize evidences of discrimination. Women in Mauritius have for the first time a powerful tool, which will help engineer actions towards the achievement of goals of gender equality. I can assure you that it's a gem of a document. Of course implementation work has already started."

The full interview of Mrs Sidaya is in Annex 2. Two other ministers who worked for gender mainstreaming were Mrs. Bappoo and Ms. Minerve. The work done by Mrs Bappoo has been mentioned earlier and the interview with Ms Minerve is given later in this chapter.

GENDER EQUALITY

As stated in the UNICEF 1998 Situation Analysis of Women and Children,

"Gender relations have gone through a very significant transformation recently but these changes are not without strain and friction.

Most studies that have been carried out show that there has been very little change in gender role responsibilities in the home in spite of the fact that women have now taken on wage earning responsibilities outside the home. Women are still largely responsible for housework, childcare responsibilities and household management. The difficulties of juggling household responsibilities leads to considerable fatigue and mental stress and strain which inevitably affect children who become the scape goats in situations of tensions between parents."¹³²

"Gender equality assumes particular significance in the local context since it is in the national interest to maximize at any point in time, the output of its human resources in the pursuit of economic development objectives."¹³³

In the context of generating greater gender equality, a Gender Bureau was set up in the Ministry of Women in August 1998. Although the Bureau does not have legal powers to

¹³² UNICEF, Invest in Children: Securing Rights in a Changing Society, October 1998

¹³³ Ibid, into the 3rd Millennium

intervene in cases of gender inequality, it has set up the necessary networks and lobbies within the public and private sectors to bring cases to public notice so that remedial action can be taken.

It has also prepared the National Gender Action Plan¹³⁴, which sets out the actions to be taken under five groupings. These are, Gender and the Economy, Gender and Human Resource Development, Gender and Health, Gender and the Law and Rodrigues. The main issues pertaining to women in the economy were the difficulties of women to combine their multiple roles in the work place, the community and the home without adequate support from the state and society. This support cannot be forthcoming unless there is enough sensitisation of the difficulties faced by women. It needs to be recognised that if in Mauritius the divorce rate is still low, it is largely because women are willing to forgo positions of greater power and responsibility in the workplace so as to preserve the family. As stated in the Action Plan, 'Because of imbalances of gender roles and socialisation within the family, women have to combine the heavy obligations of the home and their profession. From consultations, it is evident that the confidence and self-assurance needed to hold responsible decision-making positions in Government or the private sector are not encouraged at home and at the school. The media further projects poor images of women by failing to promote role models for women.'

Under Gender and Human Rights, issues of removing discriminatory provisions in labour legislation and the fixing of wages based on job content instead of gender in the primary sector such as the sugar and salt industries have been raised. The important question of economic empowerment of women through more programmes for facilitating self-employment among women and the provisions of training and other facilities for women have been raised. Although girls have equal access to education at all levels, it is found that the number of girls entering the science and technical streams is lower than that of boys. Thus women tend to face a disadvantage at the labour market. Introducing programmes for extra curricular activities and leadership programmes for girls and adult education for older women have also been mentioned. The main health issues which have been identified are reproductive health, health care for menopause and elderly women, the extension of the Occupational and Health Safety Act to the public sector and examining the problem of mental health among women.

Women in Rodrigues face a variety of problems among the most important of which are lack of financial facilities for starting small businesses, protection from exploitation of octopus fisher women, training on the use of fishing vessels for fisher women and control of fraud at sea.

The Bureau faced much difficulties during the initial period because of infighting between groups within the ministry itself as well as lack of support from other ministries, but it managed to work with a core group of supporters and well wishers thus being able to get a considerable amount of work done. Unfortunately, it was not stabilised or anchored enough to withstand a change of government. In 2000, therefore the Bureau was disbanded and a new formula was examined to give shape to a similar organisation.

¹³⁴ Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development, National Gender Action Plan, Ending the Gap, March 2000

C. GENERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TRENDS OF THE 1990'S

As stated in Chapter III, the planning exercise continued up to the mid 1990's with the last plan covering the 1990 - 1994 period. Since then the long-term strategy plan the 'vision document for the 2020 and the Millennium strategy document have been published by government. This shift in the planning focus was needed as the international environment had changed. Mauritius faced competition from many poorer countries which began exporting to the world market the same garments and clothing which Mauritius had been producing. It was becoming difficult to compete with these countries such as Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as wages and social benefits which Mauritian labour was demanding increased the cost of production in Mauritius. To compete successfully, Mauritian exports have to be of a better quality, higher value and be competitive in terms of price. Thus, from employment creation, the focus has been on quality and high value jobs and increased productivity at all levels.

As stated by the then Prime Minister (Sir Anerood Jugnauth) in his preface to the 1990 - 94 Plan,

"Today a New World order is emerging where market access is less certain. Domestically, too, the situation is becoming more complex with a full-employment economy and a population with evolving values and higher aspirations. These are formidable challenges for us all. In our march towards greater affluence, we should not lose sight of our social and cultural values or relinquish our efforts to build a more equal and just society where the interest of the vulnerable groups are safeguarded and social harmony reigns."¹³⁵

But maintaining social justice by giving better wages and facilities to workers, in particular maternity and other family – friendly benefits to women, could also mean making Mauritius 'less competitive' in the narrow financial parlance, but intrinsically a richer country able to face the longer term and inner needs of the population. The challenge facing the country is thus to maintain the delicate balance between economic growth and social welfare.

By the 1990's, the transformation of the Mauritian economy which had taken place over the three decades since Independence was completed. Agriculture had lost its lead position to the newly created Export-led manufacturing sector which became the engine of growth as from the mid 1980's. Fortunately, sugar output was maintained at its 1970 level because of the higher sugar cane yields and sugar extraction rates obtained, making it possible to respect the various marketing commitments for the supply of sugar to the European Union and the US. Another important development for increasing revenue from sugar has been the diversification of sugar exports into different refined value added sugars and special cane sugars including organic sugars. Diversification out of sugar into other higher value crops is also being pursued actively. Increasingly, vegetable

¹³⁵ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, National Development Plan 1992 - 1994 Programmes and Policies, 1993

production is also expected to reduce dependence on imports as well as provide a surplus for exports. Exportation of flowers and ornamentals has also had a good start.

The main prop of the Mauritian economy has been the textile sector since the mid 1980's. But the speed at which change was taking place can be understood when we realize that within two decades, viz. by the 1990's, there was already a new sector emerging – the export-oriented service sector. Nonetheless, manufacturing will continue to hold its key position until the attempts to move into the export of services has taken firm position. As shown in the last two chapters, the textile sector, the main provider of employment for women, has helped solve the unemployment problem.

With the textile sector facing intense competition due to globalisation, it is the tourism sector that is proving to be resistant to external pressures. Even the tragedy of the Twin Towers has not deterred tourists from visiting Mauritius. Tourist arrival figures indicate that there has been some decline in tourist inflow since September 2001, but which could have been worse.

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

Several women have risen to management positions in the Textile sector. A number of women have also successfully set up their own businesses. One example of a woman who has climbed the rank and file to the top is Huguette Tan-Yan. She won the 1999 Lifetime Achievement of the National Competition of Women Entrepreneurs organized by the Ministry for Women. She had this to say of her own experience when managing a work force of some 2,000 women employees. *“It was not easy because 2,000 employees means 2,000 different view points to reckon with. One needs to have unlimited patience, respect for the worker and most important the ability to listen to the workers and their needs.”*¹³⁶

There are several factors, which could hamper the continued growth of this sector. The main weakness of the sector arise from the concentration of exports to the EU and US markets resulting from favorable markets access arrangements, competition from rivals, low cost exporters, changes in type of export orders, shorter lead time for delivery, styles getting more sophisticated and faster changing market trends. These are all external factors which are making it more difficult for the majority of smaller and SME's which comprise the majority of firms in the EPZ sector to survive. Among the important local factors hampering the development of the sector are the high rate of absenteeism which has resulted in low productivity, lack of local design and research capability and high airfreight, inadequate port facilities, poor management and availability of funds for upgrading equipment accompanied by relevant training.¹³⁷

The downturn of the manufacturing sector will have repercussions on women since it is mainly the women who are losing their jobs in large numbers.

¹³⁶ Ministre de la Femme, du Bien Etre de la Famille et du Developpement de l'Enfant, Femmes en avant, Femmes entrepreneurs - Interview, Decembre 99 No.1

¹³⁷ Ministry of Economic Development, Productivity & Regional Development into the 3rd Millenium, National Strategy for Sustainable Development 1999-2005, Government Printer, May 2000

Can women go back to being housewives after having gained a certain degree of financial freedom? They need greater empowerment through training and other forms of assistance to be able to move into new fields. And organisations such as the Industrial and Vocational training Board and the Ministry of Tourism have been forthcoming in organizing training programmes which are aimed at helping women and female school leavers find employment opportunities. Since the majority of women work in the textile sector, courses in Computer Aided Design and Computer Aided Management have been set up for both men and women. There have been some difficulties faced by working women in attending such courses as time off has not always been available to them. On the job Training has been generally easier to organize for working women than programmes after working hours.

The tourism sector has been the third prong of the Mauritian economy since the 1985's. The tourism product *'is a sub - tropical island destination characterized by white coral beaches, friendly hospitable people, a safe lagoon and a scenic diversity'*.¹³⁸ It appeals to a variety of market segments from the leisure market to the sporting events and conference markets and tourists with special interests like bird watching. About 75 percent of tourists to Mauritius are below 45 years and are from Europe - mainly France, Italy and Germany- Reunion and South Africa. It is estimated that the sector yielded about 19 % of total export earnings in 1998, thus being the third biggest foreign exchange earner. It created some 50,000 direct and indirect jobs in the same year.

The main challenges for this sector will be to ensure the attraction of Mauritius to high spending tourists especially since there has been an increase in the proportion of low-spending tourists to Mauritius in recent years. Although tourist density is still low and there is less risk of tourist saturation, the need for improving sewerage and waste treatment infrastructure is critical if the natural assets are to be preserved and the exclusivity of the destination maintained.¹³⁹ It is becoming clear that more women are moving into this sector.

As stated by Prof. R. Lamusse, The increasing importance of services in both local and international operations offers a wide range of job opportunities for women which will lead to an increase in the quality of jobs that will accrue to women in Mauritius. ---More women can reach commanding positions. *"The empowerment of women may well be the single most important development in the new society of the 21st century."*¹⁴⁰

The less pleasant aspect of the tourism sector is the rise in prostitution which would appear to have occurred hand-in-hand the tourism industry. As stated by the Ministry of Social Security in a short declaration to the Press on prostitution in March 2002,

“The Ministry of Social Security does not deny the fact that prostitution exists in Mauritius and more and more young people are entering into prostitution. The

¹³⁸ *ibid*, Vision 2020

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, into the 3rd Millennium

¹⁴⁰ Lamusse, Professor R.; The empowerment of Women in Mauritius, Ministry of Women, Family Welfare & Child Development, Woman No.3, 1999

Ministry provides some assistance through the Social Aid programme. Those wishing to abandon prostitution but have no means to make a new start may apply for this assistance. The assistance is provided based on a report on the case made by the officers of the Ministry. There are also social organizations which work with prostitutes who wish to “*ranne patente*” (give up their patent to work as a prostitute) these organizations work in absolute discretion. Other organizations such as the Organization for the Prevention of HIV/AIDS also work towards preventing prostitution.”¹⁴¹

From the newspapers and reports prepared by the Ministry of Women, it would appear that prostitution is not only on the increase but girls as young as 10 years are entering into this ‘business’. As stated by a prostitute to a reporter, “*We want to dance and amuse ourselves*”. It is becoming clear that prostitution thrives in the places favoured by tourists. Grand Baie in the north has become the ‘tourist hot spot’ with its large and small hotels, a multitude of nightclubs and entertainment places, which have attracted a host of prostitutes from the rest of the country. But social organizations consider that there are a few areas in the poorer suburbs of Port Louis where there is a concentration of not only prostitutes but also drug addicts and dealers and others. The prostitution business is now being given some respectability as some of the massage parlors and even beauty salons are being used as cover ups for prostitution.

Prostitution is illegal in Mauritius and anyone caught with a prostitute can be fined up to Rs 1,000 or imprisoned for up to 3 months. The sentence is heavier if the prostitute is a minor that is below 15 years. “*Soliciting a male person for immoral purposes*” is also punishable by law. But the difficulty is to prove that the woman is soliciting and being paid for having sexual relations. Since January 2002, only 8 prostitutes have been arrested and 6 women have been imprisoned for the offence of ‘immoral purposes’. (*été ecroutées pour le délit d’immoral purposes*) Under this ‘accusation’ anyone who acts indecently runs the risk of being arrested.

The issue to be considered is, “*How can the current legislation be made more effective*”? Or once again, “*how do we prevent prostitution and in particular child prostitution?*” Some of these issues - which have been taboo for discussion in the past - have more recently have been studied by various ministers and ministries, and solutions proposed. The Ministry for its part is taking several measures to prevent this practice and to provide support to abused children.

Centres have been set up to rehabilitate children who have been suffering from all forms of abuse. A Unit of the Ministry of Women has been working with several NGO’s to provide an efficient service to the poorer regions in Mauritius where abuse and child prostitution has been on the increase. Some data on abused children are in Annexe Table V.3.

¹⁴¹ Le Defi Plus, From 6 to 12 April 2002, Enquiry by Yannick Sardes-Ross – Steward Armoogum-Brinda Chetty

Driven by poverty and neglect children are also appearing on the streets of the capital attempting to earn a living by begging. The Ministry has been working with UNICEF and Save the Children Fund to provide a home for such children.

It is in this context that having the Social welfare centres under the Ministry of Women made much sense. Women, children and old people could have been better catered for through these centres and with the relevant ministries working together. Bringing these ministries together is vital if we are to maximise the use of our resources. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to compartmentalise issues creating problems of communication among ministries. Quite often committees are set up but commitment at the state level is also required as social issues are closely related to each other, before officers can plan on a co-ordinated manner. The lack of IEC programmes or poor IEC programmes also contribute to a rise in the number of social dysfunctioning in the society.

Many NGO organisations such as the Trust Fund for Women and the SOS Femme are doing much good work to help relieve the problems of poverty, family break-ups, prostitution and the rise of HIV/AIDS which are appearing on the social scene with the increase in the number of working women and the changes in the paternalistic family set up.

ENGENDERING THE BUDGET OR MAKING THE BUDGET MORE FEMALE SENSITIVE

Another important gender technique that Mrs. Sidaya introduced was the 'engendering the budget' initiative. A seminar to introduce the idea to Mauritian professionals was held in 1999 with the assistance of the UNDP. The Gender Budget Analysis (GBA) has been an initiative of the Commonwealth Secretariat *"which incorporates a set of processes and tools geared to assessing the impact of national budgets on gender, particularly women. More specifically, it seeks to dis-aggregate the impact of the national budget separately on men and women."*¹⁴² In Mauritius gender issues have been implicitly incorporated in the budget exercise and changes have been made to the Income Tax Act and other financial legislation to put women on an equal footing with men. For example, it was only in the 1990's that married women were able to submit Income Tax returns separately. Women in 1999 paid about 25% of the total income tax received.

The engendering budget system should bring gender issues into the macro-economic framework. Do women benefit equally from the expenditures made on the economic and social sectors? A detailed analysis on a sector-by-sector basis requires disaggregated data on the beneficiaries from government expenditure. Sometimes such data is not available. It would appear that in the health and education sectors for example, women and girls benefit almost equally from government expenditures. There are as many girls in the education system as boys and similarly, women attend the various health facilities in

¹⁴² Aubeeluck, A K and Hanoomanjee, Mrs E; Engendering the Mauritian Budget, Paper presented at Seminar organized by the UNDP and Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development.

equal numbers. It is more difficult to carry out the analysis for the economic sectors such as the construction of roads and harbours.

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

Women provided the cheap and docile labour, which attracted the first foreign entrepreneurs to the Mauritian Export Processing Zone (MEPZ) in the 1970's. More women found full-time employment during the period 1980 to 1990 than in any other period in Mauritian history. Some 80,000 women, mainly young women, found first time employment in the Export Processing Zones, which had been set up in Port Louis and the urban district of Plaines Wilhems. This was also the period with the highest rate of growth of output for the EPZ sector; for example between 1988 and 1989 the annual growth rates were more than 20 %. This resulted from a similar increase in female employment. There has been a deceleration of employment creation after 1990. Thus, while the industrialization of the economy has had a profound impact on Mauritian society, it was the women themselves who have made it possible at a cost to themselves.

Entering the labour market has in many respects increased the workload of women. Apart from their reproductive and community roles women are increasingly becoming income earners. Thus unless they obtain greater support from the spouse, it is the family itself and the child, in particular which is affected. The health and physiological consequences on the women has also become evident.

As the number of jobs available to women increased, the female labour market participation rate also went up. The labour force participation rate (LFRP) gives the number of women who are employed, are unemployed or who wish to work as a percentage of women in the ages of 15 to 60 years. The rate has therefore, increased from 20% in 1972 to 35% in 1990 and 41% in 1995.

TABLE V.2
WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT – CENSUS YEARS

	1952	1962	1972	1990	2000
Activity Rate of Women 15 Years +	13.1	17.5	20.3	34.7	40.5 ¹⁴³
% of Women Working in Agriculture	52.2	40.2	37.1	14.3	8.4
% of Women Working in Manufacturing	1.0	6.8	10.2	49.6	43.4

Source: Central Statistical Office, Census reports

The detailed participation rate for 1990 and 1995 are given below. As stated earlier, both girls and boys are staying in school longer as a result of which the rate of participation for the age group 15 - 19 continued to decline over the period 1990 to 1995 and 1997. As children stay in school for more years moving into tertiary level education, the labour force will in future attain a higher educational level.

¹⁴³ Central Statistical Office, Labour Force Sample Survey 1997 and Census Report 2000.

TABLE V.3
ACTIVITY RATES FOR SELECTED YEARS BY SEX AND AGE GROUPS

AGE	MALE				FEMALE			
	1990*	1995	1997	2000	1990	1995	1997	2000
15-19	50.7	44.0	35.8	31.1	25.7	24.6	20.5	18.0
35-39	97.1	96.8	96.9	97.5	45.9	54.7	55.9	59.3
55-59	81.7	83.7	84.1	85.0	24.6	29.3	30.2	31.7
60-64	29.7	34.9	35.8	-	9.0	9.4	9.4	-
15 and above	80.6	80.1	78.7	79.2	34.7	38.8	38.7	40.5

Source: Central Statistical Office, Digest of Labour Statistics, 1997.

**Central Statistical Office, Labour Force Sample Survey 1995*

Notwithstanding these spectacular increases in the LFPR for females, the rates were still lower than the rates in the East Asian countries such as Hong Kong (45 in 1986, Malaysia (45 in 1980) and Singapore (46 in 1986). The rates in the industrialized countries are much higher and range between 65 in Norway and 60 in United States.

Before the setting up of the EPZ, most women who entered the labour market were agricultural labourers. As in most agrarian societies, many family members worked unpaid in the family farm or were seasonable workers in the nearest sugar plantation. A small number of women who had been educated became teachers and nurses. The majority of women remained at home and had children. Thus compared to 1952, when 13 percent of women were working, slightly more than 50 percent of them were in the agricultural sector, by 1990 35 percent were working and only 15 percent of them were in the agricultural sector.¹⁴⁴

In fact, women dominate the EPZ sub-sector, representing 69% of the total EPZ employment. The ratio of females to males in the other sectors were much lower, as shown below. For example in Agriculture, women accounted for about 26 % and for 32 % in Finance, insurance etc and 36 % in Community, social etc. in 1997.

TABLE V.4
EMPLOYMENT BY SELECTED INDUSTRY AND SEX, 1997
(THOUSANDS)

Industry	Male	Female	Total
Agriculture & fishing	42.9	15.6	58.5
Of which sugar	(24.2)	(9.5)	(33.7)
Manufacturing	72.2	64.7	136.9
Of which EPZ	(25.2)	(56.1)	(81.3)
Construction	37.8	0.2	38.0
Wholesale & retail trade	50.1	21.8	71.9
Financing, insurance, real estate & business services	10.5	5.1	15.6
Community, social and personal services	75.4	42.7	118.1
Central Government	(43.5)	(12.6)	(56.1)
Local Government	(5.2)	(0.7)	(5.9)
Total	322.6	153.1	475.7

Source: CSO, Digest of Labour Statistics, 1997 and other years, Mauritius

¹⁴⁴ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Survey of Women's Roles in Economic Activities, 1995

There is another feature of the female labour market which has implications on the family. During the early period, it was largely young unmarried girls who entered the EPZ. Girls also tended to drop out of school before even completing their primary education either to look after younger children, to get a job to support the family, to get married or because of high cost. As educational provisions for girls were expanded and after 1976 when secondary and tertiary education became free, there was a marked increase in school enrolment rates. Concurrently, as economic conditions became difficult, older women including married women with or without children sought jobs in the EPZ as a means to supplement the family income. Thus the employee profile of the EPZ has undergone a change.

This change in the age profile of the female EPZ workers has been further reinforced as girls are staying on in school for a longer period. This is shown in Table V.5 as the Activity rates for Females between the ages of 15 – 19 has been falling over the 1990 to 2000 period. From around 25 % of girls in that age group who were working or looking for a job in 1990, only 18.1 % were working or looking for a job in 2000. This is because the enrolment ratios for girls have been on the increase.

Another feature is that some girls with some years of secondary schooling are reluctant to work as Production Workers in the EPZ. With higher personal aspirations, educated girls prefer to stay unemployed while waiting for an appropriate job. This increases the female unemployment rate. As shown in the Table below the unemployment rate for females has been higher than that for males.

TABLE V.5
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY SEX, SELECTED YEARS

	1990	1997
Males	3.1	3.9
Females	2.3	9.8

Source: Central Statistical Office, Digest of Labour Statistics, Second year

It should also be noted that not only is the female unemployment rate higher, but the differential between the male and female rate has been on the increase over the 1990 – 1997 period. Some of the reasons have been given in the preceding paragraphs.

Another less favourable factor that emerges as regards the labour market and women is the occupational distribution of women. While in 1962, 71% of women were employed as agricultural labourers and the rest as domestic servants, as from 1990 the majority or more than 70% of women are employed as agricultural and production workers. Thus the large mass of women has moved from the lowest rung in the agricultural sector to the lowest rung of the industrial sector.

This is unlike more mature industrialized countries where the sectoral spread of women is less skewed; there is a heavy concentration in the less skilled occupations, largely held by women, in Mauritius.

TABLE V.6:
OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED FEMALES (%)

Occupation	Mauritius (1993)	Japan (1992)	Norway (1992)	US (1992)	Hong Kong (1992)	Singapore (1992)
Professional ⁱ	9.5	12.7	36.2	31.5	14.0	23.1
Clerical ⁱⁱ	17.3	54.7	51.7	57.3	51.9	41.2
Production & Related Workers Agriculture, animal husbandry & forestry workers, fishermen & hunters ⁱⁱⁱ	69.3	24.4	9.0	9.4	33.3	34.6
Other	3.9	8.1	3.2	1.9	0.8	0.1

Source: Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, The Role of Women in Economic Activities, 1995 and ILO Report on Labour Statistics, several years

i---Includes Professional technical, administrative managerial and related workers

ii---Includes Clerical and related workers and Service and Sales workers

iii---Includes Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers

Nevertheless, there has been some slight movement up the occupational hierarchy, especially as from the mid 1990's. With industrialisation and the development of the tourism sector in particular, more women have obtained middle management jobs in this and the other service sectors. This is shown in figure 1 on page 187.

Another development which has been particularly important for women is the efforts made to provide self-employment opportunities for women. The role of women in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) and family businesses is well acknowledged, internationally. In Mauritius as well, there is a large percentage of women working in the informal and SME sectors. Recognising that these sectors enable women to combine their several roles more effectively, the Ministry of Women has put in place several schemes to encourage women to enter this sector. The most important of these schemes have been the Micro Credit Scheme, which is based on Grameen model of Bangladesh. The objective is to enable the poorest segments of the population to get access to credit facilities without any collateral and start income –generating activities. The scheme favours group solidarity among women (3 to 5 women) and loans do not require any collateral. The maximum amount loaned in Rs. 50,000 which bears 8% rate of interest and which is refundable in 5 years.¹⁴⁵

In addition to providing loans to self-employed and small entrepreneurs other support is given. These small women entrepreneurs are not left to themselves. Right from the time they express a desire to start a small enterprise they are taken care of by the officers of the Ministry. They are helped in the writing of their project, in the methodology of

¹⁴⁵ Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development, National Gender Action Plan 2000, March 2000.

business management, the procurement of raw materials as the case maybe, the keeping of simple accounting necessary for their enterprise and familiarisation with technical know how at the Common Facility Centre of Floréal. And if they do not have a ready market for their products they can always exhibit their products at the Market Centre of Quatre Bornes where they find clients or may even obtain important orders, even for export.

To encourage women entrepreneurs to aim higher, the Ministry organises every year a competition for the best woman entrepreneurs and since 1998, two best women entrepreneurs have participated at world women entrepreneurs competitions. The setting up of courses on management and finance for small businesses held by the organization responsible for small-scale industry development together with the Women's Entrepreneurship Council has helped more women to set up small businesses. There has been an increase in the number of women self-employed as well. An Association of women entrepreneurs has been set up and has assisted other women wishing to start businesses of their own.

MOVING TO MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN MAURITIUS

In terms of women in management, the conclusion from a series of studies on this topic has been that internationally women have fared less well in the world of 'Big Business' than they have done in the political, social or literary fields. 'Big Business' seems to be the last male bastion, not only in Mauritius but internationally. It is therefore not surprising that literature on this phenomenon is on the increase. Mrs. Ramguttty -Wong who has studied this issue in Mauritius has found that *"Across all sectors and all levels of management, women represent 25 percent of all Mauritian managers."* However when the analysis is broken down by level, we find that only 4.71 percent of top managers of both public and private organizations are female, as shown in table below:

TABLE V.7A:
REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN MANAGERS IN MAURITIUS

	Female managers in Pubic sector (percentage of total) (n= 325)	Female managers in Private sector (percentage of total) (n= 1379)
Top level	5.85	4.71
Middle level	9.92	10.69
Junior levels	8.29	10.26

Source: Mrs. Ramguttty - Wong, appearing in Ministry of Women, Family Welfare & Child Development, WOMAN, International Women's Day 2000

It transpired from the survey of 1753 organizations conducted by Mrs. Ramguttty - Wong, that the majority of CEO's rated women managers to be as good as men but a majority of senior managers believed that men in general would either feel indifferent or uncomfortable about having a female boss. More details of the study are given in Annexe 4 (pg 294).

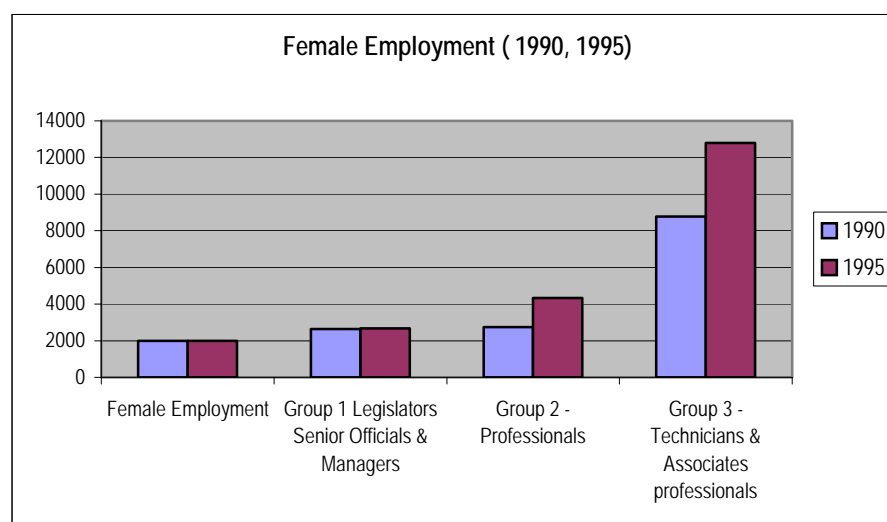
It is evident that without the creation of a family - friendly infrastructure in the world of work little progress can be attained in the assisting women break through the 'glass ceiling' in the corporate world. Provision of on site childcare facilities, parental leave and flexi-time are some of the provisions that need to be considered seriously. But will corporate Mauritius, which is governed by men willingly, introduce schemes to open the gates to women or to topple them, or a few of them, from their pinnacle? I guess not. The need for an appropriate social infrastructure for childcare is taken up in the next section of this chapter.

On the other hand, the study showed that women who have reached upper-level positions were not particularly concerned about difficulties such as lack of support, pay and other reward inequities. But the major issues according to the respondents were *"the incidence of Sexual Harassment (52%), exclusion from important training opportunities (39%) and lack of support from female subordinates (39%)"*.¹⁴⁶

The findings of the Ramgutty - Wong study are reflected in the economy as a whole as can be seen from the Table V.7 below which gives the occupational distribution of women in employment, at the level of Group 1 - Professionals and Group 11 Managers. In terms of actual numbers of females, there has been an improvement. There were about 30 additional women employed in Group 1- Legislators etc between 1990 and 1995; whereas there were about 2,500 more in Group 2 – Professionals. As regards Group 3 - Technicians and associates professional, the increase was almost 4,000 as shown in Figure below the increase has been less significant for males. (Refer Annex Table 1 **page xxx**).

FIGURE I

FEMALE EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS, SELECTED YEARS



¹⁴⁶ Ibid, Ramgutty - Wong

In terms of education as well there has been some improvement as shown in table below:

TABLE V.7B:
OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED POPULATION (%)
& EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, SELECTED YEARS

	1990		1997	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employed population (12 + yrs in 000)			322.6	
Nil & pre primary	5.9	14.7	0.0	0.0
Primary	47.5	44.1	46.7	45.1
Secondary & diplomats	44.0	39.6	50.3	52.9
University	2.6	1.6	3.0	2.0

Source: Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development, Women and Men in Figures, July 2000

It can be seen from the above figures, that there has been a slight upgrading of the qualification level of employees in Mauritian industry. This is a good sign for females, as more girls get better educated.

WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

There has been greater gender balance in the public sector than in the private sector. In addition, the female professional and managerial level employment to total employment is higher in the public sector than in the labour market as a whole. For example in 1999, some 2,570 females were employed as compared to 3,128 male professionals in the public sector. This gives a male: female ratio of 45: 55. Fifty nine percent of the female professionals were nursing officers and midwives. Educational officers accounted for 26% of female scientific professionals. Information Technology appears to have attracted many female graduates as around three fourth of the pool of analyst programmers (77%) are women. However this could mean that higher salaries in the private sector have attracted the majority of male analyst programmers. Some 28 Scientific officers (out of a pool of 59) and only 5 engineers out of a pool of 96 (5 percent) were women in 1999.¹⁴⁷

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

As stated earlier there are several issues pertaining to women and the labour market and the impact on the family. While larger numbers of women are drawn into the labour market for financial reasons as well as a means to attain a certain degree of independence, the ripple effect of this trend on the those around them has been little studied. Since it is evident that the large-scale entry of women into the labour market cannot be reversed, measures to reduce the less desirable ramifications of this trend can and has to be introduced. Another issue that has also to be addressed is how women could be assisted to become more productive in the labour market so that they may aspire to reach higher levels of responsibility and enter the decision - making echelons.

¹⁴⁷ Mauritius Research Council, Gender Component of the National Audit on Science and Technology, unpublished 2000

IMPACT OF INDUSTRIALIZATION ON WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

This is the growing pressure on family life as more women enter the labour market has surfaced as a national concern. Most women who are in the EPZ work long hours. Working hours are usually 10 hours per day with 10 additional hours of compulsory overtime per week. Although some of the firms provide transport, this is not universal. In the majority of factories there is inadequate provision of facilities for rest or eating.

Studies conducted on EPZ factory workers have indicated that the incidence of anaemia and overwork is high among female factory workers. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that psychiatrists have noted an increase in the level of mental stress and depression among both men and women. The problem is more serious for women because they are tradition-bound to cope with all their other roles as mother, wife, homemaker and carer of the old and dependant. At the same time the financial independence that women have gained has made them reluctant to bear the burden at home and at work.

The 1999 Continuous Multi-purpose Household Survey included some questions on the way families were able to reconcile the work and family responsibilities. Although some 50 % of the 2,345 women interviewed, declared that they were able to manage but with difficulty, some 10 % did find it very difficult.

TABLE V. 8
RECONCILIATION OF WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES, 2000

	NUMBER	%
Very difficult	245	10.4
Difficult, but can manage	1169	49.9
No problem	931	39.7
Total	2345	100.0

Source: Economic and Social Indicators – An occasional paper, Central Statistical Office (2000)

Thus the psychological strain of leading a double or even triple life is taking its toll on women. Although morbidity rates, which refers to hospital admissions, as a percentage of population has been traditionally higher for women than it is for men, it is the reverse in the case of admissions to the psychiatric hospital. Unlike men, who appear to suffer from a high level of Alcohol Dependence Syndrome, women are more prone to Schizophrenic Psychoses. These are taken up in the Health section below.

PRODUCTIVITY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

While realizing the need to provide better conditions for women at work, the main problem is low levels of efficiency and productivity in the EPZ. An important factor responsible for this is the high level of absenteeism. This is estimated to be about 9

percent based on a study undertaken by the University of Mauritius in 1990¹⁴⁸. The same study pointed out that absenteeism is higher among the larger firms and there is a positive relation between absenteeism and labour turnover. Both these factors tend to lower productivity levels. As stated earlier, with globalisation and the emergence of low cost competitors from Asia such as Vietnam and Indonesia, it will be extremely difficult for Mauritian firms to survive.

The tendency since the 1990's has been for Mauritius EPZ firms to have recourse to cheaper foreign labour to take up the slack in the labour market. This reliance on foreign workers has been on the increase in recent years. This has led to two important developments having a bearing on Mauritian women.

First, a reduction of employment opportunities and secondly greater difficulties for Mauritian women do climb into supervisory positions in the EPZ. In fact the whole issue of foreign workers and the impact on Mauritian female workers should be studied as an 'EPZ Management issue' and or a 'female employment and opportunities issue'. Employers will hold the view that foreign workers are essential to remain competitive and meet production targets which indirectly creates jobs for Mauritian women.

As it is, as the result of stiff competition, a number of firms in the EPZ have had to close down thus laying off labour. Many women who have been in employment in the same firm for more than 20 years have suddenly been laid off with meagre compensation. It would appear from the labour market data available that women are finding it extremely difficult to find alternate jobs. As already stated, this has led to increasing unemployment rates for women.

This is one area where up to date studies by the Ministry of Women to follow up on women who lose jobs suddenly would be useful in preparing appropriate support schemes. There has been an attempt on the part of employers working in conjunction of the IVTB and other organizations to start training programmes for the unemployed workers so as to upgrade their skill levels and to made them more employable in another sector. The key strategy has been to put in place schemes for multiskilling so that workers become more flexible and can be readily prepared to take up a job in a new sector. Training has to be designed to make workers more employable.

Others are being encouraged to set up their own business with the provision of loan capital and technical advice through the Ministry of Women's entrepreneurship programmes.

COPING WITH MULTIPLE ROLES

It is definite that many traditionalists viewed the emergence of the Export Processing Zone with fear stating the system was standing on its head. But the fact is that the entry of women into the labour market is part of the modernization process in family life; it has

¹⁴⁸ University of Mauritius, Study of Women

given her a certain measure of economic freedom. This however has not automatically given her greater authority within the family or led to more equality in the division of family tasks. On the contrary a study undertaken in 1995 showed clearly that in more than 75 percent of households, the husband did not help in household chores. As a result, women had to spend many additional hours at home doing household chores.

How do we help women cope is the main theme of this book and will be taken up in the final chapter?

However in recent years there would appear to be greater collaboration between the spouses within the family, at least in terms of decision - making. The 1999 Household Budget survey shows that most important decisions are taken jointly by the husband and wife. It would appear that decisions concerning major issues such as the purchase of a house, furniture, participating in religious activities, contracting loans and medical care of family members are taken by the couple together in more than 60% of cases. But it is still clear that as regards issues concerning finance, in 25 percent of the cases, decisions are taken by the husband and not jointly with the wife.

TABLE V.9
DECISION MAKING AT THE HOUSEHOLD LEVEL, 2000

Decision	DECISIONS TAKEN BY				
	Husband only (%)	Wife only (%)	Husband and Wife together (%)	Other Household Member (%)	Not applicable (%)
Purchase/Construction of house	19.9	1.8	67.0	0.9	10.4
Contracting Loans	25.0	1.8	61.2	1.1	10.9
Savings and Investment	23.0	4.4	66.2	1.1	5.3
Purchase of household appliances and furniture	11.6	9.9	75.7	1.4	1.4
Purchase of food	23.1	17.2	58.2	1.2	0.3
Daily choice of food to be prepared	6.1	46.7	45.0	1.8	0.4
Medical care of family members	15.9	11.5	71.1	1.5	0.0
Children's education	9.9	9.0	54.3	1.5	25.3
Participation of family members in sports activities	17.4	3.1	38.3	4.5	36.7
Participation of family members in religious activities	7.9	11.7	72.8	2.0	5.6
Participation of family members in social/cultural activities	12.9	6.1	61.8	2.2	17.0
Participation of family members in political activities	20.9	1.1	41.8	2.7	33.5

Source: Central Statistics Office (2000)

As stated in the paragraph 'Women and the Economy', the single most important factor influencing women today is the large number who have entered the labour market. Working women have less time to spend looking after the home; at the same time they are more empowered and therefore in a position to demand greater collaboration from

their spouses/partners. In more developed westernised countries, women exercise their rights more frequently and therefore unions are less stable.

In Mauritius, marriages/unions are definitely more stable as shown on page 199 on 'Family break-up and Divorce'. Is it due to the greater collaboration of spouses, the sanctions from society or the will of women to remain in a union? It would appear from Dr. Premila Ghookool's study¹⁴⁹ that it is largely women who are bearing the brunt of keeping unions / marriages stable. A short interview with her is at Annex 3 (page 229) Although men are co-operating more, it is still much limited. Women and especially educated women are often willing to sacrifice their own professional career advancements for the sake of the family. In fact they project much of their own ambitions to their children. But there is an extent to which women can support such inhibitions. In fact in order to create a more harmonious society which enables both the man and the woman to blossom to his/her full capacity (without a sense of sacrifice and curtailment) society and the state should pick up some of the simple facilities which women as well as the extended family have been providing. This could include facilities for emergency childcare which has been mentioned above, counselling, and training.

Childcare facilities are the most important example. No progress can be made for women without a wide network of simple, wholesome, inexpensive child care facilities to meet the different segments of society. If this is not done, women will continue to have fewer children until a pro-natalist policy may be required.

In addition to childcare, the other psychological facilities such as counselling, childcare advice, parenting advice has to be made easily available to working mothers at times and places convenient to them. Even physical education and keep fit programmes become important if we do not want to end up as a society of obese people.

IMPROVING WELFARE FACILITIES FOR THE FAMILY

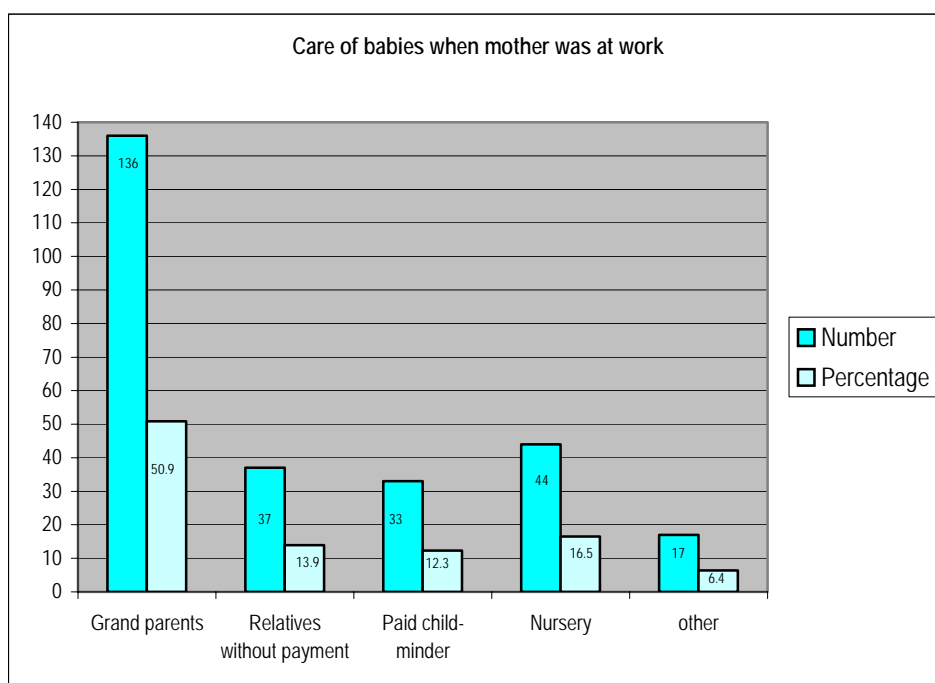
With women's activity rate in the labour force at 40%¹⁵⁰, and with just over half of all married women in employment, the problem of inadequate day care services for children from birth to pre-primary school age has become particularly acute. Unfortunately, at present, reliable childcare facilities are not available in easily accessible places and at a price which is affordable to the factory worker or even professionals. As shown by studies undertaken by the CSO, in the majority of homes with children in urban, rural and semi urban areas, it is family members either residing in the home or outside the home who take care of children.

Data from the 1999 Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey are given in the Table V.10 on the next page.

¹⁴⁹ Ghokool, Premila ; Phd Thesis (19..)

¹⁵⁰ Data from 'A statistical profile on women in Mauritius' (1999) Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development.

CARE OF BABIES WHEN MOTHER WAS AT WORK



Among working mothers with school-going children, 43% reported that their children were left on their own after school, while 32% left their children in the care of grandparents as shown in the following table.

TABLE V. 10
CARE OF SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN AFTER SCHOOL HOURS WHILE MOTHER IS STILL AT WORK, 2000

Children looked after by	Women reporting	
	Number	%
Grand-parents	285	32.3
Relatives, friends or neighbours without pay	34	3.9
Relatives, friends or neighbours with pay	110	12.5
Nursery	22	2.5
No one (left on their own)	379	43.0
Other	51	5.8
Total	881	100.0

Source: Central Statistics Office (2000)

Again, although the sample may not be representative of families with young children based on these figures, the number of children left on their own is alarming. The Child Protection Act gives a precise definition of childcare services providers as formal childcare providers. According to Gopalan (1997)¹⁵¹, under formal day care, 82 crèches [at that time]¹⁵² were registered with the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development. They included private day care centres run on commercial lines, centres run by the Export Processing Zone Labour Welfare Fund (EPZLWF) and Crèches run by organizations and NGO's.

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES FOR CHILD CARE AND WORKING WOMEN

The Ministry of Women has not remained indifferent to the needs of women. The Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme has become a high priority for society as more women go out to work. There is increased recognition of the social consequences of neglecting development in the early years of a child's life. The provision of care plus proper stimulus for the child's intellectual and social development between the years of three to six will have a bearing on their later development. Children learn through social interaction with adults and other children. The principle is that children can do things first in a supportive context and then later independently and in a variety of contexts. The support of adults and more competent peers provides the necessary assistance or "*scaffold that enables the child to move to the next level of independent function*".¹⁵³ This has been recognized to have an important impact on the sustainability of recent gains in child survival.

Three international events which have contributed to the focus on the young child have been the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), (currently ratified by 127 countries, the World Conference on Education for All (1990) and the World Summit for Children 1990). Not only has Mauritius signed and ratified the Convention of the Child treaty, it has made the necessary legal provisions to better protect children against abuse and exploitation. In this context 25 laws were amended in 1998 under the Child Protection Miscellaneous Act, the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act and the Criminal Code Supplementary (Amendment) Act. The Protection from Domestic Violence Act was enacted in 1997 which provides protection to the spouses and to children.

¹⁵¹ Gopalan S, Early Childhood Development Policy, Strategies and a Programme for Action, Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development and UNICEF, October 1997, Pg 8

¹⁵² For more up-to-date data see Appendix

¹⁵³ UNICEF, Early Childhood development, The Challenge and the Opportunity

As quoted in the UNICEF Report¹⁵⁴

"The Government of Mauritius, meanwhile, has shown leadership in dealing with the growing problem of child abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children. It has set up a Child Protection Unit in partnership with UNICEF, the British High Commission and the NGO Soroptimist International. Officers to the Unit have been trained and sensitised over a two – year period by child –protection experts from the United Kingdom and hundreds of children have already benefited from the greater understanding that the unit has fostered. Meanwhile the Government has also made substantial efforts to tackle child abuse at other levels, with the expansion of its early childhood development (ECD) programmes and extensive better 'parenting' education schemes."

The care of children between three years to five years is shared between the Ministry of Women and the Ministry of Education. In 1996, the Ministry of Education put in place a programme for pre primary education in government and private centres as from the age of 4 years till the child enters a primary school. The Ministry of Women for its part has a programme for the construction of nurseries and crèches for babies and children throughout the island. It has also launched an Early Childhood development programme. It is a multi-pronged programme, which provides for legal reform, health surveillance programmes, reduction of infant and under five mortality rates to a third of current levels, and the reduction of anemia among children. Training of trainers for the training of pre primary teachers is crucial for the success of the launching of modern methods of good childcare, which involves developmental and socialization experience, cognitive stimulation and physical care ¹⁵⁵

WOMEN AND POVERTY

It is a worldwide phenomenon that although women are successfully competing with men in many spheres of human activity, they are finding themselves increasingly marginalized. In most countries, it is the women who are the majority of the poor – in terms of income, political empowerment and personnel security. In Mauritius, the situation is no different. A study on the Feminisation of Poverty showed *"that female - headed households are over represented among the poor and are more likely to be poorer than households headed by men"*¹⁵⁶ About 15 % of all households are headed by females and the majority of these females are widowed, separated or divorced. These households earn a lower income than their male counterparts as shown below.

¹⁵⁴ UNICEF, The State of the World's children 2002 Leadership, 2002

¹⁵⁵ Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development, ECD panel

¹⁵⁶ DCDM, Patterns and Trends in the Feminization of Poverty in Mauritius, Final Report, September 2001

TABLE V.11
HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY TYPE OF FAMILY, ISLAND OF MAURITIUS, 1997

Monthly household income	Male Headed Households	Female Headed Households
Average number of income earners per households	1.93	1.99
Average monthly income per household	Rs. 8,600	Rs. 4,800
Medium monthly income per household	Rs. 6,000	Rs. 3,600

Source: Ministry of Women, Men and Women in figures, July 2000

The difference in the income of female headed and male-headed households in terms of both the average and the medium income is clear. Female-headed households earn a little more than 50 % of their male counterparts. It would appear that even if they have slightly more income earners, there are probably more dependants and others who are non-earning an income. Wages and salaries earned by females are also lower than those earned by men. In the public sector men and women earn equal salaries but since there are more men performing higher paid jobs, on an average, men's income tend to be higher than that of women even in the public sector.

It is thus clear that the incidence of poverty is higher among female-headed households than households headed by males according to the DCDM study on the Feminisation of Poverty¹⁵⁷.

D. SOCIAL SECTORS

WHERE MAURITIANS LIVE

Mauritians have continued to live in the same places over the past decades. Although city status in terms of infrastructure and facilities but not in status had been attained for 3 towns by 1990, there has not been a major problem of rural population depletion. The most populous district is Plaines Wilhems in which the three main towns are situated with Port Louis, the capital city, having a population of around 140,000. The other four main towns have a population of around 90,000 each. But unlike many other developing countries, migration to urban agglomerations has not taken place in a big way. There are many reasons for this. One is the fact that social and economic amenities are fairly equally dispersed over the whole country. Another important decision was starting free zone industrial areas in rural areas. This has meant that women do not have to move to towns for employment. In fact, unemployment in the 1980's was lower in the rural areas for women than in urban areas because of this fact.

Another reason for the maintaining the urban/rural balance is that many Mauritians by nature are home loving and are not eager to move to new areas. Another change that is

¹⁵⁷ Ibid DCDM

taking place is the gradual shift to the coastal areas. Permanent homes in a beach house is a new feature becoming more common especially among middle-income and or older couples. So the urban /rural distribution of the population has remained at around 43/57 from 1983 onwards as shown in the Table below. However, the figures are not totally comparable because there have been some changes in the classification of urban and rural constituencies.

TABLE V. 12:
URBAN AND RURAL COMPOSITION OF POPULATION, SELECTED YEAR

Population	1983	1990
Total	961,191	1,024,571
Urban	411,644	415,099
Rural	557,547	609,472
Composition		
% Urban	43	41
% Rural	57	59

Source: Census Reports, Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Economic Planning & Development, Various Reports

FAMILY STRUCTURE

By the time of the 1962 Census, the family size had already fallen to 5.2. This decline has continued to the 1990's. Most women continue to live within a family so it was quite rare to have a woman heading a family in the 1950's. Women-headed households accounted for about 18 percent in both the 1983 and 1990 censuses. In 1990, 85 % of female heads were widowed, divorced or separated, 6 % were single and 9 % were married. Thus the norm for the family is a patriarchal one headed by a male.

TABLE V.13:
NUMBER, SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Concept / Years	1983	1990
Number of Households	199,712	229,690
Percentage Household over Population	20.7	22.7
Average Size of Household	4.8	4.4
Female Heads of Household	37,014	40,237
Single Parent Household	17,665	19,062
One Person Household	11,994	11,853
Two or more Employed in Household	60,000	107,964

Source: Census Reports, Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Economic Planning & Development, Various Reports

More than 80 per cent of women aged 30 years are married. Although Mauritian society exhibits many of the outer trappings of modernity, it has fiercely clung to many of the traditional moral values.

This is quite unlike the trend in France and western industrialized societies where it is the unpopularity of marriage, which is continuing. Not only has the age of marriage increased but the percentage of women remaining unmarried has also risen.

Society in Mauritius is still highly traditional and most births take place within wedlock. There are not many 'single teenage mothers' living on their own; most of them live within a family. In 1990, for example, there were 50 births for 1,000 teenage mothers. In the same year, less than 10 percent of girls of 15 - 19 were already married. Unmarried mothers do not appear as a category in official data, although publicity has been given to this group in the Press. From discussions with social workers and different associations, it would appear that in many cases of "teenage pregnancy" it is an elder relative or friend taking advantage of a minor. Legally speaking, these could be classified as rape. Based on a study done on pregnancy in schools in 1997, it was estimated that about 500 to 600 minors become pregnant every year for the first time. Around 100 of them are still adolescents. Some remarkable features of the problem of adolescent pregnancy transpire from the fieldwork that has been carried out on this subject. For example

- It is usually during the month of February viz. a few months after the holidays and the festival period that most cases are reported to the few homes which support cases of pregnancy.
- It is lack of information on sexuality that is the cause of much of the excessive number of teenage pregnancy.
- There is only one centre which provides shelter for teenage mothers.
- Often the girls do not know the fathers of the child or do not want to reveal their names.
- A few are cases of rape.
- In other cases the fathers are married men who do not want to take responsibility for the baby.

The Ministry of Women is looking into the matter and is considering developing appropriate intervention strategy. The *Mouvement d'Aide a la Maternité* (MAM) is active in the field and is managing the Foyer Clairiere de Bonne Terre which receives teenage mothers. The Mauritius Family Planning Association for its part under took a study on teenage pregnancy in 2001.¹⁵⁸ In the majority of cases, the child mother has had

¹⁵⁸ Week-End, Societe, Dimanche 19 novembre 2000, Port Louis

to abandon the baby although in a few cases, the former has married the father of the child.

Mauritius has kept up with the international trend of increasing age of marriage for both the bride and bridegroom. The Mauritius experience with setting the legal age of marriage was quite interesting. The legal age for marriage was 16 years for girls from the British times until 1983 when in response to lobbying from some pressure groups and following international practice; it was raised to 18 years. Provision was made for girls who were below that age and wished to get married; special dispensation had to be obtained from a judge in chambers. However, in practice it was found that the number of cases where the dispensation had to be applied was so large that the law did not reflect the wish of the people at large and could not be justified. So the legal age for marriage for girls was once again lowered to 16 years.

While marriages between different ethnic groups are on the rise because the labour market offers greater opportunities for meeting prospective partners from other ethnic groups, marriage within the community is the common practice. Some informal system of elders of the family arranging marriages is still in practice.

FAMILY BREAKUP AND DIVORCE

As a larger number of women enter the labour market and have an independent income, there would appear to be more tension between the spouses within the family. Younger couples are less willing to make amends and patch up which has resulted in an increase in the divorce rate. Divorce which is the obvious and final breakdown of the family structure has been on the increase reaching 0.7 per cent in 1991, although it is still far from the 12 percent in Reunion Island, 48 percent in US and 50 percent in UK and many other European countries.

Some data on the number of divorces in Mauritius is given in figures below.

FIGURE 2

NUMBER OF DIVORCES, REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS, 1996,1997

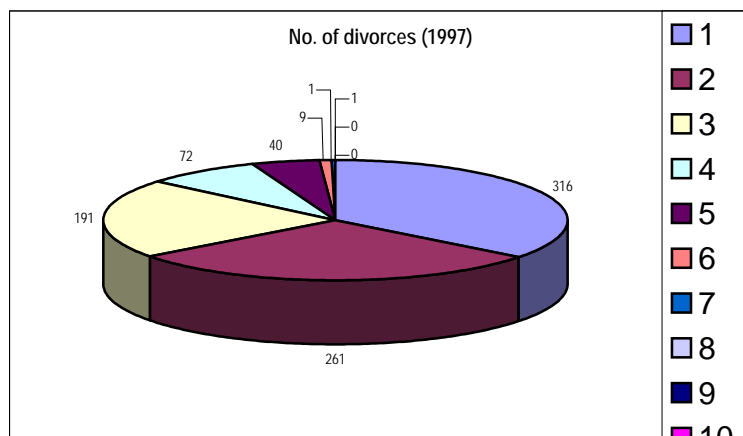
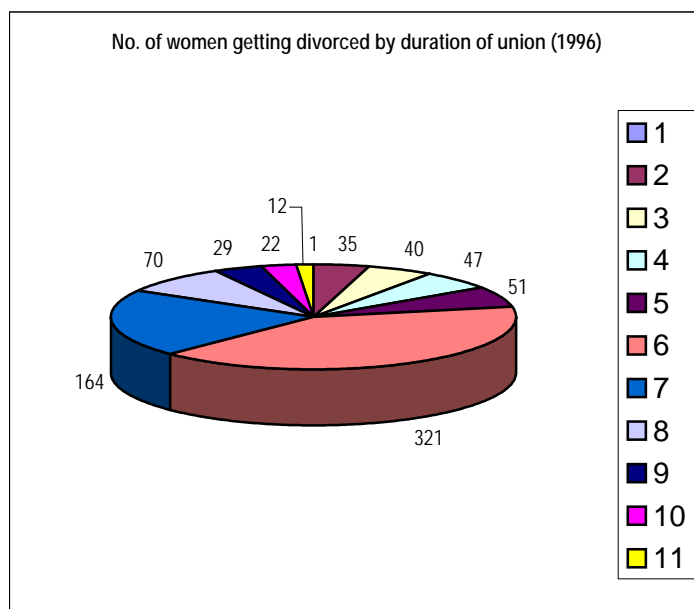


FIGURE 3

NUMBER OF WOMEN GETTING DIVORCED BY DURATION OF UNION, REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS, 1996,1997



There has not been much change in the pattern of divorce over the past decade. The majority of divorce takes place within five years of marriage (32 percent) and another 25 percent occurs between nine to six to nine years of marriage and the 23 percent between 10 to 14 years of marriage. This pattern has been maintained over the decade. The same amendment to the Marriage Act also made children born to a woman who was only religiously married legitimate.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mauritius has continued to expand on its system of social security. At the same time, with greater affluence, some income groups can afford to move away from the government system in terms of health care, education and some form of retirement benefits. But the vast majority of the population including women in the lower income groups rely on government for their health, education and welfare needs. So there has been an expansion of health and social facilities.

The basic National Pensions Scheme set up in 1976 has continued into the 1990's. There have been revisions in the rate of payments in line with the cost of living index. In addition Non- contributory benefits are paid to employees above the age of 60 years. A wide range of other non-contributory benefits are also available for widows, invalids, orphans, children as well as inmates of government-subsidized institutions.

Ms Minerve who was the Minister of Social Security, during the 1995-2000 period, following a long career as a social worker talks about her experiences.

Box V.3

INTERVIEW OF MRS JOCELYNE MINERVE

What are the factors that made you enter politics?

Well, I attribute it to my up-bringing. My family background played an important part as my father had been in the Labour Party and was sacked from his job in a sugar factory, by the factory manager just because he was alongside with Anquetil, Rozemont and Seeneevassen (other Labour leaders). This happened when I was growing up in the 1940's I think the high handed attitude of the sugar industry nurtured me and first took me to the political rallies of the Labour Party in Champ de Mars and has struck in my imagination since then. It had something to do in creating an element of awareness which translated into a social commitment from the young age of around 16 years old. I began to be involved in social work with kids in a children's movement helping them to live their children's life. I also gradually began to organise collective action to solve their problems in their schools life, daily life, family life, social life and so on. I was also involved in social work and Community Development within Institute for Development and Progress (IDP).

As I became dissatisfied with that, I be-friended religious groups as I wanted to grow in faith. I wanted to find out for myself the teachings of my religion and began reading religious books to understand the message. I felt that much of social work is useless unless one understands the root causes of social problems. Religion had an important role to play in many social problems.

I also started to become aware at that time (1970's) of politics which appeared to be the path and the means towards solving persistent problems like high school failure rates, school dropouts and poverty. I was very much struck with the 'so called social exclusion' which coincided with my growing awareness of the emergence of the new left of the MMM trying to take over the spirit of the former Labour Party. This happened in the early 70's. I became part of this new perspective in the political life in Mauritius. Well, that's my story of my involvement in politics. I can count nearly 30 years of active politics in Mauritius in the MMM – with an absence from the country from 79 – 83, when I was the General Secretary of the International Movement for Children in Paris. It is an organization helping some 60 countries to fulfil their fundamental duties towards children.

How did you decide to go into active politics?

When I came back in 1983 I was asked to stand as a candidate in the 1983 election. It was a fortnight without sleep because the big question was "Would I make it in active politics?" and then some friends made me realize that as a social worker I was acting as a fireman, try to extinguish the fire. But by entering political life, I would be able to tackle the problems at source. That was what I believed. So parallel to my action as a parliamentarian, I got involved in local-level politics in the Municipality of Beau-Bassin/Rose Hill for seven years where I was the Chairperson for the Social Affairs committee. I wished to bring more people to participate in politics as the only means towards democracy. That's why we started the Women's League and the Women's Centre in Beau-Bassin where women could discuss problems of battered women and soon the first shelter for battered women in Coromandel was started.

I was the Minister of Social Security but resigned when I felt that I was not able to implement many of the schemes that I had in mind. After the riots following Kaya's death in February 1999, I stood back and asked myself what I had been doing all these years. The final analysis was that after 30 years engaged in politics and 16 years in parliament I had not been able to reduce school failure because it was the kids of 12 – 13 years old, in Beau-Bassin, Barkly who started the riots. The 4th world comprising those excluded from the rest of society had started burning police stations, shopping malls like Spar and other symbols of the rich.

What does it mean to be a politician vis-à-vis former superiors, subordinates, colleagues, friends and family?

The political leaders wanted me to be submissive and follow party lines on general goals and objectives; leaving you with little personal choice. Well I have been a follower for too long.

As regards subordinates, when I was in the Municipality as the Mayor or in the Ministry, I have always considered my subordinates as essential components of the team working towards a common mission and objectives of the Ministry. That's why one of my first moves when I was appointed was to meet all the employees of the Ministry or of the Municipality. In the Ministry, it was region wise and department wise. To take one and all on board was for me the only route to succeed in the gigantic tasks we faced given the meagre means (les miettes) that was at our disposal. We either succeeded or failed together. I have always tried to work together as a team. My attitudes towards colleagues was to try to persuade and convince them while discussing with them that problems should be analysed in global and holistic way.

The position as women – How far have we reached the goals in the struggle?

Some progress has been made - recognition of women's personal rights and several legislations have been passed since Independence which have reduced the gap between men and women. But we should be very vigilant not to lose what has been acquired as rights in our life up to now.

As women we may be weaker and smaller but we need to unite together to find our common identity. You should know who you are and what you are called to be because you become what you are, as stated by the philosophers. Women in Mauritius have to become united to defend our mother earth, our rights and that of other women.

We should ensure that kids are brought up to be just and holistic in their approach to life. We should keep kids far from this greed which is engulfing out society. Money is a final goal; it gives power but should not be used to walk over the bodies of the others. Our agenda should be live and let live.

In that context, we should as Mauritians make a special plea for the whole issue of the United States military base in of our territory of Chagos Archipelago to be returned to us? We should unite in our efforts to work towards a world of peace and consequently an Indian Ocean zone of peace as it is the official stand of Mauritius from 1982 to date in international flora.

As the former Minister of Social Security and National Solidarity in charge of the Ilois Trust Fund for short time, may I request you to put these issues high on your agenda and to use your good offices to bring an urgent and just solution to this sensitive issue.

What is your position as a woman and how do you feel about the opposite sex?

Opposite sex, you know, I pity them. I mean globally because you have exceptions of course. I pity them in the sense that they have not got that much confidence in themselves and in their ability to transform society, transform the world and transform life.

I am coming up with a new social consciousness, a new alternative vision of development of life, of everything. I think now we should stop talking about development. You know why, look at the world, despite all the billions, billions and trillions of money that has been invested at UN level, it's becoming increasingly worse and poverty is increasing both in terms of number of poor and the depth of poverty. We need a holistic approach to solve current problems.

A comment on the Minister's views

Ms Minerve is an exceptional person in the sense that she more than any other politician has worked with the people at all levels for a very long period. She has devoted most of her adult life to social work. She has a good sense of what the people need. It was most appropriate that she was made the Minister of Social Welfare. In fact, one of the first initiatives she took was to hold a major seminar on the social welfare system so as to work with all the social partners to arrive at a plan for social welfare which was directly linked to what the people wanted. Unfortunately, her term as minister was short lived and her efforts were not pursued further. But she continues to work with the people at different levels to 'make a difference' to the people around her.

EDUCATION

As families are becoming smaller, the pre-occupation of parents to better prepare children for the future has become predominant. It has been a universal and timeless perception that education provides the best insurance for the future. In Mauritius, the ethos for education has been in evidence from the times of the early settlement and the provision of near-equal educational opportunities for girls became a reality after the 1980's. Whether parents were encouraged to allow girls to continue with their education as jobs became more accessible or for purely altruistic reasons, it is not clear.

Women have taken gigantic steps in terms of education attainments. The 'universal primary education' slogan of the 1960's is now a reality for all girls. Although there is some drop out as from the Standard IV level, the majority of girls complete the six-year programme. Girls have also routinely attained higher pass rates at the Certificate of Primary Education as shown below:

TABLE V.14
PERFORMANCE AT CERTIFICATE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION, 1998

	No of cand. entered		% pass
School & private candidates	Boys	14286	59.93
	Girls	13484	69.73
	Total	27770	64.71

*Source: Mauritius Examination Syndicate report, several years**

Each year some 13,000 boys and girls sit for the CPE examination. The numbers are almost equal but in terms of pass rates there is a fairly big difference. Girls outperform the boys in the overall pass rate as well as in terms of individual subjects. A higher percentage of girls obtained A in the four main subjects sat for at the CPE in 1998. Boys did better in Environmental studies but the girls did better in the other three compulsory subjects namely English, Mathematics and French. This would appear to be the case over a number of years.

TABLE V.15
CPE 1998, GRADE DISTRIBUTION BY SEX AND MAIN SUBJECTS

Subject	No pass	% Pass	No A	% A	No B	% B
English						
Boys	8989	65.82	2569	18.81	1396	10.22
Girls	9998	76.92	3126	24.05	1762	13.56
Maths						
Boys	9754	71.44	2445	17.91	878	6.43
Girls	9995	76.93	2379	18.31	991	7.63
French						
Boys	10066	73.71	4005	29.33	1715	12.56
Girls	11053	85.05	5284	40.66	2020	15.54
EVS						
Boys	9256	67.78	4162	30.48	1458	10.68
Girls	9634	74.14	3951	30.40	1606	12.36

*Source: Mauritius Examination Syndicate, several reports**

As shown in the study undertaken for the Mauritius Research Council on Gender and Science and Technology, notwithstanding their good performance, the number of girls continuing higher studies in the science subject is lower than the number of boys.

Girls appear to do better irrespective of the school that they attend. As shown in the Table V.6 below, even in low performing schools such as Emmanuel Anquetil Government School, the percentage pass for girls is higher than that for boys.

TABLE V.16
PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED SCHOOLS AT THE CPE EXAMINATION, 1998

School name	Sex	% Passed	English	Maths	French	EVS
Cascavelle GS	Boys	25.00	25.00	50.00	43.75	37.50
	Girls	60.00	60.00	71.43	80.00	60.00
	Total	41.94	41.94	60.00	61.29	48.39
Emmanuel Anquetil GS	Boys	5.08	5.26	11.86	15.25	10.17
	Girls	16.39	19.67	36.07	44.26	22.95
	Total	10.83	12.71	24.17	30.00	16.67
Hugh Otter Barry GS	Boys	89.02	90.24	93.90	93.90	89.02
	Girls	97.47	97.47	97.47	97.47	96.20
	Total	93.17	93.79	95.65	95.65	92.55

*Source: Mauritius Examination Syndicate reports, several years^{*159}*

There has been an expansion in the educational facilities available for girls as a result of which more girls have been attending secondary schools. Refer annex Table V.2 for CPE pass rates by districts.

TABLE V.17
PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL CANDIDATES AT SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, ISLAND OF MAURITIUS, SELECTED YEARS

Year	Sex	Number Examined	% Pass
1990	Boys	4945	58.8
	Girls	4568	67.1
	Total	9513	62.8
1998	Boys	6511	77.6
	Girls	7373	78.1
	Total	13884	77.8

The difference in the pass rate between boys and girls is much less at the secondary level as shown in the above table. This was partly because there were more government and higher quality schools for boys than there were girls. This is also one reason why less girls went in for science subjects because of the lack of places. These issues are gradually being addressed and more secondary school places are being made available for girls.

The school certificate examination marks the end of the school career for the majority of boys and girls as the percentage pursuing with the higher school certificate programme constitutes less than half the number sitting for the School certificate examination. There are many reasons for the drop out such as the need to earn an income, difficulty of finding a suitable school place and the fear that it may not be possible to find a job at a later stage.

¹⁵⁹ These tables are taken from the Mauritius Research Council Report on Gender and Science and Technology, 2001

TABLE V.18
PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL CANDIDATES AT HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION,
ISLAND OF MAURITIUS, SELECTED YEARS

Year	Sex	Number Examined	% Pass
1990	Boys	2086	54.8
	Girls	1879	57.6
	Total	3965	5.2
1998	Boys	2803	73.2
	Girls	3246	72.6
	Total	6049	72.9

As stated in the last chapter, more girls are continuing with university education in Mauritius as a result of the expansion in places at the UOM. However the majority of girls go in for the courses at the Faculty of Law and Management and the Faculty of Social Studies and Humanities.

HEALTH

There has been a steady improvement in the health status of the population with life expectancies reaching those of middle-income countries. For men, the life expectancy is 69 years while for women it is around 74 years. The differential between men and women has been on the increase and this trend is likely to continue a result of several factors, the most important of which could be the more risky and unhealthy lifestyle of the male population.

The infant Mortality rate – a good indicator of the health of a country, which is around 20 per thousand live births, is too high for a small country with a relatively good health system and which spends about 10 % of its total recurrent budget on health facilities. It is believed that low weight babies, poor health of the mother, lack of rest and care during pregnancy are some of the factors which could be responsible for the high infant mortality rates. During the 1990-1995, early neo- natal deaths represented about two thirds of overall infant mortality rates. Hence, further improvement in the infant mortality rate can only be obtained with improvement in neonatal survival through better prenatal care.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Mauritian children are protected against preventable diseases under the free vaccine programmes of the Ministry of Health. Immunization coverage is high. About 88 percent of all babies are immunized against tuberculosis at the age of one month and the other diseases such as diphtheria, pertusis and tetanus (DDT), poliomyelitis and measles during their first year and the final vaccine against tuberculosis at the age of 12. The main target would be to further expand coverage of these services. Since health services

are provided free at easily accessible places, extending coverage should be relatively easy.

Malnutrition among children has diminished and the nutritional status is comparable to newly industrializing countries such as Singapore. Anemia due to iron deficiency is not a public health problem. Malnutrition among children has diminished as shown in the table below:

TABLE V.19
NUTRITIONAL STATUS, 1995 AND 1985

Nutritional Status (WA)*	1995 Survey		1985 Survey	
	Number	%	Number	%
Severe malnutrition	27	2.2	128	6.6
Moderate malnutrition	171	14.2	338	17.4
Normal	991	82.3	1437	73.8
Overweight	15	1.2	45	2.3
Total	1,204	100.0	1,948	100.0

* *Weight for Age*

More health data are found in Annex Figures V.3 to V.5

BREAST-FEEDING

The average duration of exclusive breast-feeding is around 12.2 weeks, which is a good sign. Unfortunately, continued breast feeding up to a year is more difficult as working mothers have only three months paid maternity leave. Facilities at the work place for breast-feeding are inadequate in most work places. The time provided for breast-feeding is also not sufficient. The issue of breast-feeding was taken up during discussions with women as part of the preparatory work for the Gender Action plan.

The points raised indicate the narrow restricted approach adopted by employers as well as lawmakers to the whole issue. It would appear from the points raised by various groups that Breast-feeding is considered as a privilege accorded by the State/employer with minimum attention being paid to the practical side. In most cases, having half an hour for breast-feeding does not help women because of the practical problems of bringing babies to the office or going to a *crèche* to breast-feed during the half-hour. This arrangement therefore is implementable only when *crèches* are available at the work place so those women can rush there for half an hour each day for breast-feeding. The CSO indicated from a survey done in 2000 that less than 10 percent of women left their children in an Employer-provided *crèche*. For the majority of working women, Breast feeding means longer hours because if they take longer than half an hour to breast feed their babies then the women have to make up for lost time by staying longer at work.

Thus, the effectiveness of the legal provision of half an hour could be queried. Given the proven nutritional and psychological benefits from breast feeding to both the child and the mother, the need to make it practical and possible for women to breast feed their

babies should become a top priority for the ministries responsible for the health, welfare and well being of women and children. This brings together 3 key ministries - ministries of health, women's affairs and social security. In addition, since it is the employer who benefits from having a happier and healthier workforce, it is also in employers' interests to ensure that breast-feeding becomes a practical reality.

Women raised the same kind of ambiguity when longer maternity periods was discussed with them as part of the National Gender Plan exercise. It is not clear whether women do want longer maternity leave and whether it will be possible for establishments to accord this. But arrangements within each establishment to make it easier for women to determine how to use their time are necessary. Options must be available for women to take longer maternity leave if needed with different conditions so that maternity and child care are considered as priority interests of the individual and the community

ABORTION

"Abortion is illegal in Mauritius and this French law is more than 200 years old."

Any form of abortion which is defined as the termination of pregnancy before 28 weeks, is illegal in Mauritius; yet a large number of cases are admitted at the hospitals and clinics following complications of abortion. Working from the number of such cases, which stood at about 2,900 in 1999 as compared to 2,493 in 1994, the number of successful cases could be estimated. The Millennium document states that:

"On the assumption that one illegal abortion out of five results in complications requiring medical treatment, there would be half as many abortions as live births. This indicates, inter alia, a qualitative failure in population programmes as regards a specific category of adult couples and their inability to target young adults who are sexually active long before they can financially afford to settle down."¹⁶⁰

TABLE V.20
NO. OF CASES OF COMPLICATIONS TREATED ARISING FROM ABORTION AND MISCARRIAGES, 1985

Year	Govt. Hospitals	Private Clinics	Total
1985	2,249	244	2,493
1994	1,922	557	2,479
1995	1,888	605	2,493
1996	2,008	711	2,719
1999	2,485	412	2,897

Source: Ministry of Health, Medical Statistics Report, and Page 39

The laws pertaining to abortion are very strict in Mauritius. Abortion under any circumstances is illegal, even in cases of rape, incest or threats to health. Mauritius is among the few countries, which has maintained such severe laws on abortion. Countries such as France, India, China, and South Africa are among the countries, which have

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, Millenium Report

decriminalized abortion. While it is clearly understood that abortion should never be used as a method of family planning, the need to have some public debate on permitting abortion in specific cases is being increasingly felt.

As stated in the millennium report it is 'young adults' and those others who do not have the information or the means to have a safe abortion who resort to unsafe practices. By not investigating into the causes and circumstances, which have led women to spontaneously or otherwise try to end a pregnancy may only lead to an increase in the number of unsafe abortions. This needs to be prevented at all costs. The focus should therefore be on 'reducing unsafe abortion' and not specifically on 'legalizing abortion'. This could form part of an advocacy policy for the adoption of a highly client-oriented, targeted approach to sensitise, in particular young people, on Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) issues. Public debate on the issue of Unsafe Abortion as part of a revised SRH policy could help obtain more support to coming up with a formulae, which satisfies the sensibilities of all communities.

HIV/AIDS

"AIDS Conference calls for drugs for the poor. The gulf between the rich and the poor has never been more evident. People suffering from AIDS can live for many years in the West due to antiretroviral drugs. But despite some price cuts, these drugs are available only to small numbers of people in the developing countries. Diamond - rich Botswana fears "extinction" from HIV". These are some of the headlines from a local newspaper before the 14th International AIDS Conference in Durban in July 2002.¹⁶¹

In Mauritius, the situation of AIDS would appear to well under control. The first cases of HIV/AIDS in Mauritius were registered in 1987. Some 230 cumulative cases of HIV/AIDS have been reported since then. Some statistics on HIV/AIDS patients are given in the tables below.

TABLE V.21:
NEW CASES OF HIV/AIDS NOTIFIED, 1987-1999

Year	Mauritian			Non-Mauritian		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1987-1994	43	17	60	24	6	30
1999	17	11	28	5	-	5
Total (1987-1999)	115	56	171	49	10	59

Source: Ministry of Health, *Health Statistics Annual 1999*(Pg.37)

¹⁶¹ L'Express du Mardi 9 juillet 2002, News International, Port Louis, 2002

TABLE V.22:
DEATHS REGISTERED AMONG HIV/AIDS CASES (MAURITIAN)

Year	Male	Female	Total
1987-1994	19	3	22
1999	5	1	6
Total (1987-1999)	38	13	51

Source: Ministry of Health, Health Statistics Annual 1999(Pg.37)

"In general a low prevalence of HIV has been reported in Mauritius. For example, only 2 cases were found to be positive out of 12,888 pregnant women screened in 1999 (0.01%). However, a study carried out among female sex workers revealed the prevalence of 7.4% to be positive among this group¹⁶².

The slow dynamic of the HIV infection has been due to the strong religious beliefs and ties, the good health and educational systems and the general conservatism of the multi-cultural population.

Some change can be expected with the changes in the life style of Mauritians brought about by increased tourism and the modernization process. Increased drug use could also be a factor. The situation analysis of HIV/AIDS of June 2000 showed a progressive increase in the number of detected cases of HIV/AIDS.¹⁶³

A coordinated approach is being adopted by government to attacking HIV/AIDS. In addition to a major prevention programme, treatment of HIV patients and follow-up of babies born to HIV positive women is being undertaken. A Virology laboratory was set up at the Candos hospital and Blood donors and persons of high-risk groups are being HIV tested. The most recent development has been the provision of antiretrovirals to AID patients.

DISEASE PATTERNS

The epidemiological transition is the association of demographic changes with the changes in the pattern of morbidity and mortality in which they have occurred. Infective and parasitic diseases are no longer the main causes of death and hospitalisation. These account for less than a fifth as compared to a quarter a decade ago. The proportions of circulatory diseases and neoplasm, which appear later in life, have increased, implying changes from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases (NCD's) as the major cause of death. Mauritius has the highest prevalence of diabetes mellitus in the world due mainly to poor nutritional habits and unhealthy lifestyles. Overweight and obesity and low level of physical exercises are contributory factors, especially for females. 'Cigarette smoking and alcohol abuse are mainly male phenomena' - which fortunately Mauritian females have not tried to emulate. Tackling the incidence of NCD's requires additional control and intervention strategies and new approaches to the monitoring of health services and programmes.

¹⁶² Ministry of Health, National Report on HIV/AIDS

¹⁶³ Ibid, Ministry of Health report on HIV/AIDS

Injury and poisoning continues to be the single most important cause of hospitalisation accounting for slightly more than 13 percent of all admission to hospitals cases. The rate of road accidents has been rising from 511 per thousand population in 1985 to 1,350 per thousand population in 1995 with the number of casualties rising from 2,685 to 3,586 during the same period. The fatality index, which is the ratio of the number of fatalities to the total number of casualties expressed as a percentage also, increased from 3.9 to 4.8 between 1985 and 1995. There has been a slight decrease in these rates as from 1995. The need for policy action for better health education and promotion and an efficient emergency service is evident.

Other important issues require the attention of health planners. These are the new health problems such as cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and cancer. These are illnesses which have been associated with the changes in eating habits, brought about because of the greater affluence in the country and high tension life styles. Fast food and poor attention to nutrition of adults and children is already giving rise to new health problems. Hypertension is also more common in Mauritius than in most developing countries. The main risks identified for all the non communicable diseases examined were high intake of saturated fat, alcohol, cigarettes and reduced physical activity.

Obesity, especially among women will become a real health problem in an industrializing country where jobs are in factories are sedentary. According to 1995 Nutrition study, 40% of the population is obese. The percentage of obese men and women has been on the increase between 1987 to 1998. Also emerging problems of mental health from stress and fatigue and their impact on the social environment especially the family are other factors which have to be looked into.¹⁶⁴

The prevalence of diabetes among both men and women has been on the increase over the 1987 to 1998 period. But the impaired glucose tolerance (IGT) which is a risk category for future diabetes and cardiovascular diseases has fallen for males as shown in Table below.

TABLE V.23
AGE STANDARDIZED PREVALENCE OF DIABETES, AND IMPAIRED GLUCOSE TOLERANCE
FOR POPULATION OVER 29 YEARS, SELECTED YEARS

	1987		1992		1998	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
DM Prevalence (%)	14.2	14.5	16.3	17.4	18.4	20.6
IGT Prevalence %	15.6	22.5	14.9	19.3	11.8	20.2

As shown in Table below, the level of those suffering from hypertension has also been on the increase. This has affected more women than men.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, Vision 2020

¹⁶⁵ Ibid DCDM, Feminisation of poverty 2001,

TABLE V.24
AGE STANDARDIZED PREVALENCE OF HYPERTENSION FOR POPULATION OVER 30 YEARS, SELECTED YEARS

	1987		1992		1998	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Known hypertensives*	14.2	14.5	16.3	17.4	18.4	20.6
IGT Prevalence %	15.6	22.5	14.9	19.3	11.8	20.2

**Participants who reported having hypertension and taking drug treatment or reported hypertension and had blood pressure of greater than or equal to 140/90 mmHg were classified as "Known hypertensives"*

MENTAL HEALTH

A study undertaken by Dr Gaya on suicide is of special interest.¹⁶⁶ He found that the annual suicide rate for 1992, 1993 and 1994 was 10 per 100,000 population and had increased to 14.8 in 1998. The rates were higher for men than women and contrary to the past trend, it is the younger age groups, both sexes included the highest risk for suicide in Mauritius. The highest rate for men was between 31 - 40 years whereas for women it was 12 to 40 years. Risk of suicide is more in male subjects, of Hindu faith, residing in rural regions with primary levels of education and earning a low income. The highest incidence was among those diagnosed as being subject to depressive illness and alcoholism.

Among the other aspects of mental health are the use of drugs and alcohol as a means of relief. A recent report found that

"The abuse of substances was related to professions which entailed freedom of movement, as exemplified by hawkers, sales/service workers and the unemployed.---the lower level of education, the higher the probability for drug use. Manual workers and the unemployed were likely to start abusing drugs in their youth"¹⁶⁷

An important study was undertaken by the Mauritius Epidemiology Network on Drug Abuse (MENDU) based on data collected between 1 July 2001 and December 2001 by 8 Des-intoxication centres of the National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers (NATRESA). The report also found that men were more inclined to consume heroine or brown sugar while women preferred alcohol. What is particularly worrying about drug abuse is the impact it will have on the youth and those deprived of a safe home environment are more vulnerable to drug abuse. Once again the role of the woman in creating the safe environment is crucial. This is where she needs state and society's support. Inputs at the level of the family will go towards attaching the problem at the prevention level. This will reduce the need for expensive interventions to remedy the situation once it has become critical

It should also be recalled that 53.4 % of the persons admitted to the Psychiatric hospital Brown Sequard between July and December 2001, had an alcohol problem and 1.1 % had

¹⁶⁶ Gaya, Dr. G. ; Review on Epidemiology, Demographics and Causes of suicide in Mauritius

¹⁶⁷ MENDU, Mauritius Epidemiology Network On Drug Abuse, Study on Substance Abuse Users, July 2001

been admitted for drug abuse. While women were mainly treated for alcohol abuse there were some 16 % who also consumed brown sugar.

It would be interesting to search into the reasons for women to resort to alcohol and drug abuse. Stress and lack of fulfilment could be among the most important reasons.

MAURITIAN WOMEN IN THE 21ST MILLENNIUM

The changes that have taken place in expectations have been quite inconceivable. The prosperity brought about from the near full employment levels of the latter half of the 1980's increased income levels of the average Mauritian household. The number of working members in each household increased from 1 per household to 3 according to the Household Budget Surveys of 1992 and 1997. Average incomes increased more than threefold over the same period.

Apart from incomes, the demonstration effect of the TV and the number of tourists visiting Mauritius, which had increased from less than 1,000 in the 1970 to nearly half a million and even more in 1999 meant that the new standards, which Mauritians put for themselves, were mostly, imported. Advertising in the TV and newspapers, the mushrooming of video clubs extending to even in the smallest villages, return of the cinema as a major entertainment, the large number of Mauritians visiting beaches, exhibitions and 'Expo vente ' exhibitions and bargain sales are all pointers of a new eagerness of Mauritians to be 'with it'. Outward tourism of some 2,000 Mauritians visiting a variety of tourism destinations such as France, UK, the countries of the Far East and India, Pakistan and China has meant a further expansion in people's expectations. They all wanted to be among the 'in group'.

What is the place of women in this 'new society' that has emerged. The changes affecting the labour market have been analysed in the preceding paragraphs. There are several other issues which need to be discussed.

The higher consumption patterns adopted by women has obliged them to put in more hours at the work place so as to earn a higher income. Under these circumstances, how have women coped with their increasing obligations at work and at home? Women 'hold up half the sky'; but they cannot do more.

The change that has taken place in Mauritian society is dramatic - a 100 percent departure from what it was in the 1950's and it is irreversible. Are Mauritian women more satisfied with the change that has taken place? It isn't altogether clear. But the focus group discussions and the survey have provided some of the answers. These are taken up in the next chapter. In this chapter, we set the main issues as they appeared in society under different headings. The overall objective is to analyse the defects and strengths of the present situation and propose amendments wherever necessary to arrest the downward slide in some areas before it reaches an irreversible stage. The fact that many Mauritians are willing to talk about the shortcomings of the system as they see it means that change

can still be made. This analysis provides the substance on which the recommendations of the final chapter are made.

In conclusion, let us trace in broad terms how the change was brought about over the three periods - Colonial times to 1968 taken up in Chapter 3, the development period of Independence to the 1990's described in Chapter 4 and finally the Women in the 1990's which has been described in this chapter. To give a bird's eye view, a tabular format has been borrowed from an article in the press with inputs from the book Women by Lam Hung, M.L.¹⁶⁸. Some of these items may not specifically appear in the chapters mentioned.

¹⁶⁸ Lam Hung, M L, The Rights of the Children in Mauritius, (2001)

TABLE V.25
WOMEN ON THE MARCH, FROM COLONIAL TIMES TO THE 21ST CENTURY

Chapter	Date	Events
Chapter 3	1723	Proclamation of the <i>Code Noir</i>
	1808	The <i>Code Napoleon</i> confers the status of a minor on married women
	1846	The first school for girls is set up by the Loreto sisters at Port Louis.
	1880	Schools for girls opened in main towns.
	1940	Lise de Baissac first Mauritian woman soldier of the Special Operations Executives founded by W. Churchill.
	1944	A scholarship awarded by the Legislative Council for a girl to study in Great Britain.
	1948	Universal suffrage for all Men and Women over 18 years but subject to literacy test.
	1952	The Queen Elizabeth College, first state school for girls, is opened.
	1957	Creation of Mauritius Family Planning Association
	1958	Mrs Chicoree is elected member of the Legislative Assembly.
	1964	Action Familiale is set up.
Chapter 4	1975	International Women's Year and the attendance of the Mauritian delegation to the International Women Conference in Mexico. Creation of Ministry of Women and Prices with Mrs. Ponnusamy as minister. Free secondary education for boys and girls. Women obtain one hour for breast-feeding. Women are protected against being dismissed for reasons related to maternity.
	1976	The Prime Minister's Office takes over responsibility for Women's affairs with the closing of the Ministry of Women
	1977	Creation of the Mauritius Alliance of Women
	1978	Married women obtain right to be assessed separately for income tax purposes.
	1981	Several legal amendments made to the Napoleon code giving greater powers to women. Opening bank account, obtain a passport, open a business etc without consent of husband. A married woman is no longer a minor and she has right to the conjugal house when her husband passes away.
	1982	Creation of Ministry of Women's Rights with Mrs. Cziffra as minister.
	1983	Legal amendment to the Immigration and Deportation Act to enable husbands of Mauritian Women to have resident status.

	1983	Mauritius Signs the Convention on the Elimination of all form of Discrimination against Women
	1984	Creation of the National Women Council The principle of equal pay for equal work is applied to males and females. Wage discriminations in EPZ sector is removed.
	1987	Amendment to the National Pension Act to enable women over 60 to credit pension Benefits to their children and heirs. Adult literacy programmes for women only are begun. Labour Act amended to lower the age of retirement of women and to make a grant of 3 months maternity leave compulsory.
	1988	Transport provided to women in EPZ. The setting up of the EPZ Welfare Fund and provision of loans for purchase of household durables and for education purposes. Women can no longer be transported in lorries without the written consent of the PS, Ministry of Labour. S.O.S. Femmes is established. Family Counselling Unit set up in the Ministry of Women.
Chapter 5	1990	Women given the right to be jurors. Maternity leave granted to all women workers with one year's service with the same employer.
	1991	Primary education made compulsory. Incest is a crime. The shelter for women and children in distress set up by Ministry of Women.
	1993	Mrs. Vydia Narayen appointed first lady judge.
	1995	The Constitution (Article 16) is amended to remove all discrimination including that based on sex
	1996	Amendments to the Income Tax Act making it compulsory for all women earning a minimum income to make separate returns
	1997	The Law for the protection against domestic violence is passed in Parliament
	1998	Any husband, except with serious motives, who abandons a pregnant spouse commits a crime. The Grameen bank scheme introduced by the Ministry of Women.
	1999	National Entrepreneurs Council created
	1999	Equal powers to the spouses in the administration of the property.
	2000	Men and women given equal powers for the administration of properties belonging to the community and children.
	2001	Mrs. Kisidia Damaree first female bus driver. The optional protocol for CEDAW is signed.
	2002	Mrs. Marielyne Bayaram becomes the first woman superintendent of prisons. Centres for victims of sexual assault are set up in Candos and Jeetoo hospitals.

Annexe 1

Amendments in legislation in favour of gender equality:

- The Code Napoleon has undergone major changes. A woman can choose her profession, set up a business, open accounts or borrow without the permission of her husband
- Women have the right to choose their matrimonial regime.
- Divorce can be granted on the grounds of "*faute*" or "*rupture de vie commune*". However, divorce by mutual consent is not yet recognized.
- Both spouses have joint responsibility over the family.
- Parental authority is shared and the welfare of the child is now paramount in deciding about custody. However, the law provides that if the child is of tender age and breastfed, the mother gets immediate care and control over same.
- In 1979, the Income Tax was amended to allow married women drawing emoluments to elect to be assessed separately from their husbands, irrespective of their matrimonial regime. However, they could only deduct their personal secured loans and mortgages from their taxable income. In 1992, the Act was again amended to allow women to deduct the contributions to an approved medical scheme. In 1993, their financial contributions to the upkeep of the children were as finally recognized. The deduction for dependent children can now be made by either spouse by mutual consent. The Act was also amended to allow self-employed and married women to elect to be assessed separately in the same way as those drawing emoluments.
- In 1990, the Jury Act was amended to enable women to sit as jurors.
- Previously, according to the Mauritius Citizenship Act, only a male citizen marrying a foreigner retained all his legal rights, for example that of transmitting the Mauritian nationality to his children regardless of where they were born, the obtention of the Mauritian nationality for his spouse immediately after marriage, etc. among others. Such rights were not allotted to a female citizen marrying a foreigner. This discrepancy was reviewed and the law amended in May 1995 to grant female citizens the same privilege as men.
- The Protection from Domestic Violence Act was passed in the National Assembly in May 1997 for the protection of spouses against domestic violence. It aims at preventing domestic violence and at ensuring that where such violence occurs, there is effective legal protection.
- In cases of divorce, custody, access to children, alimony, provision is made in law that for any unemployed woman or, if employed and earning less than Rs3,500. Legal aid is

provided by the State to persons who do not have the means to pay for legal services. They should however have an earning capacity of less than Rs3,500 per month and not be holders of property worth more than Rs50,000.

- The official age for marriage is 18 years. The age of consent for sexual intercourse has been raised from 12 to 16. However, a female of 16 but under the age of 18 may with her parents' consent, contract civil marriage.
- Any person having sexual intercourse with minor under 16 years commits a criminal offence even if the accused maintains that there had been consent.
- A woman, after marriage is permitted by law to keep her surname, or may use both hers and her spouse's name. The husband may use that of his spouse if he so wishes.
- The Labour and Industrial Relations Act and the National Remuneration Orders and the Export Processing Zone Act guarantee the equality of men and women with respect to the individual's constitutional right to work and protection from unlawful dismissal. The Labour Acts also contain specific provisions applicable to women only, concerning childbirth, maternity leave, the nursing of unweaned children and restrictions on night work.
- The National Pensions Act was amended in 1987 to waive out the discrepancy between men and women concerning the payment of a lump sum to the surviving spouse should the insured person die before 60, the official age for retirement.
- The Criminal Code has been amended in 1998 to increase penalties for offences against children, including sexual abuse. The offence of sexual harassment has been introduced and penalties are provided for the abandonment of a pregnant spouse, failure to pay alimony etc.
- Nationality laws have been amended so that in cases of women marrying foreign citizens, the latter may obtain Mauritian nationality. Work permit regulations are being amended to allow foreign spouses of Mauritian women to work in Mauritius without requiring a work permit.

Annex 2

INDIRA SIDAYA

Date of Birth: 23.10.1952

Place: Surinam

Father: Late Guru Dutt Thacoor – Trade Unionist

Mother: Coontee Thacoor – born Ramdeehul – Housewife

One brother: Dr.Satish Thacoor – Eye Specialist

Three sisters: 1. Mrs. Nirala Seebaluck, E.O Ministry of Education

2. Mrs. Sushila Perbhoo settled in Canada

3. Mrs. Sharda Daby, Administration Officer Ministry of Education

Primary Education: Surinam Government School

Secondary Education: Queen Elizabeth College

University Education:

B.A (Honours) Psychology (Delhi)

Post Graduate Diploma in Special Education
(Durban)

Post Graduate Certificate in Special Education (Reunion)

Married to Atma Shiva Sidaya in 1979

Two Children:

1. A son – Amrish Sidaya aged 18 Upper VI
Royal College Curepipe
2. A daughter – Vibha Sidaya aged 16 Lower VI
Queen Elizabeth College

Work Experience

1. Tutor Mauritius College of Education
2. Education Officer (Gaëtan Raynal SSS,
Dhunputh Lallah SSS)
3. Psychologist – School Psychology Service,
Ministry of Education
4. Public Relations Officer for Women at Mon Désert Alma
Sugar Estate,
Britannia Sugar Estate and Highlands
Sugar Estate.

What prompted you to join Politics?

I believed it was all written somewhere that one day or other I had to land in politics. My late father was a trade unionist and as you probably know, before the advent of the MMM, all trade unions were close to the Labour Party. My father was regularly elected as member of the Executive Committee of the (Mauritius Labour Party). This was in the pre and post Independence days. I still remember that in my house at Curepipe Road where we shifted when I was around twelve my father used to receive such Independence heroes as SSR, Sir Harold Walter, and Sir Kher Jagatsingh etc. I used to listen bemused to the discussions that went on. I don't remember having had childhood dreams of stepping into the shoes of such illustrious people; I think they were too big for me to even dream. But somehow it must have exerted some influence upon me. My father and my mother very often used to discuss political subjects and I was fascinated by the fact that my mother could have worthy political opinions in spite of being a housewife.

But in 1974 something important happened to me. I met the one who today is my husband Shiva. We were both studying in Delhi. He used to discuss politics with a common friend of ours, Rajah Bhadain.

Shiva had participated in the Independence struggle as an adolescent. He was a bit disappointed with the labour /PMSD Alliance which had created a vacuum filled by the MMM. Rajah Bhadain had been a militant of the MMM right from the days it was Le Club des Etudiants Militants. It was fun to listen to them discussing not only Mauritian Politics but also World Politics mainly Indian Politics. It was clear that on his return to Mauritius in 1977 he would be joining the MMM. Even the Intelligence Service got the news and used to follow his movements. But Shiva astonished those who had known him in India when in that same year he joined the Labour Party. When we got married in 1979 he was already touring the country with the party and was very close to Sir Kher Jagatsingh for whom he had much respect and admiration and James Burty David, his colleague at Eden College. There I was once more breathing this air which was so reminiscent of my childhood days at Curepipe Road. But I concentrated more on my budding career and was happy lending my support to my husband in his new career as a politician. This support gradually became more intense and active. In 1982 Shiva was Labour candidate in Constituency no.4, Port Louis North/Long Mountain. I was accompanied him almost everyday in his political campaign sometimes with our one year old son Amrish in my arms. If you remember it was a landslide victory for the MMM/PSM Alliance but during counting there was only one Labour candidate causing the Key Symbol to flash on our TV screen for sometime giving hope that after all it would not be a 60-0.

But he too fell. I still remember that around 11.30 realising that the crowd outside the counting centre was becoming aggressive, he asked all his agents to call it a day and to pack up. One loyal agent came to him and said, *"We are leading, why should we go?"* And Shiva answered, *"I know we are losing; but even if I was to win here, there is no glory; Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam is losing in Triolet."* Even in defeat he would think of his leader. That

made me understand that after all there is something noble in politics. Deep inside me I vowed to myself that one day we would be taking a revenge on fate.

Shiva did not waver. He was one of the few who had the courage to burn the MMM/PSM manifesto in Belle Rose. While others had left the ship Shiva and a few die hard Labourites who had remained faithful to SSR like James Burty David, Harry Booluck etc. kept the fire burning. When in 1991 Navin Ramgoolam came home and proposed that I should accept, which finally did. The greatest encouragement had come from my husband who demonstrated that kind of abnegation rarely found. He has always been philosophical in such situations. *"The invisible hands of Fate have chosen you; you have no right to refuse. It's the Shavian 'immanent will' so beautifully portrayed in Joan Of Arc"*, he said. It was in this way that I joined Labour. Later I had to make a choice between my job at Mon Désert Alma and active politics. It was only when I felt that it was a call for duty to my country, because for me politics is above all service to one's fellow countrymen. For two years, 93 to 95, we lived on Shiva's earnings only. And then even for the elections of December 95 I had to take loans to run elections which we won on 21st December 95 and on 30th December I was sworn in as Minister for Women, Family Welfare and Child Development. The deluge that occurred the next day on St Sylvestre was in my eyes a symbolical cleansing for a new era.....

Were you happy with the Ministry which had been entrusted to you or were you expecting something else?

I will confess something to you. Prior to elections I had expressed to my leader my willingness to serve my country by shouldering ministerial responsibilities in case of victory. But once we had won the elections apart from a group meeting with the leaders of both the Labour Party and the MMM I did not meet the Prime Minister elect until 29th December 95 when I was called to meet him in his office on the same day and when he announced to me that he had appointed me as Minister in his first cabinet. I had not nurtured any desire whatsoever but when my leader then PM of my country called for me I responded to the call. I did not think of other possibilities because being Minister for Women, Family Welfare and Child Development was already a big challenge. I am still answering that challenge.

What were your perceptions of women before you became Minister? Have they changed now?

I can't honestly say that I had a positive perception of women way back in 95. From my childhood I had seen too much of this passive attitude of women who themselves had become party to the patriarchal view of society and even male chauvinism. Boys and girls were treated differently. May be historical and social factors were responsible for all this but even during my adolescence I could not tolerate this kind of double standards. Very often I was at the centre of family conflicts when there were family get together. I would make my voice heard when girls or women were rated as second class citizens.

For example, someone would say, *"A boy needs education because he will have to keep the name of the family high; a girl needs only enough to fetch a good husband."* This kind of remark would irritate me and though my sisters would plead that I should not say anything to avoid disputes it was too strong within me. I had to say my peace of mind which invariably spoilt many such evenings. But I don't regret anything even today. But let's be reasonable and fair. Things are changing. I won't be arrogant and presumptuous to say it's all happening because of me. There are many factors contributing to what we are witnessing but if one day History is to be written it will have to be placed on records that from 95 at Ministerial level certain things have been done to contribute to the emancipation of women and if it was a step which has been made I shall humbly say it was a gargantuan one.

I am proud to come across women in the sugar cane fields or in the factories who can argue for the cause of women. For example when a labourer or a mechanic for instance tells his wife *"You are my wife, you owe me obedience. When I come home my food must be ready and you must serve me"* and the wife answers, *"When I know you are coming from work and you are tired it doesn't disturb me to serve you, but when your work is over at 6.00 pm and you reach home at 10.00 pm drunk, I do not think it is my duty to serve you. I am a human being and as such I have got rights and I expect you to respect that. I am your wife and not your slave"*, I am proud because I say to myself that the message is seeping through. The women of all walks of life I come across speak to me and tell me of their life experience. So, to conclude I shall say that positive things are happening.

Let's talk of certain legal realisations since you became Minister in 95. The Protection from Domestic Violence Act to begin. Do you really believe this law was necessary?

I am more than convinced that it was absolutely important. If today you are still asking me, it suggests that there is a doubt.....

I am only echoing what is heard in certain quarters mainly from men.....

I am happy that you say so. It is rare to have a piece of law which is globally accepted by every one. The PDVA has according to feedback received by my Ministry been well received by women in general and by right thinking men. Some of them have even written about it in the press. Two years after it was voted in the Assembly, I realise that there could be practical problems in the implementation. No law is perfect. So is it most probably with the PDVA. A revision of certain clauses is not ruled out after more feedback from court magistrates and those involved in the implementation procedures.

What do you have to say to those who argue that the PDVA has brought about an increase in the number of cases of battered women?

I say that they are simpletons and short-sighted. I shall ask these same people whether they had not themselves been witnesses of cases of battered women prior to the enactment of the PDVA. And how many cases ever found their way to a court of justice?

Women suffered a whole life time and accepted it as their fate. The law which I have introduced has removed this aspect of fatality in the life of women. I have told women that they have a personality of their own and that no one, absolutely no one, be it the father or the husband, has the right to aggress the integrity of their personality. I have told men that the woman they have chosen to be their wife is a human being and as such has her rights which must be respected. The paradox with men very often is that they court a woman who is their equal and expect to marry a woman who will be their slave. Education and access to information have created a revolution among women which no one should underestimate. And what is it that women ask? They need love and respect. Is that so difficult for men who in most cases marry out of love? If a man loves his wife how can he be using her as a punching ball? To come back to your question I shall say that women have broken the wall of silence. Today they can stand and talk. There is no taboo about domestic violence anymore. That's why you have the impression that it's on the increase. The younger generation will grow up in a new culture where battering of women will not be a private affair but a legal offence. They will grow up in a culture which considers women as being equal to men. In some countries, namely the Scandinavian countries this has been already achieved because they are 20 to 30 years ahead of us in terms of emancipation of women. We have to bridge the gap now.

And what about the amendment to the Criminal Code and the Civil Code?

They are also a milestone in the establishment of equality between the sexes in respect of the law of our country. Among other things it is now possible for a woman to seek redress in cases of sexual harassment but women should be bold and denounce men who make an abuse of authority by sexually harassing their women colleagues or subordinates. Men who leave their pregnant partners without any valid reasons commit an offence punishable by law. A woman today is not a nonentity in the administration of the goods of the community. She has the same right as her husband. If the husband is found to be placing the goods of the community in jeopardy the wife can appeal to a court to prevent it from happening. This is a leap forward in equality before the law. A few weeks back during a seminar an eminent lawyer said that, *"all necessary legal amendments in favour of women have been made during the past five years."* The truth has started coming out.

You have always said that economic emancipation is a sine qua non to the full emancipation of women. What have you done in this area?

I mean what I say when I talk of the imperative nature of economic emancipation of women. How do you expect a woman to say no to a husband who abuses her and her children if she depends upon him to have enough to eat for herself and her children? I often hear women say *"What can I say? If I open my mouth there will be no food for me or for the children."* It turns your stomach to hear such things. Women who cannot stand on their own feet are like beggars in their own house. Worse, sometimes they are treated like sluts and forced to satisfy the sexual fantasies of their husbands.

The sex life of a couple is their private affair. Don't you think so?

Who says no? But no husband should be forcing his wife to indulge in any type of sexual behaviour which she abhors. If both are agreeable where is the problem? But a husband cannot believe that his wife should be an adept of the Kama Sutra to be a perfect wife. But your initial question was about economic independence of women. I say that a woman who contributes in the family budget has more respect from her husband. That is why I have introduced for women at grassroots level the micro credit scheme based on the philosophy of Grameen. This scheme has known a resounding success. Can you imagine that women can today obtain a loan without the signature of their husband and without any form of guarantee usually claimed by banks? I invite you to visit those women who have obtained such a loan and to see how their life has changed.

Women are now queuing up with small projects to obtain loan to start a small enterprise. In their own way they are contributing to the development of the country. I have also introduced the National Women Entrepreneur Council Act to pave the way for an improved participation of women both quantitatively and qualitatively in the process of economic development and a rationalisation of the actions of women entrepreneur as a family with solidarity being the key word. The Council is expected to serve as a platform for such women where issues concerning them can be discussed. I heard a criticism recently as to lack of novelty in the actions of my Ministry. I am willing to listen to criticisms but for God's sake let them be supported by facts. These small women entrepreneurs are not left to themselves. Right from the time they express a desire to start a small enterprise they are taken care of by the officers of my Ministry. They are helped in the writing of their project, in the methodology of business management, the procurement of raw materials as the case maybe, the keeping of simple accounting necessary for their enterprise, familiarisation with technical know how at the Common Facility Centre of Floréal. And if they do not have a ready market for their products they can always exhibit their products at the Market Centre of Quatre Bornes where they find clients or may even obtain important orders even for export as we have already seen. If this is no novelty, what is? To encourage our women entrepreneurs to aim higher the Ministry organises every year a competition for the best woman entrepreneurs of the world. Last year two women entrepreneurs who thus participated at world level. Have you ever heard such things before?

I shall give you the credit for one thing at least: Gender. Before 95 many people ignored the meaning of this word whereas now it is part of our vocabulary. But what is Gender?

The modern sense given to the word gender is relatively recent. It moves on the premise that at birth we are male and female. It is our history, our culture, our religion, our traditions that make us men and women and which force us to adopt a certain behaviour which is accepted but which is not necessarily what Nature had decided. Let's take an example. Nature has decided that it is women who give birth to children. Agreed. But does Nature say that nurturing is the sole affair of women? When you study different

cultures you understand that it is not always so. So is it in the world of animals where the male is also concerned with nurture. Why responsibility? Can't the husband also help in the household chores? It is said that the best chefs in the world are men. Why can they be good cooks in a restaurant and not at home? The notion of Gender calls upon us to review our age-old attitudes to life, to other members of the family as well as to society has maintained women in a state of servitude if not slavery. If we do not change our attitude, if we do not view women as equal partners we shall lag behind. The perception of women, their sensitiveness, their motherly view of life can help solve many problems and avoid others. That is why I am campaigning for a better participation of women at decision making levels.

Yes, you have been talking of 30% reserved seats for women at the Assembly and elsewhere. Do you really think it's workable?

It has worked in some Scandinavian countries; at village level it has produced miraculous results in India. Mrs Vasundara Raje said it during her recent visit here and President Bill Clinton was so impressed by what he saw in a small village of Rajasthan that he told an elected woman member, *"Stand as candidate anytime anywhere. You will be elected."* France wants to give it a go and even talk of *"parité"*; the Commonwealth has approved it; so has SADC in a convention signed by all Heads of State aiming at attaining 30% women representation by the year 2005 by all member states. Do you think these people are mad to be recommending a reserved quota for women? Men have created a situation where they control every single piece of decision and now they talk of democracy and fair competition between men and women. I strongly believe that it's not possible to have a fair fight, as it's not an even field. And yet some lecturers on the subject pretend that women should get democratically represented at the Assembly and they should not expect any favours from men. Who is talking of favours? Who doesn't know that in 1993 I too held the view that women should compete on equal footing and get to the Assembly on sheer merit? I fought the 95 elections against men and topped in my constituency. But during these past 6 years I have evolved. I have understood that if the rules remain the same women will not come forward and we shall be missing their contribution at the level of decision making. Let us not be fooled by seeing a few women Prime Ministers or Ministers throughout the world and even in Mauritius to conclude that if they made it others can. Women politicians have to go through hell to make it to the Assembly. When you have gone to go through all that do you think it's easy to pursue a political career? See what happened in France to Minister Dominique Voynet who has been shamelessly vilified in public resulting in an uproar of disdain and disapproval from women. It's not easy for women at all. And yet we need them. The best thing perhaps would have been to have Party Leaders to file 50% women candidates at all elections. But where is the guarantee? We know that in spite of an improved number of candidates from the Labour/MMM Alliance in 95 we had an Assembly with a low 10% women MLA's. Where are the champions of positive discrimination? That's what men and women from the many countries and regional blocks mentioned earlier are claiming for, not charity.

Please let's get back to Gender. Concretely what is happening at your Ministry to foster the Gender concept?

A lot is happening. You don't ignore that for quite sometime we have a Gender Bureau which is fully functional with Mrs Esther Hanoomanjee as Head. We have been chosen by the Commonwealth for a pilot project for Gender Mainstreaming Methodology. And to crown it all, for the first time women of Mauritius have a powerful tool which will engineer actions towards the achievement of goals of gender equality. I can assure you that it's a gem of a document. Of course implementation work has already started.

May I ask you to talk a bit about yourself?

That's the most difficult thing to do, you know. I normally let other people do that. May be you are giving me an opportunity to clarify some misgivings about my actions and me. Some people pretend that it's difficult to work with me. Yet, I know a certain number of people who have no problem at all in maintaining good working relationships with me. I don't have double standards. I hate myself if I don't succeed in doing what I have promised myself to do. How do you expect me to tolerate others who always complain of not having enough time? When people come to see you for a post, that of Press Attaché for example, they do their duty free car they forget why they were employed in the first place. I hate this attitude of willing to enjoy the best of both worlds. Ask anybody who knows me from close and they will tell you that I am never afraid of work. My doctor keeps telling me that I work too much and that one day I'll pay severely for it. So, I expect people to work hard to deserve their pay. Something else which I loathe is delay, unnecessary delay. The red tape of administration kills me. Do you how much time is lost in getting papers to move for very simple things like obtaining a ram of paper? You want to provide children of this country with first quality crèches. As Minister I negotiate with all the relevant authorities, obtain clearance, find the modes of funding and yet it takes months and months at administrative level before it is implemented. What do the papers say in the meantime? Mrs Sidaya promised and yet they see not a single crèche. Let me give you another example of my exasperation at delay in procedural practice. I have an inauguration of a Centre by a foreign VIP programmed for a certain Thursday. The expert of that friendly country arrives on Tuesday and realises that nothing is ready. He advises us as to what must be done to make things move fast. Tell me where is the time to follow stupid procedures to complete the work in so short a time and yet it must be done. I had to intervene to get things moving. And you still have nasty tongues to say that I poke my nose in administrative affairs. No one will say that it was thanks to me that we did not lose when the VIP came for the inauguration.

How do you maintain the balance between work and home?

It took me some time to adjust. My husband is himself a seasoned politician though he is less active now. He understands the nature of my job and knows that it is time

consuming. He has always been very supportive. My two children have moved from 13-14 to 17-18 during the past four years. Very crucial years as you can imagine. Now I have learnt to grab minutes available to me for my children to enhance the quality of my relations with them. I still find time for meditation and a bit of yoga every morning. Nature and music help a lot in energising me. When I come across people who bite the hands that feed them I find solace and consolation in the happiness of my dog Atos when I return home in the evening. Gratitude is more present in animals than in human beings.

Yours views on the following.

Television:

MBC has improved a lot. When I am at home I watch "*Entre Nous*". Otherwise it's the news or "*Envoyé Spécial*". I don't have time for the rest.

Radio:

No time. Very rarely. I can't place a judgement.

Fashion:

Where is the time for fashion for someone who wears the saree day in and day out? I have a glimpse of it from my children who are of the age when all this counts. No more for me.

Friends:

I don't believe in the idealisation of such things as friendship. It lasts as long as it lasts. But I enjoy the company of a few of people who have preserved this relation of friendship even if we meet rarely. I like them but never expect anything from them except moments of happiness when we are together.

Religion

Personal. Rituals are one thing. Very often you perform them in congregation or with other members of the family. But my relationships with God are very personal. I find many beautiful things in other religions. I find for example the Islamic sense of solidarity with less fortunate members of the community very inspirational. I like the Christian discipline that is expected from every Christian. There is a time and a way of doing different things which I like. The virtues of fortitude and abnegation preached by Buddhism are exemplary.

Annex 3

Other women in Decision-Making Positions

Dr Premila Gokhool, Director, Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, (one of six Director in the Ministry of Education) talking on her Research on Mauritian Women

For some time now, there has been global concern over gender issues and a general wish to eradicate all forms of inequality which exist in all societies. Tracer studies have indicated the transformations in the feminine psyche thanks to the numerous environmental factors which have been conducive to greater empowerment and an enlightened sense of presence.

Our research approach focused on the Mauritian context. It demonstrated a similar change, with major variations resulting from the very fact that the island has been a land of settlement which has witnessed the co-existence and blending of cultures from the East and the West. Education has been instrumental in expanding the horizons for women although the extent to which they have taken advantage of is debatable.

This thesis looks at one segment of the Mauritian women - those who are educated, married and working and attempts to understand some of the behaviours and attitudes which shape their patterns of living. Developments in Mauritius have spanned more than two centuries in political economic and social fields. The country was first a French and later, a British colony, before becoming independent in 1968. One of the main concerns has been of the various ethnic groups has been wanting to preserve their social-cultural identity. This has given rise to a certain dynamism which favours, without tacitly encouraging, women's emancipation.

The research indicates that the major determinants of the behaviour and attitudes of these women are related to the personality of their respective spouses, to the material facilities they avail themselves of and to their cultural environment. Education, considered essential for 'success' in work and marriage, assumes little importance once these two goals are achieved. Individually, self-enhancement and personal intellectual satisfaction are thus not parts of their lifeworld.

While this study has concentrated on many of the restrictive features to the full development of the surveyed women, it is realistic enough to accept that there are other issues to be prospected. Hence, the concluding part of the study was devoted to exploring some of the areas where present potential for future research.

There is a common pattern which cuts across ethnic groups as a result of which women who have benefitted from education have subsequently entered white-collar jobs. Yet, while the economic shift has allowed a margin of financial ease, it has not released the women from the constraints of social structures which still impinge upon them not

withstanding not withstandly differently as regards marriage and work. The common findings have been:

- (i) The home is central to their existence
- (ii) In their overall life situations, education and work have acted as two main facilitators; education has given them access to work, which in turn has provided financial assurance, as well as the option to be married to somebody who earns as much as, or more than, them. It has also ensured that they act as more or less equal participating members of the family which has invested them with a form of status in society in general.
- (iii) These women's marriages can be characterised as 'utilitarian', lying half-way between the institutional marriage, where social and economic imperatives prevail and the companionship/love marriage. They make many concessions to keep the marriage going and they play 'second fiddle' – whenever roles tend to disrupt the family in terms of their identity to those of their husbands.
- (iv) The management of domestic affairs is still all or very largely left to the women while abstract (but real) authority lies with their husbands.
- (v) Most of them do not compete for promotion for fear of the consequences of the conflict that it may entail for their marriages.
- (vi) There are a few areas where the values of ethnicity condition their behavioural and attitudinal patterns of performance.
- (vii) They have by far and large, struck a middle course between the exigencies of society and their individual ambitions, deriving satisfaction from their homes, where they maintain the structure for the family, and partly from work.
- (viii) The cultural and ethnic elements act as the framework within which their education needs to fit in and not vice versa.

Mrs E. Hanoomanjee retired Principal Economist, Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development and once in charge of Gender Bureau of the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development.

How do you view women managers?

There are a few very successful women managers – both in the public and private sectors – who are getting the best of their employees – both men and women. These are the women who know that to survive in the corporate jungle or in the public sector, you have to be good and better than most of your male colleagues.

But I feel there are many women who do not perceive their roles correctly as managers but rather as screws and bolts in a machine. They go by the rules and regulations laid down by administration and lack the imagination to see the specificity of each case. It is often felt that women find it more difficult to work together. In fact, ability in another women could pose a threat and is not often seen as an asset. The explanation is clear enough. As the hierarchy becomes even steeper for women than it is for men, it is difficult for women to make place for another women in any position, except as a subordinate.

Men face the same challenges. But since the opportunities for men to move out or to forge a career path on their own is easier, the rivalry does not take the same intensity. Men are also more willing to move out and are less likely to put up with an agnostic head because there are more opportunities and they can afford to take more risks. I think that by nature, women are more cautious and prefer to put up with bickering and character assassination because there are fewer options open to them. Since many women feel unfulfilled in their career path, they are assertive and give vent to the same frustrations on others.

But as stated by new management consultants, women have the basic ingredients to become better managers than men as they are usually more patient, willing to share and work for a common purpose. Women have now to learn to use their innate abilities in the work place as they have been doing in the home front.

This is only a personal assessment of why women are unable to make it to the top. The explanation should not be generalised. Research on this issue is needed.

Annex 4**WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT**

From Ramguttty Wong

It appeared from the study that it was the overall culture and the culture within the labour market that has a bearing on the life of women. What do we mean by culture and organizational culture in particular? Culture can be understood to be "*a set of solutions devised by a group of people to meet specific problems posed by the situations they face in common.*"¹⁶⁹. Organizational culture is an integrated phenomenon, based on the assumption of sharing of causes, beliefs and assumptions with a common mission with which each member identifies himself. Thus organizational culture "*can be thought of as the glue that holds an organization together through a sharing of patterns of meaning. The culture focuses on the values, beliefs, and expectations that members come to share* (Siehi and Martin, 1984, p. 227).¹⁷⁰

How can organizational culture be compared between countries? Attempts have been made to study cultural differences through factor analyses. One of the most comprehensive has been the study undertaken by Hofstede in 1980. He analysed 88,000 responses to a questionnaire survey conducted among sixty-six countries around the world. "*Factor analysis of these means yielded four dimensions along which variations between countries were found to occur.*" These were namely individualism/collectivism, - the IND - Power Distance (POW), Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity/Femininity (MAS). While it is difficult to classify Mauritius within this framework on firm grounds, it can be said that POW is high viz. relationships between superiors and juniors tend to be formal and distant, there is greater centralization, and white-collar jobs are valued more than blue-collar jobs. MAS is high and low as sex roles are clearly defined but work is not generally valued as the central life interest. In terms of IND, Mauritian firms would tend to be high, as organizations are more impersonal.

¹⁶⁹ Week-end, Société, Dimanche 19 Novembre 2000, Port Louis

¹⁷⁰ Ibid DCDM, Feminization of poverty 2001

Annex Tables

ANNEX TABLE 1
FEMALE EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS, SELECTED YEARS

Country, Island,	Year	Total
Occupation (major & sub major)		
And sex		
ISLAND OF MAURITIUS		
<u>Female Employment total</u>	1990	124,013
	1995	136,985
Group 1-Legislators, senior	1990	2,644
Officials & managers	1995	2,671
Group 2 – Professionals	1990	2,745
	1995	4,342
Group 3 - Technicians &	1990	8,776
Associates professionals	1995	12,796

ANNEX TABLE 2
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF PASSES AT CPE EXAMINATIONS BY GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRICT AND SEX: 1993

Geographical District	Male		Female		Both Sexes	
	Number examined	% of passes	Number examined	% of passes	Number examined	% of passes
Port Louis	2,575	55.0	2,425	61.2	5,000	58.0
Pamplemousses	1,452	45.4	1,495	53.0	2,947	49.2
Rivière du Rempart	1,621	44.7	1,457	51.6	3,078	48.0
Flacq	1,982	53.9	1,991	57.8	3,973	55.9
Grand Port	1,695	54.0	1,604	56.0	3,299	55.0
Savanne	971	51.2	896	57.0	1,867	54.0
Plaines Wilhems	5,117	65.6	4,777	72.6	9,894	69.0
Moka	1,003	52.5	976	57.1	1,979	54.8
Black River	576	29.0	589	40.1	1,165	34.6
Island of Mauritius	16,992	54.9	16,210	60.8	33,202	57.8
Island of Rodrigues	715	36.5	756	42.3	1,471	39.5
Republic of Mauritius	17,707	54.2	16,966	59.9	34,673	57.0

Source: *Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, 1994*

From: *UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Women and Children*

ANNEX TABLE 3
CHILD ABUSE CASES RECEIVED BY THE NCC

	Dec. 1990 – 28 Feb. 1994
Battered (by parents) (by teachers)	999 (919) (80)
Neglected	612
Child beyond control	467
Custody of child	416
Abandoned child	168
Victim of sexual abuse	165
Child not attending school	130
Incest	98
Child at risk (day care centres)	91
Child without birth certificate	81
Traumatized child	27
Child with suicidal tendencies	35
Run away from home	25
Child mendacity	25
Teenage pregnancies	26
Alcoholic children	2
Child labour	17
Alleged case of child battering by Police Officer	1
TOTAL	3,385

Source: National Children's Council

ANNEX TABLE 4
NUTRITIONAL STATUS INDICATORS

Indicators	Developing Countries	Mauritius	Industrialized Countries
Low Birth Weight babies (1990)	19%	9%	6%
Mothers breastfeeding at 1 year (1980 – 1990)	73%	40%	...
Malnutrition (1980-1992) Underweight (< 5 years)	36%	24%	...
Wasting (12 – 23 months)	10%	16%	...
Stunting (24 – 56 months)	48%	22%	...
Daily calorie supply/capital (1998)	2440	2679	...

Source: Health Statistics Annual 1992, Ministry of Health, September 1993; Human Development Report, UNDP, 1992; La Situation des Enfants dans le Monde, UNICEF, 1994

ANNEX TABLE 5
AGE-STANDARDISED DEATH RATES PER 100,000 OF THE WORLD NEW
STANDARD POPULATION (BOTH SEXES)

Causes	Singapore	Mauritius	USA
	<i>1990</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1989</i>
ALL	521.0	731.8	490.0
Infectious & Parasitic diseases	13.3	14.4	7.2
Malignant Neoplasms	118.2	60.1	115.2
Diseases of the circulatory system	194.0	324.0	183.9
Ischemic Heart	99.3	113.5	98.0
Cerebro-vascular Diseases	63.4	106.1	27.2
Respiratory Diseases	83.6	74.5	37.1
Digestive System diseases	13.3	32.7	17.6
Chronic liver diseases and Cirrhosis	4.5	12.7	7.3
Injury and Poisoning	33.8	48.3	53.0
Motor vehicle – Traffic accidents	8.5	18.3	17.9
Suicide and self inflicted injury	11.8	12.4	10.2

Source: 1992 World Health Statistics Annual, WHO, 1993

ANNEX TABLE 6

SECULAR TRENDS FOR STILLBIRTH RATES, IMR AND ITS COMPONENTS: IOM

Years	Still Births	Early Neonatal↑	Late Neonatal↑	Post neonatal↑	Infant↑
1970	38.1	21.2	8.5	27.3	57.0
1980	24.3	14.6	3.8	13.9	32.3
1990	15.7	13.9	1.5	4.5	19.9
Relative decrease (1970 – 92)					

← *per 1,000 total births (i.e. live births and stillbirths)*
 ↑ *per 1,000 live births*

Source: Health Statistics Annual 1992, MOH, September 1993

ANNEX TABLE 7
DISTRIBUTION OF CURRENT USE OF CONTRACEPTION
AMONG 3,853 MARRIED WOMEN IN 1991

	IoM (%)	IoR (%)
Pill	20.8	22.9
Condom	10.9	2.9
Tubal ligation	7.2	4.6
Injectable	4.1	22.0
IUD – DIU	2.8	3.2
Vaginal tablets	0.3	0.0
Vasectomy	0.2	0.0
Natural methods	6.6	10.0
Withdrawal	21.1	1.6
Others	1.3	3.2
None	24.7	29.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Mauritius Contraceptive Prevalence Survey 1991

CHAPTER VI

**ANALYSIS QUALITATIVE
AND IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

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CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE AND IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS

EVOLUTION IN THE STATUS OF GENDER RELATIONS AND STATUS OF WOMEN

This chapter brings together the various aspects of the changes in the life of women over the last two centuries. It is the final verification of the data presented from books and documents. According to records, more women are getting educated and are aspiring for better jobs. This brings us to the assumption that their lives are happier and more fulfilled. But is this true?

The chapter focuses on the women themselves as well as the men around. The findings of the surveys conducted as part of this study is contained in this chapter.

But before we start on the survey and its findings, it is necessary to set the academic parameters on which this study was based.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE AND IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS

A. INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters, analysis of secondary data traced the changes and evolution in the status of women with respect to education, health, social security and welfare, employment and legal status. This Chapter presents the findings based on primary data, both qualitative and quantitative and reflects how the changes and evolution are experienced and perceived by men and women of different age groups and classes. The objective of the qualitative data was to obtain information on experiences and understanding of men and women of different age groups and religions to understand the type of changes that have occurred in the lives of women, namely, changes in roles, opportunities in life, attitudes and thinking and gender relations. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized to collect data. The objective of the qualitative methodology was to gather in depth information on how the change has been perceived and experienced by men and women of different generations with respect to women's status and position in society over the last thirty years. The objective of the quantitative method was to ascertain trends on a national basis. The significance of the two methods utilized in this study may be dictomised as follows. The qualitative method is “*an inch wide and a mile deep*” opposed to the quantitative method which is “*an inch deep and a mile wide*” in the context of understanding social phenomena, which in this case is the evolution in the status and position of women.

B. EXPLANATION OF THE TERMS EVOLUTION AND STATUS

The dictionary (Lexicon-Webster) explains evolution as “*development; any process of formation on growth; continuous progress from unorganised simplicity to organized complexity.*” Sociologists Vidya Bhushan and Sachdeva¹⁷⁰ have explained evolution as “*a process of differentiation and integration. It describes a series of related changes in a system of some kind*”.

¹⁷⁰ Bhushan V and Sachdeva, Sociology. Page 725. Pub.Kitab Mahal.New Delhi. Date.1994.

From this, it is to be interpreted that evolution involves growth, both of a quantitative and qualitative nature. Evolution is basically about change. Sociologist Herbert Spencer stated that evolution of societies occurs along a continuum of primitive, ancient to modern forms and prescribes the following principles of evolution.

- (1) Social Evolution is one cultural or human aspect of the law of cosmic evolution.
- (2) Social Evolution takes place in the same way as cosmic evolution
- (3) Social Evolution is a gradual process.
- (4) Social Evolution is essentially progressive in nature.

However, sociologists also disagree that evolution is necessarily always progress. A movement towards goals and objectives that are desired by society characterizes progress. It is measurable.

According to Sociologist Mazumdar¹⁷¹, progress must comprise six ingredients. These include enhancement of human dignity, respect for the individual, increased freedom for investigation of truth and spiritual growth, creativity and aesthetic enjoyment, a social order that promotes the first four qualities and the promotion of life, liberty, justice and equity.

However, the outcome of evolution, i.e. the changed outcome may or may not be welcomed by society. If evolution embraces conditions of progress, then it can be referred to as progressive. But evolution may also mean decadence in some circumstances. Evolutionary changes are welcomed by some and opposed by others, for example, divorce, civil marriage, and equality of women. Some may welcome divorce as a good solution to a bad relationship. Women may see equality as good and beneficial. Men may not welcome it.

Although there is considerable controversy among sociologist about evolution and the laws of evolution, the existence of evolution is accepted as a reality.

The concept of evolution is central to this study on the Evolution of Gender Relations and Status of Women in Mauritius. The study seeks to investigate and describe the outcome of evolution for gender development and gender relations, and status of women. Has the evolution been experienced as progressive, retrogressive or mixed?

¹⁷¹ Mazumdar.T.Quoted in Viday Bhushan and Scachdeva. Sociology. Date.1994 Publisher. Kitab Mahal.

EXPLANATION OF STATUS

From a sociological perspective, status is a social position that carries culturally defined expectations or roles¹⁷². Status may be achieved or ascribed. Lay persons use this term as a synonym for “prestige”.¹⁷³ Ascribed status is a social position that one receives at birth or assumes involuntarily later on in life. Achieved status is assumed voluntarily and reflects personal ability and effort. Master status is a “*status position that has exceptional importance for social identity, often shaping a persons entire life*”.¹⁷⁴ Essentially, status describes how valued a person or a group is. Power and status emanate from the roles that individuals play and the rights and duties attached to the positions occupied. A person can perform important roles but may not be liked or valued in that role. Example, women perform very important roles in running the home. In many societies this is not even acknowledged as productive activity. A woman may be earning the income for the family but her position as the key income earner may be resented.

In this study the focus is on the changes that have occurred in the ascribed and master status. It is hypothesized that developments over the last three decades have opened opportunities for women to make achievements that simultaneously affect the ascribed and master status given to women as being subordinate. (The Code Napoleon Law in Mauritius pertaining to the status of women within marriage.)¹⁷⁵

According to Edward and Bridget Dommen¹⁷⁶

“ Perhaps the greatest change in Mauritian Society over the last generation has been the transformation of the status of women - in the home, in the workforce and in their contribution to national affairs.”

The authors conclude that the causes of this metamorphosis were ‘new employment opportunities, smaller families and better education.’

The qualitative data collection conducted for this study aimed to gather information on how the position of women within community and households has evolved. Information was gathered through in depth interviews drawing out the differences between respondents and women in the previous and younger generation cohorts. The population was classified into *Visible* and *Invisible*.

Individuals linked to positions of power (directly or indirectly i.e. as either leaders or members of the public service institutions) are *Visible* and the grass roots without any linkage to power are the *Invisibles*.

¹⁷² Barker, RL. Social Work Dictionary, 2nd Edition. NASW Press. USA.1991.

¹⁷³ Barker, RL Social Work Dictionary. 1991. NASW Press. Washington DC

¹⁷⁴ Macionis.J etal. Sociology.Page 147. Prentice Hall.1997.USA.

¹⁷⁵ The Code Napoleon. Legislation pertaining to the Status of women in Marriage. Section. Mauritius.

¹⁷⁶ Dommen, B and Dommen E. Mauritius, An island of Success. Pacific Press. 1999.Page

C. ANALYSIS OF THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

THE POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Information on the persons subjected to in-depth interviews and focus groups are contained in Appendix III.

In-depth interviews were selected on the basis of respondents' profile. The three age groups selected were: age 56+, age 55 –35 and age less 35 years.

These three age segments were chosen in order to facilitate data collection across different generations and socio economic life situations, and obtain their experiences and perceptions of the evolution in the role and status of women over three decades.

The groupings include:

- Men and women in the age group 56 plus. The older groups were selected to obtain comparative perspectives. They were classified into '*Visible*' and '*Invisible*'. The visible comprised persons in positions of leadership and professionals. They are people who can speak from a wider experience and first hand knowledge. The invisibles are the grassroots persons who are not in positions of leadership and are also not linked to any systems of power and influence such as government institutions, trade union leadership or community leadership. They are ordinary people who were interviewed to relate their experience of the evolution in the lives of men and women and the changes in gender relations. The comparative narratives were analysed to identify the differences in the status of women and the evolution in gender relations.
- Persons in the middle age group 35 to 55 years. They were young adults, all married and were raising families at the time of independence.
- Younger persons who were aged thirty-four and less. They are born after independence.

SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS FOR THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The population selected was directly or indirectly known to the researchers. For the invisibles, people known to the investigators were requested to identify people willing to talk on the subject. This is referred to as the snowball technique. Particular attention was given to account for differences emanating from variations in:

- Urban and rural factors.
- Religion and ethnic factors.
- Social classes. (Visibles and Invisibles)

The interviews were hand recorded. The interviewee was asked if the interview could be recorded on tape but the respondents were resistant to their voices being recorded. Research ethics demand respecting the wishes of the respondent so the tape recording of interviews was not utilized, moreover since it could not be uniformly respected. Hand written notes were type written. It was interesting to note that people responded with very spontaneous feelings and emotions. From the point of view of a researcher, the strength of the interviews was that the issue mattered to the respondents, and that they were not just merely being cooperative. During the interviews with elderly persons strong emotions were evident during conversation about changes in society.

It was easier to select the Visible. The selection criteria used to identify the visible were based on their socio-political and professional attributes.

- Political Policy Makers.
- Administrators and Professionals
- Persons in key positions in the NGO and community services.

D. THE FOCUS GROUPS (SEE APPENDIX 2)

THE FOCUS GROUPS WERE MADE UP OF

1. An all male focus group of Visibles.
2. An all women focus group of Visibles.
3. An all women focus groups comprising grass roots women.
4. A group of women activists.
5. An all men focus group of Invisibles.
6. Focus group in Rodrigues.

THE FINDINGS - INVISIBLES - WOMEN

Table VI.2.1 shows the focus group of Invisible women aged 56 years by religion and residence.

TABLE VI.1
WOMEN AGED 56 PLUS PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS BY RELIGION AND RESIDENCE

Religion	Locality		Other	Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Hindu	2	1	1	Includes Tamil, Marathi and Bhojpuri
Muslim	1	1		
Christians	1	1	1	*Chinese Catholic

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The Christians included one housewife aged 60+, one Sino Mauritian aged 60+, and one Franco Mauritian aged 60+.

The Muslim group included two housewives aged 60 years plus, one living in an urban area and the other living in a rural area.

The Hindu group included one woman in the age range of 56+. It included Marathi, Tamil, and Bhojpuri speaking.

THE MAINSTREAM ANSWERS

The findings in this section indicate the views and experiences of women aged fifty six plus, born during the decades of 1940's and before. They were young women at the time of independence, all married and raising families. The respondents fall in the category of *Invisibles*.

Key finding. All the respondents stated that there is a big difference in the status and position of women and relations between men and women compared to the period when they were young girls and the decade of Independence and post independence decades.

THE CHANGES INCLUDE

The changes in educational achievement and attitudes towards education of girls. All respondents stated that there is a big difference between education achievements of women born in the decades prior to independence, those born during the 1960's and 1970's, and those born after that. The progression has been

from little or no education, to expanding secondary education and to opening University/Higher education and training for girls, and to the present. The evolution has been from a situation of neglect to now pushing girls to study. This is how the respondents who were interviewed perceived the changes.

1. Education helps to develop the individual. As young girls women in the age group 56+ did not have access to education even if the family could afford it, which was rarely the case. The families of two of the respondents could have afforded to give them higher education, (one Hindu and one Muslim) but social attitudes did not favour that women continue with their studies. Girls had to be married, the earlier the better. Attitudes were changing in many families during the 1960's decade but then many families could not even afford to educate their children whether they were girls or boys. But special sacrifices were made by families to educate the boys. Parents saved to send their children, mainly boys, overseas. It was not the custom to send girls on their own to study far off. Moreover the girls married young.

Even in the immediate post independence decade, which is the start of the 1970's, not many women went out to work. It was still considered the norm that after marriage the girls would stay home and look after the family if they were not professionals or highly educated. Foreign wives of Mauritians usually tended to work, as they were usually well educated. Money was still scarce. People were careful about spending money.

Women were subordinate to men. They could not assert themselves. Even as times changed and development occurred, women who were socialized to be subordinate remained subordinate in their relations with their husbands and other male relatives. Men were generally more courteous towards women, made gestures like getting up to give their seats to women in the bus. Men and women in their generation did not interact with each other or if they did, it was very minimal, in the presence of others. (Gender segregation) but their daughters were socialized differently.

All the women had sent their daughters to school and encouraged them to study. After studies, their daughters took up employment and when married, continued to work. The grand daughters, who are the youth and young eligible women in contemporary society, made more progress in education. They are encouraged to become professionals.

Jenny's Case. Jenny went to primary school but did not complete it. But her daughters, who are adults (the eldest having two adult daughters

herself) had all completed schooling up to “senior, i.e., School Certificate” and then trained to be secretaries. But her granddaughter is a professional. She also has a grandson studying in France. He had won a scholarship. Jenny talks with great pride of her grand daughters. *“Zotte kone condire, roule zotte loto. Aucune parmi mo tifi pas en apprane conduire loto. (They know how to drive and own a car. None of my daughters drive”.*

Shanti’s father was a hardworking man who prospered as a planter. He had the means to educate his daughters but his daughters did not study beyond school certificate. The older ones married at very young age. (Shanti’s older sister was married off when hardly thirteen and the others by fourteen and sixteen years.) But in those days it was the norm to marry off their girls and among elite families it was generally not accepted that the girls take up employment. *“Had I been allowed to work after ‘senior’, I could have retired as a high official”.* Shanti cited names of women who were in school with her and done well in their careers even with a ‘senior’. Shanti stated that some parents were more modern, particularly those with ‘Arya Samaj’¹⁷⁷ and they were beginning to change their views. *But most Hindus were very orthodox. Marriage was the destiny of the girls.”* Shanti believed that marriage was still the destiny for girls but women should be educated and enabled to stand on their feet if something goes wrong. Shanti had both her daughters’ complete high school and both started working before they were married off. Her daughters continued to work after marriage. Shanti provides them with childcare support. Her daughters were not very encouraged to go for university education. Her husband was not very convinced about the utility of higher education for girls. But both the sons received university education overseas. Her granddaughters are now in high school but the grand daughters will train to be professionals. Shanti’s two daughters-in-law are also professionals.

As of the 1970’s preparing girls with some capacity for economic self-reliance had become a norm along with a good marriage. But in contemporary times, making the girls study and be economically independent is the first priority, then marriage.

Khatija also related that she was born in the 1930’s, and she had no education. Her daughters received education but in the case of the granddaughters who are going to school, every effort is being made to ensure that they can obtain good results and gain access to higher education.

¹⁷⁷ Arya Samaj is a more modern movement of Hinduism.

Malini too had a similar life experience and history to relate. She was born into a large family of brothers and sisters. They were too poor to study but Malini made every effort to educate her girls up to secondary school. Her grand children are still too young but she is certain that the children will study to become professionals.

Amina and **Shanti**, though housewives all their lives, they come from a higher economic class as their parents were well to do and they married men who had good incomes and supported them well. Gangoh, Khatija, Malini and Jenny are comparatively less well off compared to Shanti and Amina. But there is a mainstream pattern with respect to education of women. The evolution over the last three decades reflects a rapid change in parents' attitudes towards education for boys and girls. It has become quite egalitarian with parents accepting that secondary and tertiary education is equally important for girls as for boys. Families continue to invest in the education of their children.

The deviation in the pattern is reflected in the in-depth interview of Gangoh. She was too poor to educate her daughters. She would have struggled to educate her sons. Her sons chose to work and one son immigrated to Italy. But the sons of her brothers and their daughters studied and became professionals, one of them a very high official in the country. Gangoh's experience is that when one is poor, larger extended family tends to interact less and so poor families experience isolation.

Shanti

"If there is one thing that has become equal for boys and girls, it is education. Of course it depends on the child too but parents do not think of withholding education from girls."

Ahmoy

In the past, girls were not going to school in such numbers. Classes were smaller but now classes are large and they do not teach so well.

2. EXPANDED WORK OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND PARENTAL SUPPORT

Findings from the in-depth interviews relate that over the last three decades there has been a diversification of employment opportunities for women. Thirty years ago, employment opportunities were limited and social attitudes too were still reticent towards women working outside the

home. But necessity and opportunities created through development changed peoples attitudes and result is that in the decades following independence, there emerged a process of transformation in society. The progression towards an industrial society rapidly drew women out from the seclusion of the home to the more public arena, brisling the old stereotypes about women's role and place. Women are to be found in almost all types of jobs and occupations. Women are able to earn money and have some say in spending it. They were too deprived in the past. No freedom with spending money. In most cases there was hardly any money to spend. A gradual culture of the working couple started. Today, the two-income earner family has become a norm. All the respondents in this category stated that they provided childcare support to their daughters and daughters-in-law and claim that had this support not been available, it would have been difficult for the younger generation of women in the family to remain in employment. Also they would be more stressed. All the respondents stated that it was a good thing that girl were not so dependent on the husbands financially. However, this group of interviewee's also believed that it was natural that men provide for women. *"There is nothing shameful about it and women should not feel humiliated by that dependence. However if a man failed to provide, or could not earn enough, was ill for instance, then it was good that women earn so that they and the family did not suffer."*(It is noted that there is no difference in reposes of elderly grassroots women emanating from religious background, education and social class of the respondents.)

This thinking is not supported by the younger generation of women who stated that they *"hate the idea of having to depend on a man for their financial needs."*

3. EVOLUTION IN THE STATUS AND CONDITIONS OF WOMEN HAS RESULTED IN BEHAVIOR CHANGE

The respondents stated that a key difference between women three decades ago (and earlier) was that the younger generation of women (meaning less than age thirty five) are very independent minded and very assertive. They do not feel subordinate to men in status. They are not at all submissive, fight back and rarely remain quiet or submit. They also asserted that the younger generation of women showed 'less respect to their husbands and elders. They do not submit to their mothers in law. The respondents maintained that while it was a good thing that women were no longer subjected to so much control and subordination, the younger women have overdone it with assertiveness.'

Shanti

“How will marriage sustain if a women does not know when to keep quiet!”

Gangoh

“Ou dire ene mot, zotte repond ou avec cent.” Meaning that young women talk back disrespectfully.

Jenny

“Banne tifi aujourdhui koze trop”. Meaning that Young girls today talk too much.

Khatija

“mo pas gagne problem avec person cause mo reste tranquil. Mo manniere sa.” Meaning that Khatija never gets into an argument with any one. She remains quiet. It was her character. So she avoids confrontation. It could be interpreted as submissive behaviour.

From the point of the elderly invisible respondents, submitting or restraining oneself by keeping quiet or submitting to men emanated from the fact that men were heads of the family so the women implicitly is of lower status. But women also saw it as a strength, a diplomatic act to avoid conflict from escalating.

4. THE YOUNGER GENERATION OF WOMEN ARE VERY CONSUMPTION ORIENTED

The respondents maintained that the evolution in the conditions of women have given them improved economic status which they have achieved through going to work. Enhanced Economic power and capacity has made both men and women very consumption oriented. The mainstream views were that women must know how to save and manage money well.

Shanti stated that “Even with two salaries my children complain that they do not have enough. I was a stay home wife and depended on my husband. With his earnings we were able to settle all the children, all the children were given a house to live in. The average young generation couples cannot make the economic progress that their parents made. We started very humbly although I did have my heritage which my husband managed well.”

Khatija (rural respondent) also had something similar to state. “When I was a young women, if we received money, we saved it. Today’s women, they spend it. They run to the beauty parlour. It costs Rs 300 at least and they have to go every month! They spend on other things also. I guess there is so much to spend on also. We did not have all these facilities and temptations.”

Ragini “ *Banne jeune pas couma nou.zotte depense boucoup. Zotte fini depense zotte l'argent avant zotte gagne li meme. Mais pas capave blame zotte aussi. Tout ca bann reclame. La vie aussi chere.*” Meaning that the younger generation spends too much money. Even before they get their salaries they have committed their money. But cannot blame the young persons with all the advertisements luring them to buy. Also, cost of living is very high now.

5 WOMEN ARE LESS INHIBITED WITH RESPECT TO SMOKING AND DRINKING

More women are stated to take alcohol and smoking which was formally a privilege of the males.

Respondents stated that younger women show less inhibition in smoking and drinking in public. These developments were not welcomed and not considered as progressive. It was considered to be harmful for health and not lending to the dignity of women.

Gangoh stated, “In the past we ate simple food but it was healthy. You can see that people are living longer because of the right food they ate. You think women of today will have the good health when they are old!”

Jenny “*Banne tifi fume et aussi boire plis ki avant. Ti ena tifi ki ti fume cigarette, mais zotte pas ti fair li trop ouvertment. Mis metenon, li vine plis.*” Meaning that “a few girls used to smoke in the past, but they were discreet about it. Now girls are open and smoke and drink more.

6 WITH THE EVOLUTION IN THE STATUS OF WOMEN, STYLE OF DRESSING HAS CHANGED

In the opinion of older women respondents, younger women wear clothes that are far to revealing of their bodies.

Not all respondents spoke on this issue. Jenny and Gangoh and Ragini discussed this issue. Amina and Khatija made no comments.

Gangoh

Modern girls do not always present themselves with dignity before older persons and are also not very careful of the way they sit, their body postures.

“ How do you expect men to respect women when they dress up in such revealing clothes!”

Jenny

Young girls do not dress with care. They wear clothes that are too revealing.

Ragini “*ou en trouve maniere ki banne jeunes habeeye!* Meaning. *Have you seen the way young girls dress up*”? This statement is a covert expression of older women's' disapproval of the way the younger of women generation dress.

7 SOME RESPONDENTS FELT THAT YOUNGER WOMEN WERE LESS RELIGIOUS AND THEREFORE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT WAS LESS EVIDENT AMONG WOMEN OF YOUNGER GENERATION

Both Jenny and Dominic indicated that young people were less committed to religion and did not attend church regularly.

Successful living required spiritual growth and development.

Khatija mentioned that younger women followed religion but did not always apply it. Gangoh also stated that young working women had less time for religion.

It is to be noted that only the Christian group complained that younger persons did not attend church regularly. Women from the Hindu and Muslim communities did not state that participation in religious institutions had declined.

8 In the views and experiences of older women, the younger women seem to have more liberal attitudes and behaviour with respect to sexuality. The older women stated that when they were young girls' virginity ' was greatly valued by girls and society. Today girls are more free and attach less importance to virginity.

The respondents stated that with respect to sexual behaviour, values and behaviour had changed over the last three decades. When they were young, women from all communities avoided being sexually active until marriage. But, “*young women today go to far.*” *The respondents did not use the word virginity but used expressions like “alle trop loin and pas respect zotte le corps.”* The respondents did not state that family planning was not desirable, just that it had its positive and negative outcomes and one negative outcome was increased sexual awareness and activity among youth. It was cited to be one of the reasons for why men tended to treat girls with less respect. Older women did not see greater sexual freedom as a positive change. In the views of older women, this change in sexual behaviour did not lend dignity and respect for women. The older women stated that all young girls were not the same but premarital sex was

becoming more common among the younger generation and young persons today have a lot of freedom and not necessarily the maturity to go with it.

9. VIEWS ABOUT ABORTION

The mainstream answers show that people are very guarded and conditional on the matter of abortion. The mainstream answer was that ideologically it was not a good thing but situations necessitate it some times as there are no other suitable options.

Discussion. The implications to be drawn from these findings can be;

- That provisions should be made for those situations where abortion cannot be avoided.
- On moral grounds abortion is not acceptable.
- Moral considerations may not always be fair or practical.

In contrast, younger women were more affirmative in their views on abortion and claimed that it should be conducted in a humane manner.

Jenny and Dominique were against abortion. Jenny admitted that even so, she was aware that even Catholics resorted to abortion as a way out.

10. HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT HAS BECOME EASIER

The mainstream responses indicate that developments over the last three decades have removed the intense drudgery of housework which women had to face in the past. This indicates an improvement in the conditions of women. Women are not confined to physically exhausting and repetitive tasks like fetching and storing water, collecting wood and scrubbing of floors manually. Both urban and rural women have many facilities to assist with housework. This change is considered as an improvement in the conditions and status of women. It was the women who preformed the most tiring and repetitive tasks in the home. Women still do that but now it has become easier or the nature of the tasks has been transformed. Example. Women had to grind spices manually. Now this is done by the machine in increasing numbers.

Khatiija Women of my generation and standing had very hard lives. Today life is very different. Young women do not have to do activities like fetch water, firewood, fodder for animals, plaster the house with mud, wash clothes in the river and such tasks. Even in the villages women have the same facilities as in the cities. Young women refuse to use wood for fire and cooking. They all use gas and other new gadgets. There is water and electricity in all households and even in villages women use washing

machine to wash clothes. Even grinding is mechanical. Of course not all women have all the labour saving devices, but it is all very common and normal. Women aspire to buy all these appliances if they do not have them. So we cannot really compare the life now and thirty to forty years ago! Those born after independence were born into a different culture. One cannot also expect them to understand the pain and difficulties we encountered. They have seen nothing of the life my generation lived through.”

11. HEALTH

Respondents in general failed to talk about health specifically. Generally referred to it in terms of “many facilities.” Khaitija stated that in her time as a young woman, even to get a panadol from the boutique was a challenge. Now health care facilities are available all over. Women no longer have their babies at home. Medicines are easily available, be it in the city or the village.

TABLE VI.2

YOUNGER GRASSROOTS WOMEN - INVISIBLES.- AGE 35-55 YEARS

Religion	Locality		Other	Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Hindu	2	1	1+1	Hindu women. 1 Tamil.1Marathi. 1,Bhojpuri.
Muslim	1	1		
Catholic	3	1	1	1Chinese1Creole.1Franco Mauritian. 1Rodrigues.

THE PROFILE

The Second age group of the Invisible women comprised women aged 35 to 55years. They had varied education and occupations ranging from part time domestic worker, self employed (one Chinese - a widow was a shop keeper, a married Muslim women working in the family shop, a Hindu spinster self employed as seamstress; a catholic married woman employed as a secretary/clerk. A Hindu married woman –housewife. A Franco Mauritian housewife who has also worked for herself on and off. The Chinese shopkeeper and the Muslim housewife who helps in the shop are well do to do financially. The rural housewife is also middle class. The remaining three Hindu women (one Tamil and two Bhojpuri speaking) were working class. One Hindu woman was separated and also worked as a commercial sex worker.

E. THE MAINSTREAM FINDINGS**1. EDUCATION**

The mainstream findings were that there has been an expansion of educational facilities for both girls and for boys because many poor families could not afford to send children to Secondary School and University. Families also have fewer children since the 1960's. The result is that parents do not discriminate too much on grounds of gender. In the past there were so many children but well off families were fewer. There are many families where they have only girls.

2. VARIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK AND SOCIALIZATION

Development has brought many opportunities for all families. Women now have many opportunities to work even though the work may be hard, for example work in the factories. (*travaille dans usine pas facile working in a factory is not an easy job*)

Rani, a Tamil speaking Hindu aged 45 years, stated that her mother had a very difficult time raising them although they were only five of them. Her maternal grandmother helped the family but as a young girl she had to accompany her grandmother who worked as a domestic servant. Rani had a love marriage at age 17 and even after her marriage; she had to work as a domestic until her husband stabilized. Her husband is self employed, working as a vendor of goods. Rani helps him but now she does not go to the bazaar but manages the stock at home and sells things with people in the community. She states that her husband was very dominating and had many affairs with other women. But she had to look after the children and could not leave him. Not that she ever wanted to because she loves her husband dearly. Now the children are adult, so life has stabilized. Rani states that there was a great difference in her life as a young girl and that of her daughter. Her daughter Milli is the youngest and the only girl in the family. She has been loved and "*spoilt- gattey*" by all. Every encouragement was given to Millie to study. If Millie does well, Rani is even thinking of sending her to study in the UK. She can live with her brother there. There is no discrimination; in fact her daughter gets away with more privileges. Rani's two sons dropped out of the education system and are working with their father now, as the family now owns a restaurant also. Her eldest son got married recently to a girl of his choice. Her daughter in law stays home. However, Rani maintains that although Milli is allowed to go out with her friends at times, we are careful and she is watched by us all. After all she is a girl, cannot take a risk. But is my time, by brothers really controlled us girls. If we went out to the front of the house, we were immediately told off. Just the look was enough. Jenny

has friends and they come home. She studies in a coeducational institution, something my mother would never have accepted had I the opportunity to study. I would have to go to an all girls' school. My daughter talks to boys but I keep advising to her not to let any boy fool her. One must protect the girls. A simple mistake and her whole life is at stake. My sons used to help me with housework, they still do. I have a bad back and when I did not have the brush, my sons used to brush the floor, not my daughter. Boys too must learn to be useful in the house. This way they will be closer to their wives also.

Rani stated that she was not a traditional dominating mother in law, always watching over the daughter in law. She gives her daughter in law freedom to dress, as she likes, to go out. Women of her generation usually had a very difficult time with the mother in law.

Rani feels that abortion should be legalized. Women face too many problems due to unwanted pregnancy. *“How much pills can women take!”*

Amrita, is a housewife living in the district of Flacq. She has always lived in the rural localities. She has two daughters and a son. Although she lives in a nuclear family, they are surrounded by family and they are really an extended family. Amrita married her husband Anil when she was aged 21 and Anil was 28. Her mother and mother in law married when only 13 and 14 years of age.

Amrita states that people of her mother in law and mothers generation married early and had many children. But Anila's father was with the Arya Samaj and he did not favour large families. Her mother in law had eleven children of which one died when he was very young. Both her mother and mother in law had very little education. They had to work very hard and had few facilities. All their time was spent in housework, looking after the children and the animals. There was also little leisure *“distraction”* for women. Television came much later. Even if there was television, their mothers in law would probably not allow them to watch. They could not even talk very easily with their husbands. They did not have much freedom. If they had free time then they did embroidery or sewing. They normally had to cover their heads when in the presence of older relatives. *‘Not much in towns, but in the villages it was the practice.’*

Amrita stated that the difference between her and women of her mother's generation is that she has more freedom. She has all the modern facilities and there is not much difference between facilities that people have in urban and rural areas. People in the rural areas are also equally developed like the people in the cities. *“dimoune banne village aussi develop couma banne la dans la ville.”* By *‘developpe’* Amrita meant *‘having education,*

knowledgeable, modern, ability to converse in Creole and French than just Bhojpuri.'

Amrita views are that women are still dominated by men. She believes that women must obey their husbands as a general rule.

But women too have a right to enjoy their life and be educated and go out to work. Amrita sometimes regrets that she could go out to work. But she also enjoys being home and looking after the family. Two of her sisters-in-law work. One had tertiary education but all the rest have SC (senior) and HSC. The sisters in law, (wives of her husband's brothers) all reside in the same complex. Two of them even drive, not just cars but the family mini bus also. Amrita does not drive. Of her husband's sisters, only one works, the rest are all housewives. Amrita stated that there is a lot of work to be done in the house. Amita does not like being dependent on the husband for money. She stated that financial dependency was the main aspect she disliked about being a housewife. However, she admitted that she managed all the money her husband earned but she still felt that it was not her earning and had to be careful about how she used it.

Amrita's stated that her daughters have a different way of thinking and living, (*mode de vie different*)

Her daughters are assertive, they are not timid and they say what is in their mind. She would like her daughters to study but the elder one is already in love and wants to get married. She cannot stop her as she is of age now. The boy is nice so it is ok. *"Anyway, we cannot keep the girls with us for ever. They have to get married and leave home. So I suppose it is fine in the end."*

Malathi

Malathi is Marathi speaking. She is a housewife. Her husband is a small time planter and does also odd jobs. She has two boys and a girl. Her daughter went to work in South Africa but had to come because her residence permit was not extended. The family received a 'demand' and as the boy and the girl were happy, the marriage was settled. A sister-in-law arranged the match. Malathi believes it was a good thing. It is good for the girls to get settled early in life. Her daughter has studied up to Senior School and also sat her A levels but did not do well. The family are not very well off so it is better that the girl got married. Malathi felt happy that her daughter is married, more so as she is married within the community. Malathi states that her husband is an alcoholic and the boys are working and managing their own life.

Malathi, like her husbands is of the view that if the family can afford it, it is best that the wife looks after the home. But is there is too much poverty, then the woman will have to work even if she would like to stay home.

Women and men have made a lot of progress in Mauritius but those who are poor have not progressed very much. They have not been able to use all the facilities.' *Where do you get money for tuitions!*'

Malathi states that women of her mother's generation grew up in poverty. They were very much controlled by their mothers in law and had no independence. Women of her generation are more free and have many facilities. They do not cook on firewood although Malathi does use firewood also. Malathi does not have a washing machine and a lot of other appliances as she cannot afford them. (She has a fridge, gas cooker and a TV and video.) Anyway she prefers to hand wash her clothes. She stated that machines do not wash very clean. But Malathi also stated that she did not see her daughter washing clothes in the river or on the washing stone. Malathi was hesitant but when probed further for her views, she is of the opinion that women should have access to safe abortion.

Baby

Baby is a Hindu. Born in an urban locality, Baby now lives on the coastal region. She is separated from her husband. She has a son aged 18 years who lives in Australia with her sister. Baby stated that her husband abandoned her just a few years after her marriage for a younger girl although Baby her self was quite young. Baby is very attractive looking, wears only European clothes. She has many male friends and is hoping to marry her French boyfriend. Baby is reputed to be a commercial sex worker. She has a job as a kitchen assistant in a resort hotel. Baby claimed that she is modern and does not believe in servitude to men. When her husband stated having an affair and she learnt of it, she did not accept that her husband has a relationship with another women. More so he was not even providing for her and her baby. So she did all kinds of jobs, worked as a domestic, in a restaurant and finally landed the job in the hotel. According to Baby, her experience is that the average man is unreliable and only looking for 'distraction', they want to avoid taking any responsibilities. Men of her father's generation "*were different- Even if they were unfaithful, they still provided for the family. But men today are neither faithful nor good providers for the family. I am fed up with the mentality of the men in Mauritius. I am waiting for my friend to come and hope to settle overseas. (Mone degout zomme Maurice. Mo pe attane mo camarade vini et mon ena lespoir etabli dehors.)*" Baby does not socialize too much with her family and was very unwilling to talk about them. She only meets her married sister sometimes and on rare occasions her brother may visit her. Baby is pro abortion and believes that it should be legalized.

Nazrine

Nazrine has seen women evolved from poverty. Women are more hardworking and have made use of the opportunities that came. The work of women has increased. They work outside home and also do a lot of work in the home also. But in spite of it all, women and girls are more developed and continue to develop more. They have the right be heard and express themselves freely. The younger generation of women are now exposed to everything so they are developing even more. “vine plis debriaare”. Some girls are overdoing things. In the past, young girls would not knowingly enter into relationships with married men. But the new generation of girls (born since independence) are breaking marriages. They flaunt themselves before men and feel no guilt or shame to break up another woman's home. So women are also becoming the cause of misery for other women. “All girls are not like that but it is becoming more common”.

Nazine views are that that many people have started earning more but have more debts also. There is a lack of money. There are too many suicides, so people are not happy. In Nazira’s opinion abortion is not a good thing. One must take precautions. Nazira married at age 23 and has five children.

Nazira stated that men are becoming marginalized as their roles are being diminished.

Minu

Minu is a very frail looking Hindu spinster, residing in the locality of Vacoas. She lives with her mother a widow. Minu studied up to primary school. The family was very modest and her mother worked for her living (and continues to do so) Minu is good at sewing. But now on account of poor health, she has reduced her workload. Minu is very timid and submissive person. She does not like to go out and socialize, most of the time stays at home.

Her mother, aged 60 +, is more outgoing than her. Minu stated that she was very different from the girls of her generation who are very modern in their dress and like to go out and enjoy themselves. Minu’s leisure activities are watching Hindi movies. The family has a video. Her mother has travelled to the UK on several occasions but Baby is too timid to go on her own.

Minu did not marry. She was scared to get married and then as her age advanced, it became difficult to get a suitable match. Also, as her mother stated, being poor was also an obstruction. Baby has another sister and three brothers. One brother is settled in the UK. He has a good job. One brother lives in the same housing complex. He is a graduate, self-

employed. The eldest brother too is self employed but he lives in another town.

Baby sees that there is even a greater difference between herself and her nieces. Her nieces are all studying and one of them is even studying overseas. In her time when she was a young girl it was unusual for a girl to go and study at university level. Her generation of girls did not insist if parents said no to something they asked. But her nieces are different. They persist until they have their way and get what they want.

Minu's mother is a bit worried about what will happen to Minu once she is not there. *"At least she has a house, a place to live and I hope that her sister in law and brother will be good to her. Minu is very submissive and not at all demanding. She is very timid to talk even with her brothers."*

WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THE STATEMENTS AND OPINIONS OBTAINED FROM MIDDLE AGED GRASS ROOTS WOMEN?

- The data reveals that the middle-aged women were more liberal compared to the women who were in their mothers' age group and women older to them.
- They married later than their mothers and had smaller families. This makes a lot of difference to life styles. Women can have more time for themselves.
- Also, their mothers were raised in greater poverty and deprivation. The middle-aged women have better facilities to manage and run their homes. They have television, gas cooking facilities, refrigerators and other household appliances though not all have washing machines. They do not however see the younger generation of women washing clothes on "*roche lave* or the river"
- There is not a big difference in the lifestyle and facilities available to urban and rural women.
- Women are not confined to the house. There are varieties of jobs open for women. The younger generation are not at all house bound.
- Middle aged women stated that they were better educated than the women of their mothers generation but compared poorly in educational achievement and sense of independence compared to the younger generation of women.
- There seems to be no mainstream pattern visible with respect to independence in thinking and action. Among the Hindus, the variations are extreme timidity and subordination to self-reliance at the cost of exclusion. i.e. the situation of Baby. She is living her own life. She relies little on the family. But cases like her are an exception, such exceptions always existed even in very traditional society but there was a price to pay,

i.e. exclusion and isolation. Minu on the other hand is very attached and dependent on her mother and brothers. She fears her brothers.

- Overall, middle aged grassroots women enjoy more facilities and better quality of life compared to women of their mothers generation but are still seen to be too yielding and submissive compared to women in the younger cohorts.
- Middle aged grassroots women, like their mothers still hold marriage as the final destiny for girls. Girls who are not married are considered unfortunate in life.

TABLE VI.3

GRASS ROOTS WOMEN AGED ≤ 34 YEARS

Religion	Locality	Other		Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Christian	1	2		On of coastal area; one Moka region; Rodrigues
Hindu	2	2		
Muslim	1	1		

THE PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The respondents' age ranged from 21 years to 33 years. It included a respondent from Rodrigues. The occupations ranged from student, domestic worker, self-employed person, housewife, stay at home person, employees of private sector.

One respondent was from Rodrigues. She is self-employed. She is separated from her husband who has a mistress. She has one child, a boy.

THE MAINSTREAM FINDINGS

The invisible group of women aged $34 <$ perceptions and views about the status and evolution of women, based on comparisons with their mothers and grandmothers are.

1. The new generation of women are better educated, better informed and more intelligent than the women in their mother's cohort and the grandmothers.
2. **Coco** "Younger women are better educated, better informed and they are more intelligent." **Non Mainstream answer.**

Fabienne Women in Rodrigues are not privileged like women in Mauritius. Women in Mauritius have many opportunities for developing

them selves and for recreation. (*Banne femme Rodrigues pene distraction couma benne femme dans Maurice.*) Mauritius has nice shops and there are places to visit. Fabienne has been to Mauritius on several occasions. She has a sister who is married and lives in Mauritius.

3. The younger generation of women are not submissive. **Fifi**. "They do what they have to. We are not submissive (*sa! Li pas existe! Submissive women ! This does not exist now*)" **Coco**. "Women care about themselves and will go on improving themselves."
4. Women are more independent and more respected than in the past. The respondents felt that this was partly due to legal reform and partly due to the fact that women too had changed.
5. Wider opportunities for friendships and recreation. Women are broad minded and open in their thinking and behaviour compared to women of the previous generations. The younger respondents maintained that the younger generation of women are objective and practical. They interact with individuals (women and men) from different communities and socio economic class. Social friendships are not just confined to within family. They have friends from all communities and different walks of life and they socialize. **Fifi** "*Mo mama li ti ena so banne camarade mais zotte pas ti autant libre pou zoen so banne camarade. Bizin demand permission pour sorti are mo papa et ca ti pose ene problem.*" meaning that "my mother had friends from other communities but she had to seek my father's permission every time and that always created a problem."

5 Attitudes and views about combining employment and childcare.

Mixed feelings about women working when there are young children in the family. **Coco**. "I think that women should be at home with the children when the children are still young. They need the attention and love of the mother." **Charlotte**. "I feel that it is better that women stay home to look after the children when children are very young, specially if there are no older relatives or good maids available." **Fifi**. "It is hard. Ideally if possible but the reality is that these days two income earners in a family are a must. So there have to be other arrangements for child care if close family support is not available."

6 Economic self-reliance is very important for women. A Stay home wife is now an ageing cohort.

All respondents felt that it was essential for women to earn as one can no longer rely on one income and women want better quality of economic life so they feel that having a means of earning income for self and the family is a must also. The choice is hard because the love and warmth that children need is also very important. It is evident that women find themselves in a very difficult situation.

Fifi "The time when women stayed home is over. It applied to my mothers generation but among women my generation, it is rare. Most of my friends work. I would have liked to stay home for some time at least. It is not easy with three small children, but I cannot. I need the income I get from work. My mother helps be a lot, but there is a limit to my reliance oh her."

7 Women in the previous generation were too repressed and had little legal and social support to speak their minds.

Fifi "*Banne madams generation mo mama et grandmere ti trop domine par zotte mari. Zotte pas oze koeze devant banne zomme. Pas ti aina grand difference entre mo mama et grandmere.*" Meaning *Women in the previous generation dared not speak to other men and dare not speak back to their husbands. There was little difference in this respect between my mother and grandmother.*"

8. Views on Abortion.

Views on abortion were mixed. All stated that ideally it would be best if it did not happen but one needs to be realistic.' It is outmoded not to permit abortion. Unwanted pregnancies will happen and women must be given a decent way out of it.' Almost all the younger generation of women support the need for legal recourse to abortion.

One non-mainstream response indicated that abortion was bad and should not be permitted on any grounds. "There are ways to deal with unwanted pregnancy through social support like adoption etc."

9. Improved Gender Relation

Respondents in this category stated that the younger generation of women have better relations with men. Men respect women more than in the past when women were treated as unequal in marriage. **Fifi**. "Men respect women now. They do not shout at women and humiliate them like the way my father and grandfather's generation used to do" **Coco**. "Men have more respect for women. They see women doing so many things besides looking after the home and family." **Charlotte**. "Men respect women more because there is no way a young woman today will not let a man get away with the arrogance and dominance. Women today have the laws and social support. They do not have to put up with unfairness."

10. Major Problems in Society

Major problems in society were perceived as being alcohol and drug abuse.

Coco “Many families are not providing the right care for children. Children are minding themselves and growing up by themselves. That is why there are problems like drugs. ... Also, It would be good if every one minded their own affairs. They interfere too much in the affairs of others.”

Fabienne stated, “the big problem in Rodrigues society is that people do not mind their business. There is too much of gossip about others. (*trop palabre*) Men are very flirtatious and promiscuous. They are violent. However, with the passing of the domestic violence act, at least some fear has set in. What can women do when policemen themselves beat their wives, what is the example set?”

MALES - INVISIBLES

TABLE VI.4
INVISIBLE MEN. AGED 55-68 YEARS

Religion	Locality	Other		Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Hindu	2*	1	1	* 1 Tamil. 1 Bhojpuri
Catholic	1	1		
Muslim	1	1		

The occupational background –Unskilled, Retired, Employed part time.

The education variation was from Primary up to SC. Two of the respondents were widowers and did not remarry following the death of their spouse. They spoke highly of the women who had been with them for a long time.

THE MAINSTREAM FINDINGS

(i) Equality in Education

More equality of opportunities for education and self-development. There has been development and progress which has given opportunity to both men and women to develop themselves. As Rajen put it, “it is good that people are given the opportunity for self development. They can achieve progress through self development.” The education opportunities

have expanded for both boys and girls. *“It is a good thing that women have been freed from the confinement to the home.(avant, banne femme ti reste trop ferme dan la caz.)”*

(2) **Greater independence**

The mainstream answers were that women are less dependent on the men. They can also earn their own money.

There has been a great change in society since independence. Women are to be found working side by side with men in almost all sectors. However the mainstream responses of the older group of ‘Invisible Men’ are that women should not go out to work. The spouses of the grass roots male respondents were or are housewives. The grassroots men take pride over the fact that they did not make their wives work outside the home.

(3) **Marriages now take place when the girls are older**

Women marry later now. The findings reflect that when the grassroots men married, their wives were very young. Between the ages of 14 and sixteen. It is noted that the respondents always hastily defended themselves by stating that *“in those days girls were married off early.”* Their daughters were married off between the age of 18 –21years.It was stated that the younger generation was marrying even later.

(4) **Narrowed differences between status of men and women**

Since the last three decades opportunities for women have expanded vastly and there is not a big difference between rights and privileges of men and women. However, grass roots men stated that equal rights are different from saying women and men are equal. *“ Ou trouve femme ek zomme pareille!” “Zomme ek femme pas pareille! You find men and women similar! Men and Women are not same!”* In the opinion of the grassroots men, women in the past understood that men and women were different. Younger women do not understand this. They try to behave like men. *“This is not possible! “trouve ca villain (It is ugly).” Rajen.*

(5) **Women are becoming arrogant**

Women have become arrogant. The socialization (education) has made women arrogant. There is little variation in the responses. Cyril stated, *“banne femme aujourd’hui pena maniere. Tend zotte kote!- The younger generation of women have little manners. Hear them talk!”* Rajen. *“Geutte ki pe passé dans la caz. Si ene femme ena en plis education ki les zotte, li tini so grandeur. Ghamandi! Couma pou gagne la paix dans la caz!.* Meaning that *‘a woman who acquires little more education than the others in the house, becomes proud and arrogant, putting others down. How can you have peace in the home under such conditions’?* Rajen stated that the “real issue we need to ask of our selves is despite all the development and progress

we have had since the last three decades, do we respect ourselves and others?”

Suntoo. *Mo bien content mo tifi, mo faite bocoup pour li. Mais so maniere kɔze, par fois li bless moi, La maniere ki li pe kɔze, Zamias mo femme ene repond moi coume sa. Mo dire ou, li fair moi plorey.*” Suntoo stated that his daughter has talked to him in a manner that made him cry. His wife has never addressed him in the way that his daughter sometimes addresses him. Suntoo stated it hurts as he considers himself a loving and good father. Cyril also had a similar story to tell. He stated that after a hard days work if he takes a drink, his daughter ill treats him, has even hit him. “They say I am a drunkard. But I provide for all their needs. Gave them education. My wife stayed home and looked after them well. My wife is also looking after their children.”

(6) **Erosion of progress by social problems**

The respondents stated that despite all the development and progress, development over the last three decades has not been beneficial. Social problems like drug and alcohol abuse have increased and many women are drawn into drug misuse.

One non-mainstream response - Rajen. *“Tout ca problem pe vinni cause developement pas propre. Pas pou tini! Pe donne instruction mais pena education! System education pas bon. Nou pas pe vivre dans ene bon society. Dimoune pas respecte zotte prochain. Zotte pas travaille bien. Pas serious.* —The translation is that ‘Development itself has been implemented wrongly. It is not sustainable. People do not respect each other. They are not hardworking. We have given instruction but not education.’ Further Rajen stated that men and women should have been prepared, made to understand the changes. this was the undesirable effects could have been avoided. Its ok giving equal rights, but also it is important to understand what it means!

7. **Religion has less impact on people's behaviour towards fellow humans**

The impact of development has changed people’s attitudes towards religion. People practice religion but are not sincere about it. For many it is just a show. It is reflected through all the big fancy utensils you see people carrying to place of worship. God has not asked for all that! People do not pray with sincerity. It is taking people away from spirituality so how can you have progress. How can one respect others if religion is practiced insincerely?

Farook stated that impact of development has changed people’s attitudes to religion. Young people go to the mosque but they do not apply religion in their day-to-day life. Farook also stated that it here was a lot of harmful influence from the media which has a destabilizing impact upon the family and society.

(8) **Two income earners are a norm**

Grassroots men stated that most young couples work to earn for the family. This was not the situation three decades ago. Women worked but not full time. There has been rapid change in society in this respect. This is not seen as a positive development by grassroots men. Ideally women should stay home if possible. "There is a lot to do in the house if the house is to be well maintained and the children well raised. Housework and childcare is not for men."

Some variations in responses were that it was acceptable for women to work but when the family has children, and then it is preferable that a woman stays home or has a part time job that is not too demanding. Some respondents were of the view that women should not work outside the home at all.

(9) **Views on Abortion**

Grassroots men aged 56+ plus seem not to favour abortion. The views expressed were that abortion would not happen if men and women conducted themselves rightly. Rajen argued, *"There are facilities to prevent pregnancy. People resort to abortion when the relationship is not morally correct."*

The explanations given by men for not approving abortion were on moral grounds. When asked what his views were in the case of rape of a young person or incest, the reply was, "that is the point I have been making. If people respected each other, it would not happen. However, in such cases, **Rajen** stated that abortion should be permitted.

Jerry and Cyril held similar viewpoints. Farook was very moralistic and eventually avoided answering the probing question of what is the option if pregnancy occurs as a result of victimization.

DISCUSSION ON ABORTION

Older grassroots men seemed to assume that unwanted pregnancy occurred only out of premarital relationships. It is well known that the majority of unwanted pregnancies¹⁷⁸ are experienced by married women opposed to unmarried women.

The grassroots older men stated that there was no need for abortion when family planning was available. But it was for most part the responsibility of the women to prevent unwanted pregnancy. This does not reflect an attitude of equality and is symptomatic of pushing the responsibility to woman alone. If awareness and acceptance of gender equality exists, then, both men and women should be equally responsible for avoiding unwanted pregnancy. The grassroots older

¹⁷⁸ MFPA. Study on Abortion. 1994.

cohort of respondents did not show any significant differences in their responses which could emanate from religious beliefs and social class.

Younger grassroots men differed. Even the Christians (Catholic) asserted that restrictions on abortion were outmode (*“depasse”*) and not realistic to the realities of life. In the mainstream, they are accepting of abortion if circumstances are difficult.

Younger cohort. Those single were embarrassed by the question and uncertain how to answer and stated that they could not form a view. But among the married, the answers were mixed. One non-mainstream reply, a Hindu aged 30, was totally against abortion, saying it was a crime.

Grassroots men of all categories maintained that the new generation of women were very assertive and arrogant. They did not submit and always strive to have the last word. Also, they find that the evolution of women had been experienced as women becoming more controlling over men. Women do not give in if they to Discussion on abortion.

Older grass roots men seemed to assume that unwanted pregnancy occurred only out of premarital relationships. It is well known that the majority of unwanted pregnancies¹⁷⁹ are experienced by married women opposed to unmarried women.

Grassroots men of all categories maintained that the new generation of women were very assertive and arrogant. They did not submit and always strive to have the last word. Also, they find that the evolution of women had been experienced as women becoming more controlling over men. Women do not give in if they feel there is injustice being done to them Even middle aged women are different in this respect from the cohort of women 56+, who were submissive and accepted the dominance and authority of their husbands unquestioningly.

Some variations in the responses were that it was ok for a women to work but when the family had children, then it is better that a women stays home or has a part time job or work which is not too demanding. One non-mainstream view was that women should not work outside the home under any circumstances.

TABLE VI.5
INVISIBLE MEN AGED 35 –55 YEARS

Religion	Locality		Other	Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Hindu	1	2	0	1*Tamil, 2 Bhojpuri
Muslim	1	1		
Muslim	1	1	1	

¹⁷⁹ MFPA. Study on Abortion.1994.

THE PROFILE OF THE INVISIBLE MIDDLE AGED MEN

The age group varied between 40 to 53. Education variations were between primary schooling and 'senior' form five. They were all married. One was a widower.

Mark

Mark is a plumber. He is aged 41. He got married at the age of 18. He has three children. He was born into a large family of five brothers and six sisters (birth order four). His mother was a housewife. Since the age of eight, Mark has lived in upper Plaines Wilhems. He was born in a rural locality. Mark studies up to form five.

Mark stated that there was a very big difference between women of his mother's generation, his wife's generation and women of his daughter's generation.

His mother, and women of her generation were submissive, never raised their voice, loyal to their religion and principles. His mother's views on marriage were that once a couple marries, then it is for good and what ever comes with the marriage, one has to accept. Women of his mother's age group rarely went to school, and marriage was their destiny. They married early and were not really interested in studies.

Women of his wife's generation too married early were not particularly keen on studies. Both his wife and his mother married when aged sixteen years. However, the wife is more independent and assertive. She has her own principles. If Mark were to be 'infidel'. i.e. unfaithful to his wife, his wife will not tolerate it and that will be the end of the marriage. His wife likes to go out and he has to be there with her. It was different for his mother. She rarely went out, it was not a 'must' for her. But for the women of his wife's generation, going out is a 'must'. Women of his wife's generation still regard marriage as the destiny for women. But they believe in equality between men and women.

Religion is also important to most women like my wife. Now women of my daughter's generation are very different. They are ambitious, they want to study and openly assert that they are not going to spend their lives doing house work. They are more ambitious than men. My son is a plumber like me, but my daughter is going to University. "My daughter is planning to study in South Africa. I have to find the money. She has openly stated that marriage is not on her mind at all so do not talk about it. If it happens one day well and good, but it is not her priority. My daughter goes to church but many of her generation do not. Young people today move more in groups than couples. If they go to a disco for example, it is a group. It is also expensive to go out as a couple. You can order two bottles of beer and share among five but as a couple, you must order at least two."

Mark stated that " Women today are the superior gender. They do not respect men, in fact they control and dictate to men. The change has been such that men

find themselves in an inferior position. So the situation has altered a lot over the period of independence. Women never accept to admit their fault or shortcomings and this way they will end up with poor development. This will be their undoing. You must face the reality.”

“All this change and changing relations between men and women. But the bottom line is the same. You change the brand of tea, you change the cups and you change the way you brew it, but at the end of it all, what we are looking for is simply a good cup of tea.”

What we need is to live in peace and harmony as a couple and as a family. The way things are happening, it's as if every ten years men and women are undergoing big change in their views and expectations. This destabilizes relations in marriage and couples drift apart. But Divorce is not the solution because it is the next generation, i.e. the children who pay the price of divorce. This is not fair. You cannot seek your satisfaction at the cost of others dis-welfare.”

Views on abortion. Mark was categorical. Although a catholic, he firmly stated that abortion should be legalized. There is no other way. Mark has flexible attitudes towards women and work. He believes that believes the demands of women today are such that it is not possible to survive on one salary Women do not adjust now. “Do you think any women today will want to live without a washing machine and such appliances? These things cost money. So both men and women must work. As for childcare, they must buy it or have the support of the family. It will not harm the child. The elites never raised their children themselves and yet their children have good manners and turn out well in life.”

Michel

Michel is an electrician. He did a lot of odd jobs before he settled into a stable job with a resort hotel in their maintenance section. He has always resided in rural localities. He is married.

He has three children but was himself raised in a large family.

His views about women and development and relations between men and women are similar to Mark. “The woman today must have the last word.” (*li bizin sorti gagne*)

Chotu

Chotu works as a cleaner in a para-statal organization. He lives in Montagne Longue and is also a small planter. Chotu is a Hindu, married and has 2 children. His wife used to work with the Meteorological department but now stays at home. Chotu and his wife both completed senior school certificate. Chotu married a girl who was raised in an urban locality.

Chotu stated that there is a big change in the relations between men and women and in the behaviour and life style of women.

Starting with women of his mothers generation Chotu stated that this cohort of women (*banne ancien*) were raised in poverty, are very submissive and respectful to their husbands and elder relatives and live their life by religious values and principles. But his wife's generation is different from the '*ancien*' (a term used to describe the older generation.) They are more modern, better educated and have many facilities that women of my mother's generation never had. My mother's generation of women dared not ask only obey. But my wife and her generation of women, they ask and they also manage to get. My mother never asked my father what he did, where he was going or when he would come. But women of my wife's generation they ask and demand explanations. The younger generation of women, they do not ask, they demand. They are modern, better educated, with modern views, will not easily accept anyone their parents find as a suitable match for them.

Chotu stated that he did not agree that married women should go out to work. His wife used to work but he made her stop. He maintained that there was a lot of work for women to do in the house, employment outside home was not compatible with family welfare. Only in extreme cases it cannot be avoided.

Chotu also stated that he preferred working under a male boss than a female. Also, in his opinion 75% men do not have any sentiment and feelings of respect for women. His answer to probing was that "*zomme, zot race coum sa*" meaning that lack of respectful sentiments for women was inherited in the male species.

Ricky Aged. 50. Tamil speaking. Ricky is a self-employed person. He is hawker in the bazaar of Quatre Bornes and also ran a grocery store. Ricky has seen many ups and downs, including imprisonment. He has three children, two boys and a girl. Of all his children the daughter is most educated having completed her secondary education where as the boys dropped out of school and are working with him in addition to their own work as painter and restaurant. His oldest son is married.

Ricky says that in his youth he was not a very caring husband, it was his immaturity. Now he has stabilized and has grown up children.

The main difference in the conditions of women and the change in gender relations are.

Women of his mother's generation generally had a very poor life. They lived in poverty, worked hard in their own homes and the poor ones also worked hard in other people's homes as domestics. Over and above the poverty and deprivation and hard work, they had to accept the authority and dominance of husband and in-laws. They had no freedom and were like slaves to their husbands. Literally waited on their husbands even if he happened to be a cruel and drunkard person.

Women of my wife's generation were also poor but they have evolved and have become more confident and assertive. My wife and I had a love marriage. Most marriages were arranged in those days.

Now the situation is different. Girls today have a lot of facilities and do better than boys in school. It is not the boys who now run after the girls, but the girls too openly run after the boys.

The changes that have taken place since independence have given women economic power and independence. Because they earn, they are also more confident and want to have a say in how to spend the money. Women do not as a rule make wrong use of money. Women have become smarter and it is not easy to fool them.

“Younger women are becoming more arrogant. They do not give in. (pas submit). They continue talking and as a result there are more problems in families today, more divorce. A woman must know how to talk to a man. The man is vulnerable, he will do anything for her. (*Ene femme li bizin kòne amne zomme. Fazile pur ene femme embette en zomme.*)”

Ricky is of the opinion that Abortion should be permitted. Not only for a couple who is not married, but also those who are married.

Siven

Siven works and resides in an urban locality. He works in a prestigious institution, a private club for the visibles. Siven is aged 41. Has studied up to form five. Siven maintained that there has been a great change in women. He compares with his mothers and sisters and the younger age group of women. In his mothers time women lived in the shadows of men and had poor education and few facilities. There was little opportunity for work and in any case, society expected that women stay home and look after the family. Siven views are that it is a good thing that women work although his own wife does not work. He has two children. Siven states that women who were born in the post independence decades and are adult women now are very confident of themselves and they are found in all domains of work, not just locked up in the homes. They do well in their jobs also. However, along with the changes women have become “*very infidel*”. Men too are infidel but in the past, it was mostly the man who was responsible. Today whether married or not, women freely indulge in affairs and have many relationships. This is creating problems for families.

THE MAINSTREAM FINDINGS FROM THE GRASSROOTS MEN AGED 35-55 YEARS ARE :

1. The evolution in the status of women has taken the form of women moving from the confines of the home to be more Visible in public.
2. There is a very big difference in the opportunities and their lives as subordinates to their husbands. They were submissive, rarely talked back to their husbands and accepted all the shortcomings in their husbands, and remained faithful to their husbands even if the husband did not treat them well.
3. Women born in the pre-independence decades and who are now in their middle age, were more assertive, had more freedom and were more controlling of their husbands, and not unquestioningly submissive.
4. The new generation of women are very controlling of their men. Some **views** represented men feeling some sense of inferiority vis a vis the new generation of women.
5. Evolution of women has also resulted in greater sexual liberation of women. The grassroots men saw this as being a negative outcome for family and society.
6. The grassroots men too had mixed feelings about abortion. Surprisingly, the Catholics stated more liberal attitudes compared to the Muslim and Hindu groups.

TABLE VI.6
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS INVISIBLE MEN AGED \leq 34YEARS

Religion	Locality		Other	Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Hindu	1	2		
Muslim	1	1		
Christian	1	1		

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The respondents included students' workers in petrol filling station, labourer, hospitality service provider, unskilled employee in a parastatal organization and employee of a textile undertaking.

THE MAINSTREAM FINDINGS

- (1) Big difference between women of the younger generation, their mothers and the 'ancient'. (The ancient meaning the women aged 56+0)

Manu 'The ancient were different. They do not talk very much. Had very little education and very submissive and religious.'

Ashok 'Oh big difference. Mille fois! Difference in thinking, difference in education, knowledge and attitudes. They have different priorities.'

Hans 'There is a big difference between girls of my generation and those who belong to my mothers and grand mothers group. My grandmother is very orthodox, her life revolves around the house. She only likes old movies, particularly religious ones. My mother too is a bit like her but she is more open and progressive. My mother had more education than my grandmother so her outlook to life is different. But my mother is also very submissive and lacks confidence in herself. She is also too shy. My sisters are very different. We all live in the rural areas. My aunts are similar to my mother and my grandmother's sisters are also like her, even if they live in the cities. I do not see any difference between my sisters and cousins who live in the city. They all dress the same. All go to school.'

Chotu Women today are different. The people of my mother's age belong to the ancient group. They did not have education and other facilities. Their lives were full of restrictions so they developed differently. My wife and women of her generation had education and they think and behave differently. The older generation of women were house bound and socializing for them meant doing something related to religion.

Chris 'There is a big difference in the behaviours and lifestyles of girls of my generation and women of my mothers generation. Women of my mothers generation lived very restricted lives. Young girls today are ambitious and think for themselves opposed to always thinking of others'

- (2) Young girls are very assertive and talk more than the women of other generations. Young men experienced their mothers and grandmothers as less verbalizing and giving in i.e., submissive.

Manu Young women today they want to know what you are doing and seek explanations. Also they use harsh language. You cannot compete with them in a verbal encounter.'

Hans Generally older women ask fewer questions and they believe what ever you tell them. The younger generation of women is not like that.

Ashok Younger generation of girls interact more. Whether it is with the opposite sex or among them. And they have different things to talk about. My grandmother's conversation is almost always been around morals and religion. When these issues are discussed, only then will she participate otherwise she remains a listener.

Chris 'Older women are more reserved compared to the younger generation of women.'

Jacques 'Younger generation of women are more ambitious and think about themselves. Older women were always family oriented and accepted their life situation whatever it was'.

Ahmed Women of my mother's age group and my grandmother's age group were very reserved and did not speak much in the presence of men. Younger women are more open and converse easily. Younger women have same facilities like men and are educated so their outlook to life is different. It is good that women are educated and have similar rights to develop themselves. The system in the past was not fair to women.

Manu

Manu is aged 30. He was born in a rural locality and has lived all his life in a rural locality. He works at a filling station and was married about two years ago. He has one child. His wife is a year younger to him. She is a Housewife. Manu stated that if financial situation does not necessitate it, "he sees no logic in women working outside home. (*pena logic*)."

Manu was raised in a family of three brothers and three sisters. His mother is an agricultural labourer and even after retirement is continuing to work. Manu says that his mother was not submissive like most of the women her generation. She talks back. But otherwise she belongs to the ancient cohort, very traditional, no education, life regulated by religion, no leisure, not aware of modern ways of talking and addressing people.

His wife belongs to the "modern" cohort of women. By modern meaning, better educated, assertive, controlling of their men, not afraid to ask their husbands where they are going and insisting that they too accompany them. Modern girls talk loud and use abusive language, they do not fear to use abusive language.

Manu is against abortion. He states that it is harmful to women and not in their interest.

According to Manu, it is women who get their way in this society. Men have become the submissive generation.

Ashok

Ashok is aged 21. He is a student. He is a Hindu. His father is retired and his mother is a high official in the civil service. Ashok has grown up in a family with three generation of women. His grandmother. She had Primary Schooling but is well read in Hindu scriptures His mother is a graduate. His sister is a professional.

Ashok stated that his “grandmother belongs to a different generation of women. She is always trying to serve and her life is centered on the management of the home. She gets upset if the house is not well managed. She has a very authoritarian way of talking to workers. She is really very oriented to serving others. My mother is a professional and there is not too much difference between my mother and my sister except that for my mother’s generation of people marriage was the most important thing in the life of women. My mother is very open and progressive, although she dresses very traditionally, always in a sari. Most women of my mother’s age, if they belonged to a well to do family, had secondary education but my mother went to University. She was a little more privileged than the average Hindu woman of her generation. My sister does not feel that marriage is the ultimate destiny for a woman, although she would like to marry and settle down. But she will not marry just because it is the done thing”.

Ashok’s views on Gender relations.

“On the average girls in my social circles (middle class and upper middle class) believe that males are superior to females. Not all think like that but a good number do. How a man treats a woman depends on the kind of person the woman is. Not just because she is a woman. It is not just the boys who run after the girls, but the girls too run after the boys.” Ashok feels that girls should dress in a manner that lends them dignity. (Meaning that women should not wear revealing clothes)

The women of his grandmother’s generation were very timid and suppressed. They are also very restrictive in their socialization and believe that socialization must be within the group only.

Ashok stated that his mother is different. She works but also does a lot of housework. She is more open and although majority of close friends are within the same community, they have good friends from other communities too and socialize. Although his mother is not submissive like the grandmother, she often avoids conflict by submitting to their father. Younger generation of women and men are very open in their friendship circles. “ My grandmother would feel upset and scandalized if she sees my sister talking to a boy. My mother is not like that, she understands.”

Ashok feels that basically, it is still a male dominated world in which there are more of submissive than dominating women. Ashok is supportive of women working outside their home. It would not be possible to make ends meet otherwise. Ashok believes that he is superior to women and will never feel

inferior to his wife even if she earned more than him. But suppose he were to be dependent on women, he 'may' then, feel inferior. However, the debate according to Ashok is not inferior or superior. Men and women are different but they are human beings and therefore must have equal rights and be equally respected. It is not fair that a woman should work, look after the house and pull her weight equally and then be considered a lesser being. In many ways women are superior to men. "My mother works and when she gets home she quickly gets into her role as homemaker and is there for every one. In my view that is a very superior thing to do."

Ashok's views on Abortion. "Well, its complex, like the euthanasia issue. In cases when it is known that the child will be born handicapped, or a product of rape or incest, then abortion should be permitted. Also in extreme cases of poverty like families in very poor countries (Mauritius does not fall in that range) it can be mandated. But it should not be made very liberal otherwise young people will just indulge in irresponsible behaviour and then that will tantamount to killing."

Ashok believes in religion practices his religion.

Hans (*Rural student. Flacq*)

Hans is also a student. He is a Hindu. He lives in the district of Flacq. His mother stays home and his father is self-employed. Before he used to be a semiskilled worker with the sugar estate. He has two sisters, one of them recently married.

Hans has lived in an environment where he had lived with women of three different generations. His grandmother, his mother, and sisters and cousins. Hans helps his mother with the housework sometimes, like when he is on holidays. It is usually fixing things around the house, cleaning windows, the fridge. But he does not do the laundry. He does remove the laundry from the line if it starts raining and he is around.

Hans stated that his grandmother belonged to a different generation. She does not know many things and does not understand many things. For example, she cannot do things like putting of the video; she will always call us to put it on if she ever needs to watch the movie. She likes mostly religious movies. The grandmother assets herself with the daughters in law but she is very indulgent of the grand daughters.

DISCUSSION ON THE VIEWS OF YOUNG INVISIBLES

The in-depth interviews have revealed different types of experiences of men. Grass roots men feel that they are being marginalized as a result of the changes that have occurred in the living realities of women. Men experienced women as controlling and confrontative and seek accountability from men.

Both men and women stated that men respect women more than they did in the past. At least in the manner of speech. The younger generation of men does not talk to women in a dominating manner. They address women more as equals than as subordinates. The younger generation of women will not accept men addressing them as if they were subordinates. Educated women also experienced men as withdrawing into themselves and distancing themselves from spouses if women assert themselves too much. Women have to learn to give in.

Educated men believe that women deserve equal rights and privileges but also maintain that men and women are not equal or similar. Men do not appreciate women imitating male behaviour and older generation of women also feel that women and men are different and women should not behave like men.

Men do not feel that they are inferior to women. Many women still feel that men are naturally superior.

FINDINGS FROM THE INDEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH THE VISIBLE

WOMEN

The respondents classified into 'Visible' women are presented in table 6.3.1 below.

TABLE VI.7
VISIBLE WOMEN OF AGE-GROUP 56+ YEARS

Religion	Locality	Other		Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Christian	2*			*Chinese-1, Creole-1
Hindu	2**	1***		**Bhojpuri, Gujrati, ***Women leader
Muslim	1*	1		*widow of religious head

The Profile. The Visible women comprised women who were leaders or active members of civil society institutions. The common feature among them was that they had all never been in employment with the exception of one who was involved in the family business but now was mostly an active member of civil society.

They were all raised in families that were relatively well to do. Except for one, none of them had a University Degree although one had a post secondary qualification. The one who had a University Degree was not born and raised in Mauritius. Their families could have afforded to send them for higher education had it been the norm. They all reported that they were all very close to their fathers.

The Visible Women (56+years) reported the following mainstream answers.

- They were raised in environments wherein women were housebound and expected to be very obedient to their husbands and elders and trained to be good housewives above all as a good marriage was their destiny. Oona stated that she was a bright student yet all the family did was to discourage her from studying and thinking ambitiously. *“The Christian community were more progressive, it was becoming acceptable that girls could go out to work but in “genteel” professions like teachers and librarians. Girls were generally discouraged to be ambitious. Ambitious women were not considered feminine.”*
- Very few women in the 1950's and 60's received tertiary education. This applied to all communities, including women living in families that had the economic means to educated women at tertiary level.
- ‘To have completed form five itself was a big achievement’

Abha was raised in India so she received tertiary education.

- **Rajshree.** “In Mauritius tertiary education was a privilege. Most families, even if they could afford to, did not put much emphasis on tertiary education except for a few families among the Hindus. Even if the family could afford it, social attitudes did not view education as a necessity for women. The Hindu respondents reported that their Fathers were very supportive, two of the Hindu women stated that their fathers belonged to the Arya Sabha and supported that their daughters receive education.” One respondent, Sonika who lives in a rural locality could not continue with her education as she became orphaned and the family then quickly arranged a match for her when she was aged sixteen. The response of Nina. “I was born in Upper Plaines Wilhems. I suppose you could say we were regarded as elites. “(*Grand Famille*)” Both my sister and I became orphans early in life. Our Uncle raised us. He was a kind man. We inherited a fairly good amount of property. I could have trained to be a teacher, but I guess because we were orphans, the relatives considered it best that we were married off sooner the better as girls were considered a burden until they married. My sister went to the Loreto Convent, it was rare for Hindus to get admission to the convent in those days.”
- Respondents of all religious backgrounds affirmed that when they were young, women were expected to behave very submissively, not raise their voices Girls did not assert them selves in those days. As Rajshree and Oona stated, “We just obeyed what the elders decided. Girls were not expected to argue.” Rajshree stated that she had friends who feared to even talk to their father if they needed permission to attend a friend's marriage or birthday party or simply visit a girl friend. Girls would ask their grandmother or mothers to ask on their behalf. And if the father gave permission, then only they could go. Usually, permission was not given.”
- Although few women did enter the world of employment along with men, it was not considered desirable for women to go out to work. Especially families that were very conscious of their status and standing in society. A

few progressive families were beginning to open up. Rajshree was uncertain whether she would have been permitted to work. She stated that the, “issue never arose as the family received a good match for her (a health care professional) and she was married off. But two of my sister took up employment, one in the civil service and another as a schoolteacher. My father was progressive, and wanted to promote change in the Hindu community.” Even in her pre-marriage stage as a young eligible girl, Rajshree stated that she liked to do Social Service and participated in community service. Rajshree was raised in a rural locality. Since her marriage, she has lived in towns, both overseas and in Mauritius. Rajshree has three children and several grand children, majority are girls.

- The mainstream answers were that all the women who did not work did not regret having stayed at home and looked after their children. Rajshree : “All my children are professionals and they are good children. Having raised children successfully is the most important achievement a woman can make to her family and to society. ”Oona. “I worked. My husband had a good job. We were able to afford home help to look after our children.”
- **Nina:** “My children are good children and they are very well mannered and respect their culture. This is the biggest achievement a woman could make. Working women are always in a hurry and have little time for the family.”
- The Visible reported that the average women had few facilities although they did not suffer much themselves as they had home help even if they stayed home. Most families had some home help. It was mentioned that home help has become difficult since the post independence era. The exception to the mainstream came from the visible residing in the rural locality who stated that her life to a school teacher after marriage was very simple and that she did most of her house work but also found time for community service.
- In the mainstream, the Visible supported that some change be brought in the legislation with respect to abortion.
- It was also stated that they provided a lot of child care support to their daughters and facilitated that their daughters who work are able to raise their children and pursue their careers. But will the daughters be able to provide the same support to the next generation of mothers? “I do not think so because they themselves will be working.”
- The society had changed a lot over the last three decades. People have become very consumption oriented and they are very stressed. Particularly women.
- There is increased infidelity in marriages. “Not that it did not happen in the past. But people tried to manage the problem. Now both men and women take greater risks and so there is more infidelity in marriage and at the same time the problem is being managed less well. *Partout la meme histoire* (Meaning it is becoming common).” Rajshree.

- On the average, people have less respect for each other. Every one is more self oriented, “*trop personnel*”.
- Over the last thirty years, it is the life styles of women have changed. They are financially more secure and do not have to depend on the husband.

Rajshree “I never went out to work and it is my husband who provided for me. But life is different for my daughter, daughters in law and grand daughters. They all work and hold professional positions. But women do not really enjoy their earnings as life has become costly. Earnings usually go towards purchasing things for the home or the education of the children. Most married women do not women do not really enjoy the money they earn. Two income earners in the family has become a necessity opportunities. But some women have been excluded in the process of economic up-liftment, example women in the cite.”

Oona “My experience tells me that most women now days go to work. It was very rare in my time and I was perhaps you can say among the pioneers among working women. It's not only that women work to add to family income, in may cases they are the key income earner while the husband takes it easy. He has nothing to worry if he gets everything without having to make any effort.”

Ahba “Although a graduate myself, in my time it was not considered important for women to work. I do not regret not having worked outside home. I was able to supervise the studies of my children. My daughters are all professionals and have careers. The youngest too will work after her studies. Everywhere one sees, it is usually the same both men and women go out to work. Whether professionals or otherwise. Professional women are not going to stay home.” Women of the younger generation are too assertive and ‘talk back’ a lot.

Rajshree “*parfois zotte exaggere. Fair trop couma zomme. Pas capave vine parrey Nou egale mai pas parrey!*” Meaning that women are exaggerating their assertiveness and trying to imitate men. Women and men are not the same even if equal.”

If I did not refrain from asking many questions, my granddaughters will not hesitate to talk back to me in a manner that I will find hurtful. I know how they will react so I do let my self-exposed to such a situation. And mind you, my granddaughters are well brought up and more careful that some young persons I know. But this is the way young people are today.’

Abha “Young persons do not keep quiet like most women of my generation. They talk back, with a lot of solid arguments and wit. The new generation of women are not shy. They do well in studies and achieve well and look for men who will match them. It is not always easy. Men feel a little uncomfortable with girls who are very bright and professionals.”

Oona "Oh the younger ones talk! One cannot compare with them. They are different from my generation of women and from their mothers generation of women also."

Bahar "Women's dependence on husband for money has been reduced. A lot depends on the man and family they marry into. But it is true that women are not totally dependent on men for money. They work and also earn. Sometimes, they are the sole income earner for their children and themselves."

Young girls are very ambitious and they are not at all oriented to the house but to careers. They are independent minded and very confident of themselves. It is not uncommon to see girls do better than the boys in both studies and jobs. This is the big change in the post independence generation of women. Moreover, women are visible in all sectors. Younger generation of girls decide on occupations according to their likes and job opportunities, not on the basis of what is a suitable job for women.

Abha

"The girls do very well. It is not uncommon to see the girls overshadow the boys. It is not easy finding a suitable boy for arranging marriages for girls who are highly qualified. I suppose they will find their own husbands."

Rajshree

"The girls are doing very well. Boys also but it was not the norm for girls to study and pursue careers. Very often the girls outshine the boys. Within a short period in my own lifetime I have witnessed really great changes in the roles and achievements made by women. They travel around the world on their own, can go anywhere and there is no use parents worrying about them. They know how to take care of themselves and not get into difficulties. They are as good as the boys, often even better. Sometimes you feel sorry for the boys."

Oona "Most of my grandchildren happen to be girls. They are very ambitious. All want to study overseas. I do not know how my children will help finance the studies. I will do what ever I can. They are such bright girls".

Bahar

Yes, girls are very career minded. Life is different now. Girls too need to be educated and work for themselves. But housework is also important. All girls must know something about house keeping. They are women and will have to make a home, although majority of women it seems will work. Young girls are travelling and living alone in foreign lands as students. They are confident because of the broad experience that they acquire.

TABLE VI.8
VISIBLE WOMEN AGED 35 TO 55 YEARS

Religion	Locality		Other	Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Christian	4	1		Chinese-1, Franco Mauritian-2, General Population-1
Hindu	1	1	1	
Muslim	1	1		

The Christian group comprised an academic, an administrator, a housewife and a consultant. The Hindu group comprised President of Village Council, municipal councillor, a civil servant- administrator; and two middle management employees of parastatal organizations. It included Bhojpuri, Tamil speaking and Telegu speaking. The Muslim group comprised one political agent and a doctor.

THE MAINSTREAM FINDINGS

1. There has been an expansion of educational opportunities. Support of parents, particularly father a very central factor in pushing girls to study.

Doris

Doris is an academic. She completed her tertiary studies in Europe. **Doris** maintains that the feminist movement in Mauritius is different from Europe. Mauritian feminist movement was limited. Education opportunities for women are greatly improved now. Although Doris came from a very humble working class background, her father supported her very strongly to study and the family made great sacrifices to see that Doris had a first class education. Doris went to one of the best educational institutions (private) and won a scholarship for tertiary studies.

Ranjeeta

“Women are better educated. Compared to my mother's generation, women of my age group are really better off. My parents educated all of us, the girls even though my mother was a stay home person. My father was very supportive of education for girls”.

Jessica

“One Big difference between me and my mother and women of my grandmothers generation is education. The differences are even more stark with tertiary education. Tertiary Education acquired overseas naturally has made me more confident of my self. Staying on your own in a foreign country changes you. My mother and grandmother were cocooned within the home environment.

Rehana

There is no doubt that there is a big difference in educational attainment and the difference will continue to grow. I only studied up to form five. My parents were living in the rural area and in many ways I think I was more privileged compared other girls my age of my community. My family would have encouraged me to study more but I also had to get married and after marriage there were other priorities. But now I intend to continue with my education if my health permits.

Faiqa

Faiqa is a physician with specialization is paediatrics. "Between 1968 and 1976 (fee secondary education) parents at the lower salary scale were still confronted with the dilemmas who to send for secondary schooling. The preference was usually given to the one who would be the key breadwinner. The girls were anyway going to be married off at a fairly young age. However, girls did become breadwinners with the expansion of the EPZ in the 1980's, compared to the boys with education who could not find white collar jobs." Faiqa's stated that her mother was forced to leave school by her great grandparents even though the nuns at the school requested that she be allowed to continue with her studies.

But Faiqa had the support of her parents, particularly her father who worked very hard to get all his children educated.

Amba

"Although my mother was not so well off, we all managed to study and find good jobs. There was a lot of solidarity among us brothers and sisters. My mother worked very hard to see us through secondary school. Tertiary education was not possible. We did not even think about it."

1. WOMEN NOW MANAGE BOTH HOME AND WORK

Rehana

"Women are over loaded with work. This is not fair. There should be help available to the women. I thank god that my husband is understanding and progressive in outlook."

Faiqa

"Facilities should be given to women in terms of sharing of household chores and child rearing"

Ranjeeta

"Women are basically the ones to take care of the house. Once you are inside the home, then no one is interested in your day at the office. Things have to be done at home. In this respect, I cannot say that my husband did not help. We are a small family and I have only one child. My daughter is in Secondary school now. But I generally observe that for most women, they have to pull the dual burdens themselves. And you know how it is with maids these days."

Amba

It is difficult to manage both home and work these days as maids are becoming very scarce. Women have to consider early retirement in order to look after the family. Whether it is one's own parents or grandchildren.

2. ***WOMEN ARE MORE CONFIDENT OF THEMSELVES BUT MEN DO NOT SEEM TO WELCOME THIS VERY MUCH***

Ranjeeta

"Women have changed. They are confident of themselves, earn good salaries and are doing so many things, both at the home, the community and at the office. But in the home, a woman is just the housewife who must account to the husband. Men have not changed. They still think that women have to be controlled and managed."

Rehana

"I have observed that most men try to control their wives. But times have changed. Women are not ignorant. If a woman can work and be trusted in the office, why not at home too."

3. Relations between men and women have not changed greatly. Men have not changed very much. Women have.

Ranjeeta

"In my experience, relations between men and women have not changed very much. They may even have deteriorated instead. All that the men are interested in is the money women earn! Men have not changed very little but Women have changed a lot. Men still relate to women as their fathers related to their mothers. And if the women asserts herself, they just sulk or get lost in a world of their own."

Faika

Regarding the process of gender interaction, there has been and there is still a big gap between the educated and non-educated groups. I have a better insight within the Muslim community. Schematically, for men with religious and secular education, the respect for mothers and wives from the male counterpart is harmonious with a high degree of understanding, appreciation and tolerance. For those with religious and poor secular education, the real essence of their religion is substantially missed (many confine religion to merely rituals) and although there is no gender abuse, there is no convergent vision. Male domination is felt but not opposed. For those with neither religious nor secular education, they have no reference and male attitudes towards the female counterpart are chaotic. The difference within the Muslim community across the generations lies in the fact that more and more women are exposed to the real essence of Islam and to more secular education, opening a wide learning vistas and therefore more and more

tendency to towards the first category. In general there is a greater move towards spirituality meaning the high role of women as prescribed.”

Women’s have mixed feelings about abortion. There is on the one hand the feeling that abortion should be permitted as a practical solution to unwanted pregnancy emanating from rape or incest and also in cases of severe deformity while others fear that abortion will make women less responsible and instead of liberating women, chain them to men.

Rehana

“I think there is sufficient ground to open up abortion. Of course it must be carefully regulated and monitored. I personally am against ABORTION. I SEE IT AS A CRIME.”

Faiqa

Faiqa fears that abortion will make women less responsible with respect to contraception. Even for cases of rape, early reporting can eliminate the onset of pregnancy.

Ranjeeta

Abortion should be made available to women. Let us face the truth. When women are in a difficult situation, then they will have recourse to abortion. It is the poor women who suffer the most from the restrictive laws. The well off is able to afford the secrecy.

Doris

Most of my religious groups are against abortion. But I feel some change is needed in the law.

Jessica

I am not married but I think that in cases of difficulties it should be made available to women in a decent and humane manner. It does not mean that there should be uncontrolled access. Prevention of unwanted pregnancy should remain the focus of reproductive health through family planning methods. Abortion should not be used as a method of family planning but as a solution to an extreme situation.

THE KEY SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN MAURITIAN SOCIETY ARE ALCOHOLISM, CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Rehana

“There is too much stress in society. Everyone for some reason or the other feels stressed and this affects his or her health both physically and mentally. Both in my family and my parental family, there are no alcoholics. But there are problems of alcohol in my community even if the religion forbids it. There are other problems too. There are many couples having marital difficulties. I have observed

that when women marry outside their values and class, there is difficulty in adaptation. If the wife is well educated, the husbands develop a complex and start exerting control. I have seen so much of this in my family and community. When the men are professionals, even they submit to such behaviour. Perhaps it is due to stress at work, also in my community, there is some fundamentalism coming up. This affects the position and happiness of women in the family. As a community oriented person, I see marital breakdown in other communities too as I interact with women from all communities. Women cannot sit at home these days and men need to be more supportive and open."

Ranjeeta

There is a lot of stress. I do not know why. I find marriages so empty. Not only do I speak from my experience but also I see so many women having similar problems. Husband and wife instead of growing closer together and developing strong friendships live like strangers in their own homes.

VISIBLE WOMEN

TABLE VI.9
VISIBLE WOMEN AGED ≤34 YEARS

Religion	Locality	Other		Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Christian	2		1*	*Rodrigues
Hindu	2	1		
Muslim	1	1		

THE PROFILE

The Christian group comprised two university students, one Rodriguan Civil servant; The Hindu group comprised a youth officer, (single) a civil servant and a professional.

The Muslim group comprised a professional. married.

THE MAINSTREAM RESPONSES

1. Better Education - A world of difference between the younger cohort of women and the older cohorts.

The respondents in the mainstream maintained that their mothers and grandmothers had very little of education and generally were discouraged from studying. This reality did not apply to their generation as parents

supported and encouraged girls to study in contemporary society. The support of father was particularly mentioned by the young women.

2. *BETTER AND VARIETY OF FACILITIES*

The young visible group mainstream responses indicate that the younger respondents were aware that they had better facilities and opportunities compared to their mothers and grandmothers. The younger generation of women socialise more on their own with their friends. They can go out alone. The families are better off and the homes have modern gadgets for cooking, cleaning, washing etc. Their mothers tended to spend all their time in household activities and looking after the children even when the children are grown up.

3. *BETTER JOB OPPORTUNITIES*

Younger women are aware that the young women have a wider choice with job opportunities and it is taken for granted that they will have a job and work. Their mothers had limited choices and for most part it was expected that they will not work outside the home. In the mainstream the younger women had mothers who stayed at home. But one respondents' mother was engaged in the family business (shop) and another respondent stated that her mother was a primary school teacher.

4. *BETTER SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT*

The mainstream responses of the young Visible group were that parents listened to the daughters and give them a lot more freedom to do activities by themselves compared to women of the previous generational cohort. Parents did not favour the boys too much as in the past. The respondents did not feel that their parents discriminated against them unfairly. In any case they felt that they could talk to their parents if they felt that parents were discriminating against them on grounds of gender. Their mothers could not argue with parents.

5. *BETTER LEGAL FRAMEWORK THAT PROVIDES FOR EQUALITY*

Respondents were aware that the legal framework provides for equal treatment under law and were even aware of human rights. The young educated women are informed about the legal provisions. The younger invisible group of young women did not mention human rights although they mentioned that the laws of the country have been amended to be more fair to women.

6 *DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING*

The young Visible group stated that their mothers and grandmothers interpreted life and all realities almost always from a religious perspective. Religion was important to this group but not all pervading. They did not relate everything to religion and felt that compared to their mothers, they were more practical and scientific in their approach to living realities and problems of life. Religious institutions played a greater role in the lives of their mothers and grandmothers, but economic institutions and organised leisure play a greater role in the lives of the younger generation of women compared to religious institutions.

One key different way of thinking between younger unmarried and older cohorts of women is that younger women were not very marriage and housework oriented. The change that has occurred over time reflects that women needed to develop themselves and become capable of earning their living. Marriage should follow after that. Also, the young unmarried women asserted that housework could not be just the woman's responsibility and were optimistic about expecting that their future husbands will help in the housework. However the experience of married women from all cohorts reflected that in most cases men did not contribute to housework on a regular basis. Women still carry the burden, be it in the past or the present

The in-depth interviews also brought out differences with respect to role women play in maintaining social relations. The younger visible women had more social relationships outside the kinship system. The older generation of women contributed more to the maintenance of kinship ties and was expected to be self-sacrificing in their efforts to sustain good relations, particularly with in-laws. It was their duty. The younger cohort of women presented a different thinking. They have less time, particularly for personal visits. Telephones are used by younger women to maintain contacts with family (and friends). Modern technology has in a way facilitated the communication but the contact is distanced. Women from older cohorts used both phone and personal contact to sustain kinship ties and considered it rude to send invitations by phone and post for important kinship and family events. The impact of technology on kinship maintenance activities needs to be explored. The younger cohort of women did not exhibit self-sacrificing thinking. Fair play was the guiding criteria.

7 VIEWS ON ABORTION

Younger generation of women feel that abortion should be legalized and stated the Mauritian laws were '*outdated and ridiculous! Nearly everyone is doing it!*'

TABLE VI.10
VISIBLE MEN AGED ≥ 56 YEARS

Religion	Locality		Other	Remarks
	Urban	Rural		
Hindu			1*	*Rodrigues
Christian				
Muslim				

Profile

Hindu. Long term Civil Servant. Head of NGO. No = 2 Civil Servant. Head of Services

Christian. Academic: No = 1

Muslim. Professional: No = 1

THE MAINSTREAM FINDINGS

1. Education

The mainstream answers of this group reflect that education is the key difference between women of the earlier generations and the present generation. Progressively, women are obtaining more and more of education. Education has had the effect of transforming the lives of women.

Jean Pierre "It is strongly evident that the women of my generation had less education compared to the younger cohort of women. Speaking of my community (Franco Mauritian) Women of my mothers' generation and of my generation went to school and there was an expectation that after few of having completed schooling, the girls will marry and settle down to the life of looking after the home and raising children. Parents in my community became anxious and made certain that their children socialized with their peers, facilitating their chances of meeting up with suitable persons. There was not much interest in sending women for University education. In fact the academically inclined girls were considered to be the odd ones. There were girls who went for tertiary education but few of them returned to Mauritius after their studies. They usually ended up staying away from Mauritius. Women of my age group were given little encouragement to pursue careers. Moreover, it is wrong to think that all members of the Franco Mauritian Community are well off. In the past, there has to be a choice to be made between a boy and a girls in a family, the boy would get the chance, even if the

girl may have been academically more deserving. Things are changing now and it is different for the younger generation of women. Some families may still try to favour the males but it would be very difficult.”

Ram

No doubt that if there is one change that is evident in Mauritius is that today you find women are better educated. Generally most women in my generation and mother’s generation lived in poverty and it was not easy for parents to afford education. But social attitudes and norms were also different. Women were not expected to work if they made a good marriage. All parents hoped that their daughters would not have to work as only poor women worked. A few Indian families were well off enough to have their daughters educated. Now the situation is different. Today parents understand the value of education and try to educate all their children, both boys and girls. However, the real break through came when we were able to provide family planning services. As long as fertility remained high people could not really link up how women could work. The real change came with family planning that had a ripple effect on the norms and values concerning women and their role in society.

2. *EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY*

Thirty years ago, you could tell the kind of society we were living in by just observing the presence of women in the employment sector. Thirty years later, the presence of women is visible everywhere and it becomes evident that women have progressed and living in a modern society.

Ram

"Women could not have entered the world of work without achieving fertility control. Fertility control should be regarded as the main factor that contributed to the improvement in the life of women. It helped to reduce poverty, improved the health of women and by liberating women from a life of incessant child rearing, facilitated their entry into the workforce. Once they were able to get out of the house, the world opened up. It is a pity that the contribution of reproductive health organizations is under acknowledged by social scientists studying the development and progress of women in Mauritius.”

Jean Pierre

“The presence of women is evident in all occupations and professions it is normal to see women working in all walks of life now. It was not like that for women in the earlier generations. Women in my community were expected to look after the home and children once they married. It is not that women did not work at all. Some women worked, usually as secretaries or teachers. But it was understood that only those who were needy continued to work after marriage and birth of children. They could have had some activities that brought them some income but

generally women of my age group and my mother's age cohort refrained from employment. Somehow women my community has been slower in marking their presence among the professional groups in Mauritius. Those who first made their presence were expatriates married to the men from my community. There were some women belonging to my age cohort who won scholarships or otherwise went for tertiary education. Most of them did not return, they settled overseas. However, looking at the younger generation, two income earners are a norm and the stay home wife who dependent on the husband is a now the odd one. In all the friends and family I know, the wives are working, either in a job or they have a business of their own. They do something to earn their own money. This is now welcomed and accepted. It does not really create a problem for child rearing as the family support system is there and the welfare of children is not jeopardized."

SOCIAL CONTACTS AND FRIENDSHIPS FOR WOMEN WERE VERY LIMITED AND RESTRICTED

The older cohort of women is presented as being very limited in their social contacts and friendships. Their movements were very controlled by men and mothers in law. They were confined to the home and all their recreation and activities were linked to the home. The life styles of younger women are very different. They socialize and have their own leisure activities which are not necessarily home based.

Ram

Family planning not only facilitated the entry of women into the formal employment sector but it also widened women's social networks. Women had contacts not only with other women as friendships developed at the place of work, but it also helped women find outlets and escape from unhappy and unsatisfactory marriage relationships. Women too could find meaningful relations with members of the opposite gender, something which was not very possible for women bound to the some and surrounded by family and kinship.

Jean Pierre

"Women from my age cohort and the former cohorts socialized only within the family and community. Their circle of friends was limited. Today's generation of men and women have a wider range of social contacts and friendships, which are not confined to the same community. One of the reasons that this evolution is happening is that a lot of the recreation and leisure is also conducted outside the home setting. Also there is happily a greater awareness among my community that they need to open up, if not for other reasons, simply for their own sake. Inter marriages are beginning to take place. This was not possible in the past."

ABORTION

In the mainstream, this group of respondents supported change in laws related to abortion.

Ram

My views concerning abortion are no secret. It is high time that a logical and sensible decision is taken to legalize abortion. It is unfair to women. Women should be given the choice of not to bring into the world an unwanted child. The abortion issue should be declined from religious debates.

Jean Pierre

“Well, one has to take a practical and realistic stand. Abortion should be permitted in some cases, for instance when it is known that the child will be born with severe abnormalities.”

PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY

This group felt that marital disharmony and breakdown plus alcohol misuse were threatening the well being of Mauritian Society and the quality of social fabric.

Ram

“There is too much of alcoholism in Mauritian Society. There is the problem of ageing and growing generation gap. There is a growing risk of HIV AIDS.”

Jean Pierre

Marriages are becoming less stable. One hears a lot about Divorce and separation among younger couples. People are less religious and young people rarely even go to Church. In the past, community would come down very strongly against individuals who divorced. This is not the case now. It is now becoming accepted that a marriage may not last for life. All this creates unhappiness and instability.”

Jean Pierre

“It has now become quite a common thing to hear about difficulties among couples. In my time there was a very strong social disapproval of marital infidelity and individuals who divorced faced some sort of social sanctions, for example at Church level and also such persons would be struck off on invitations for dinners and so forth. It is not to say that such things did not happen in the past, but it was not common. People go to church less these days so I guess that people think less in terms of religious values.”

TABLE V.11

VISIBLE – MALE -AGED 35-55 YEARS

The Profile

Christian	Hindu	Muslim
Activist and entrepreneur 1 civil servant Rodrigues	Trade Unionist Politician Councillor Professional	Civil Servants

MAINSTREAM FINDINGS**1. Education - The dividing line**

Education is the key factor that differentiates women of the post and pre-independence decades and transformed life of women.

Dalip Women of my mother's age were deprived of educational opportunities. This affected their development and confidence in themselves but never the less; intelligent women managed their families well. If today we were able to inherit some property, it is thanks to the management and efforts of my mother.

Shiek

Women of my mother's generation had little education. My sister's generation is better educated and the younger generation of women have even more opportunities. This naturally explains the differences.

Joe

Women of my mother's generation did not benefit from education. It was not the norm. Anyway, people did not also have the means.

Man

Women in Rodrigues still have limited opportunities to study. In the past, they neither had the means, nor the motivation and also there was not much importance given to education by both men and women. But now, a girl knows that her chances of getting a good husband are increased if she is educated and has the ability to work. Rodriguean girls who go and live in Mauritius, and return with some qualifications know very well that *they increase their chances of getting a good husband. Men are not interested in marrying girls with poor education.*

Sunny

The women of my mother's generation lived in poverty and had little opportunity to develop themselves. Secondary education had to be paid for. Families gave less importance to the education of women. Even my sisters received less education than us brothers. But today it is very different. Peoples attitudes have changed and it has become necessary that women be educated and work. It is not possible to rely on one income alone to run a family. Women are more open and confident and friendly.

2. ***WOMEN HAVE MANY FACILITIES NOW THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE IN THE PAST***

Sunny

Women have many facilities. Some women are still excluded but in general, life has changed. The quality of life is different. There is more money available. Health services and shops are also readily accessible.

Shiek

A woman's life was quite hard for women of my mother's generation. They were also very much controlled. Had to seek permission for anything they wanted to do. Most of the time they lived in the shadows of men.

Women are not restricted to stay in the home. They can do any work as long as they have the qualifications.

Dalip

Women now have a lot of facilities of all types. Modes of life have changed.

3. ***MEN RESPECT WOMEN MORE NOW BECAUSE WOMEN ARE EDUCATED AND EQUALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND AWARE OF THEIR RIGHTS.***

Sunny

It is an individual thing. Some men do respect women; there are some that do not.

Deepak

Definitely men respect women more than they did in the past. They are careful of the way they talk of women and talk to women.

Shiek

Men and woman have similar qualifications and thus do similar jobs. They do respect women more. Women will not accept any type of treatment from men now like they did in the past. Women of my mother's generation learnt to submit and talked to women in a very authoritarian way. This does not exist. Today, it is not uncommon to see that in many families, the woman is the boss- '*femme kî mari!*'

Joe

"I think that men respect women the same as they did in the past. Even if a woman talks arrogantly, we know it is only a ventilation of emotions. A momentary thing. Where will women go? In the end, she has to submit and stay. Men are aware that there is a surplus of women."

Dalip

"I feel that men do respect women more and women have proved it. In my experience, if my mother did not manage well (although she was not very educated) my father's actions would have brought us ruin. It is my mother who

managed to save us and when I see examples like this, I see there is no reason for men not to respect women more than they respect their own gender.”

4. ***‘CHILDCARE CAN BE BOUGHT, IT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR A WOMAN TO STAY HOME.’***

Dalip

“The reality is that even if a woman wants to stay home she cannot. She needs to work to earn for the family. Women can continue to work as long as there is family support available for childcare. Staying close to the extended family is also important as this facilitates women to stay on in the job. And grandparents take good care of the children. This is my experience. My wife even earns more than me. It would just not be possible that she gives up a good job just to stay home to look after the children. If nothing else were possible, then that would have been a last option.

5 ***ABORTION***

The findings from the in-depth interviews reflect that men too have missed feeling about abortion, which are based on their personal views and life experience and not religious affiliation.

Jean Pierre feeling that the laws should be changed to provide some flexibility for those extreme situations like deformity and rape.

Joe stated that he did not favour abortion. (Joe rarely goes to church) He said it was nothing to do with religion but his own views.

Shiek feels that unwanted and unloved children should not be brought to this world to live a life of misery and rejection

Darun also supports legalization of abortion. More men supported abortion in this group.

6. ***PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY***

The in depth interviews show that men too feel that there are many social problems in Mauritian Society. Men were concerned with unemployment, but more than that, problems of alcohol and drug abuse were stated. Also men stated that individuals in modern Mauritius show less respect for each other as humans and fellow citizens than in the past.

7. *GENDER RELATIONS*

Joe

‘Men consult their spouses and family on important decisions and allow women a lot of leeway with respect to household matters. Some men do not but the same can be said of women.’

‘In many families, women are the boss. In the past also there were such cases but it is more frequent now. Many women want to be the boss.’

‘Men respect women in the same way as they did in the past. Women who are intelligent, have good manners and conduct themselves with dignity are respected. It is possible that we have more of such women so one could say that men respect more women. It is essentially an individual trait. If a woman is the boss at work, one is forced to show respect.’

Dalip

“There is more friendship between men and women. I think that now that women are allowed to have education and equal facilities, they have developed self-confidence and will entertain a conversation with a male other than her close relatives. Women of my mothers generation did not speak to men and strangers out of fear and shyness. I think men welcome this change.”

TABLE VI.12
VISIBLE MALES AGED ≤34 YEARS

Christian	Hindu	Muslim
1 Legal Profession	1 Youth Officer 1 Computer Scientist	1 Civil Servant 1 student

MAINSTREAM FINDINGS

Compared to the other cohorts, this group demonstrated a more changed thinking about women. The key changes are

1 EDUCATION AND SELF DEVELOPMENT

Rohan

“There is a big difference between my mother and girls of my mothers generation. My mother's whole life revolved around the home and my father and the kitchen. And she imposed this on my sister. But this does not work like this. Girls of my generation do not think about the kitchen. My fiancé is a professional and I do not

expect her to be tied to the kitchen. In any case she only knows how to boil an egg. But I am not marrying a cook. I will cook. I like cooking.”

Akbar

“There is a big difference between my mother and girls my age. We cannot compare. They lived in a different time and we live in a different time now. The cultures are different. The home is the responsibility of both men and women now. Men cannot expect that women come home from work and do every thing. My mother was not highly educated. I come from a modest family. As I have no sisters, we boys helped my mother in the house. My mother is housebound. I do not expect that my wife will be confined and controlled like my mother. But I am conservative in the manner that I expect my wife to tell me where she goes and if I am not happy about it, not to overlook that.”

Chris

“Women in the previous generations were less educated so knew less and that made them less confident of them selves. But the girls today they are very knowledgeable. They know more than the men. From here on one can work out what had happened over the years.”

2 *WOMEN AND WORK. SHOULD WOMEN WORK, PARTICULARLY WHEN CHILDREN ARE YOUNG*

All men agreed that women should be allowed to work if they wanted to. It was their choice and it is also the norm to do so. It is also their right. There is a big difference in the thinking of visible and invisible men aged 34 years and less. The invisible group of responses indicated that women should stay at home.

Rohan

“My mother or hers will help to look after the children. It is not necessary to give up work. Women too have an important contribution to make professionally, not just in the home. I love children and I will help.”

Akbar

“We are talking Ideally. If it is possible for women to stay home when the children are young, then it is a good thing for all. Yes, I think with a bit of help from family, work and home both can be managed and women do not have to give up work. However, children do need a lot of love and care and if there are difficulties, then it is best that for some time that the mother looks after the children, particularly when the children are very young. I feel that the mother will do a better job in the early years of raising a child than man. “

3 GENDER RELATIONS

The findings from the young invisible indicate that giving respect to women was an individual matter. Could not give stereotypes. Some women, like some men deserved respect, others did not.

This is an indication that educated young men did not hold strong stereotypes about women. Compared to the male invisibles that stated that men do not respect women, this group comparatively gave a different view.

4 ABORTION

Overall, this group was reticent on the issue of abortion. In the first instance, the answers were well; it was not right but on reflection stated that some difficult situations demanded a solution.

5 PROBLEMS IN MAURITIAN SOCIETY

Problems mentioned by all were alcoholism, corruption in society. There is too much hypocrisy. 'Mauritians are great hypocrites. We are always out to put on a show and every thing is acceptable as long as it gets one what they want.'

F. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS DERIVED FROM INDEPTH INTERVIEWS

EDUCATION

All respondents stated that there has been a great change with respect to attitude and facilities for education. The attitude change that has taken place is that parents consider education to be as *important for boys as for girls*.

In the pre-independence era facilities were limited. Moreover, parent's attitudes discriminated in favour of boys. Both due to lack of facilities and social attitudes, education was not considered to be as important for girls as for boys. Individuals of all categories acknowledge that education has contributed towards the development of women in Mauritius.

HEALTH

Through the in-depth interviews, respondents did not always come forward in highlighting the changes in health status. They seemed to take it for granted in stating that women have many facilities and that people live longer. A minority of persons stated that people ate badly now even if they were better off and therefore the future generation may not have such a long life expectancy. Majority maintained that for most part, the older generation of women were raised in poverty and had many children but few facilities. Even getting a simple medication like aspirin was problematic for women living in rural area.

Feelings about abortion are mixed. There is a fear on the one hand that if abortion is legalized it will be used indiscriminately and will make people less responsible in their reproductive health behaviour. On the other hand, the need to change the very restrictive legislation is recognized. The lower the educational and economic status of men, the greater was the resistance to liberalizing abortion. Men voiced greater resistance to abortion than women. They did not see it as simply a women's issue. Religion perspective did not act as an obstruction for those who supported liberalization of abortion. It included members from the catholic community.

EMPLOYMENT

Both men and women from different walks of life are aware that there has been a change in the economic activities of women. Women are found to be working in a variety of jobs. This was not the reality thirty years ago. It is now accepted that "becoming economically self reliant is important for both boys and girls. There is a shift in attitude that marriage is the destiny for girls. The goal of economic self-reliance now precedents marriage although marriage is still considered to be among the primary goals for a girl and her ultimate destiny. Most groups welcome this change except men with low education and unskilled occupations who while acknowledging that evolution has brought a diversity of employment opportunities for women, stated that it was preferable for women not to take up employment.

Attitudes towards employment of married women are more positive than negative. More respondents considered employment to be a positive development for women than those who considered it to be a negative outcome. Those who favoured women's employment tended to assume that there is the family (grandparents) available to provide child care support to their working daughters/daughters-in-law. Older cohort of women expressed concern over young women's ability to combine work and childcare in the future as the present cohort of working women were benefiting from parental support (mostly mothers)

for childcare because the present cohort of grandmothers belong to, for most part, to a generation of stay home women. But the younger employment tended to assume that there is the family (grandparents) available to provide childcare support to their working daughters/daughters-in-law. Older cohort of women expressed concern over young women's ability to combine work and childcare in the future as the present cohort of working women were benefiting from parental support (mostly mothers) for childcare because the present cohort of grandmothers belong to, for most part, to a generation of stay home women.

Family (grandparents) available to provide childcare support to their working daughters/daughters-in-law. Older cohort of women expressed concern over young women's ability to combine work and childcare in the future as. The present cohort of working women were benefiting from parental support (mostly mothers) for childcare because the present cohort of grandmothers belong to, for most part, to a generation of stay home women. But the younger cohorts will have grandmothers who are also likely to be in the formal labour force and there fore, intergenerational solidarity for childcare support was stated to be 'unsustainable'. Working couples. Acknowledged parental support for childcare.

Some mention was also made of the crèches and day care facilities. In general, the Christian community was more supportive of women going out to work. Men with low education were most resistant to women working outside the home. They want women to stay home and look after the home. Further, these respondents also maintain that there is a lot of work to be done in the house. The image that a stay home wife has a lot of free time does not hold. There fore housework is not regarded as an inferior occupation for women by those who support the view that married women should give primary importance to the home and avoid not employment outside home.

EQUALITY

Women have greater independence and freedom. In the past women were confined to the home, had to be economically dependent on men and occupied a subordinate position within family and society. As a result, women were shy and submissive Women did not talk very much

Younger generation of women are very assertive compared to their mothers and grandmothers.

The younger generation of women do not want to be financially dependent on their husbands where as women of their mother's generation accepted the financial dependency. The attitudes are very different.

MORE INTERACTION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS COUPLES

The younger generation of women are considered to be more social (friendly) compared to women of the older cohorts who converse in a very limited way with men. Women belonging to the older cohort were too shy to converse with men.

Women today go out to work. Their social horizons have widened. Families are generally of the nuclear type and there is more freedom of interaction among the couples.

GREATER ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND LEISURE

Both men and women have greater access to information and leisure but women have experienced more change.

Women in the older cohort did not have much leisure activities and they also did not have television. Younger generation of women, particularly those aged below 25 years have a lot of leisure activities and '*distractions*'. The going out to '*discos*' is not welcomed by the older generation of women and men who feel that young persons can come to harm from such social activities.

Women in Rodrigues stated that there was a big difference in the leisure activities for women in Mauritius compared to Rodriguan women. Women in Rodrigues had very limited facilities for leisure and '*distraction*'.

MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY

The qualitative data reveals that people feel that alcoholism, family breakdown and poor child caring are some of the key problems affecting Martian society and feel that in some way these developments are related to the development process and change in gender relations.

RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

The in-depth interviews have revealed different types of experiences of men. Grass roots men feel that they are being marginalized as a result of the changes that have occurred in the living realities of women. Men experienced women as controlling and confrontative and seek accountability from men.

Both men and women stated that men respect women more than they did in the past. At least in the manner of speech. The younger generation of men does not talk to women in a dominating manner. They address women more as equals

than as subordinates. The younger generation of women will not accept men addressing them as if they were subordinates. Educated women also experienced men as withdrawing into themselves and distancing themselves from spouses if women assert themselves too much. Women have to learn to give in.

Educated men believe that women deserve equal rights and privileges but also maintain that men and women are not equal or similar. Men do not appreciate women imitating male behaviour and older generation of women also feel that women and men are different and women should not behave like men.

Men do not feel that they are inferior to women. Many women still feel that men are naturally superior.

G. THE FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

FOCUS GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

These included:

- A. An all men focus group comprising of leaders and interlocutors. (Half-day workshop discussions)
- B. A woman's focus group (half day discussions) comprising women leaders and interlocutors.
- C. Grass roots women - domestic workers, agricultural labourers and housewives.
- D. Focus group comprising of male and women leaders and interlocutors in Rodrigues.

The objective of the qualitative data collection was to obtain information on how the change and evolution in status and conditions of women has affected gender relations between men and women across different walks of life. Also, to obtain information on some of the key changes that have occurred and how welcomed and accepted the changes are with respect to gender relations.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

THE FINDINGS FROM THE MALE FOCUS GROUPS - VISIBLE

Remarks about the focus group

The interaction among the male

Number of participants: Twelve.

Age group: middle age to late middle age

Interaction amongst members was fairly uniform. Only one member refrained from speaking at the focus group. Despite interventions to involve this one member, the individual remained aloof. (The member belongs to the Indo-Mauritian community and has an intensive international exposure to population and gender issues. This member was more preoccupied with the objectives of the study rather than tune in to the objectives of the focus group meeting.)

The conclusions on the evolution of gender relations, the experience and perception of the male 'visible' (which includes a media professional) were; **'women have come a long way with respect to education, lifestyles, changes in legal status and economic conditions.'** In the opinion of the focus group members it includes,

“Yes the conditions and situation of women has changed in many ways and it is a good thing in many ways.”

Women should be educated and be economically self reliant if possible.

A different opinion expressed was that *'actually little had changed'*.

“Finding a good husband/match for the girl is still a central issue. If it means that to get a good match for a girl today means that the girl has to be educated and having a job, then be it so. I come from a large rural family. When my eldest sister got married, it was then a norm that the woman will have to stay at home and look after the house so she was made to follow courses in needlework and domestic science as these skills in home care would raise her chances of getting a better match. But situation changed very quickly. By the time it was the turn to find a match for the youngest daughter, my father had already adapted to the changed demands of the marriage matchmaking system. In just within a decade, educated working girls were valued and stood a better chance of getting a superior match compared to a poorly educated girl who would be home bound. So my youngest sister received education.” No disagreement expressed by members over this statement. The conclusions that are to be drawn are;

- (a) Finding a good husband remains a key concern for parents of girls.
- (b) The focus group participants were of the opinions that generally this reality could not be denied or overlooked although it was becoming more important to ensure that girls become economically self reliant in the first place so that they do not have to depend on anyone for their livelihood. Marriage should come after that.
- (c) As the institution of marriage has become less stable and durable, it is important that girls be provided with the training and skills needed to become economically self-sustaining.

ATTITUDES OF MALES TOWARDS WORKING IN AN ENVIRONMENT WITH WOMEN AS COLLEAGUE'S SUPERIORS

The views expressed were that men did not mind the presence of women at the work place. A few members were very vocal in stating that they welcomed the presence of women. But there were many that were silent on the issue and resisted interaction.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS HAVING WOMEN AS THEIR HEAD AT PLACE OF WORK

Discussion issue. What are your views about having women as colleagues in the workplace and about having women as your boss/superiors?

In the views of the members, it depended on the human qualities of the person. Some women are very good and effective heads and leaders, while others are not. Few participants had experience of having worked under a woman as their head at the workplace. Experience was more at the level of having women as colleagues or subordinates. The interpretation that can be given to this attitude is that men from professional occupations do not hold stereotypes about women in the workplace. The indications are that as professionals they are objective and accepting. The alternative could also be that the members were cautious in forming or giving an opinion about a situation wherein they would be the subordinates of a woman. If group members were confident in their attitudes and views, they would have expressed their views very positively without any conditions attached (example making a statement that it did not matter what the gender was, it is primarily the human qualities that count) if they fully supported women's empowerment and equality. The fact that no negative views were expressed is hard to conclude. The presence of three professional women conducting the focus group may have been a constraint for expressing reluctance to work under women as their boss or superior.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Discussion issue. Now that women have equality, are women given same or greater respect both in the public and private domains.

The 'Visible' felt that really, it was hard to generalize whether men respected women more now in contemporary society than they did in the past. Thirty years ago, women had a subordinate legal status, had less education, had fewer opportunities for high status occupations and were more dependent on the males (husbands and fathers) for economic security. This changed situation provides greater equality between men and women. As a result, do men show greater respect for women? Does improved economic and legal status automatically result in increased respect for women by men? The discussions of the focus group reflect that there are no clear answers. However, just because a woman holds equal status with men or even higher status than men, the respect men accord to women is based on the behaviour and the kinds of messages the women gives out.

The realities expressed were as follows:

“ My mother was not a highly educated woman - she did not work outside home. But she actually managed us all, even my father. My father depended a lot on her for the wisdom and sought her advice on many important matters, including things that were not connected with the home. We all respected my mother and I think that this was generally true for most women who stayed home. They were respected because they were the mothers and wives. Education and wealth were not the criteria for giving this respect. Of course there were cases where some men did not treat their wives well. It happens all the time. But we were raised to respect women by being courteous and well behaved in the presence of women.’

Further, the participants of the focus group stated that when it comes to respecting a women, it is essentially the woman's behaviour as an individual that will determine whether a woman is respected or not, *“If she dresses provocatively and gives wrong signals, Well what to do? “* From the view point of the visible, the findings are that it is incorrect to assert that men respect women less than they did in the past, it is an individualized issue, depending very much on the behaviour of the woman.” *‘Many women give double messages. They invite the attention of men and at the same time play hard to get. They get what they deserve then. Do not blame the man’.*

The group was asked whether behaviour of young girls today was such that men found it difficult to respect them. The answer again was that *“it cannot be stereotyped. Some women are highly respected while others are not”. Some women are too arrogant and they then get what they deserve”.* As to being courteous towards women again the views expressed were that it depended on the woman. It is true that with the equality thing publicly, less courtesy is expressed towards women such as getting up to offer one's seat to a woman when travelling

in a public transport. It also depended on the education and socialization of the men. Some men are still very courteous while others are not.

The focus group participants were unanimous in expressing that things were not running smoothly in the family. They expressed that they were raised in families where their mother stayed home and did home based economic activities. (Livestock rearing, sewing, agriculture). The family managed to save. For most part, the mother managed the salary of the father. However, in contemporary society, it is the norm for both husband and wife to work "*I am not saying that the woman must do it, but someone has to look after the home and children! Someone must do it if the family is to function smoothly.*"

Nowadays, both husband and wife work. [But someone has to look after the children and the home].

What interpretation can be given to such statements?

It may be argued that one of the unintended outcomes of the evolution in gender relations and the improved status of women has been that the management and smooth running of the family has been jeopardized as a result of changing roles of men and women. If the family is weakened as a result of slow adaptation to change, then gender equality will not be sustainable if the finer values of life fail to be nurtured through the family and socialization process. It is possible that the evolution achieved through education equality of opportunity, equality '*Children must be reared in stable cultures*'. It is seen that while we have been quick to adapt to changes that bring in its wake economic gain, Mauritian Society (and indeed it is true for most societies) is reluctant to change the traditional role and functions of men and women within the family. The result is the well-understood role overburden for women. The focus group discussions bring out the fact that men like women to be intelligent, and well informed and educated, but display of assertive actions and behaviour by women are challenged and not accepted.

In the views of the male participants of the focus group, it is desirable that "women should stay home and look after the children, particularly when the children are small".

"Perhaps men too could share the Child raising but it should be mutually decided by the couple". Arrogance and assertiveness by women on account of their having equal rights will not resolve the problem.

MEN RESENT WOMEN WHO ARE ARROGANT AND ASSERTIVE?

The conclusion of the focus group (male) were that it is good that women have evolved from their secondary position and now have equal opportunity for education, work and equality before law. But some solutions must be found for the family. Men also need to be informed and educated. "*Perhaps we need a*

Ministry for Men". This sentence echoed by the focus group is often heard in many quarters of living in Mauritius.

What does this mean? One interpretation that can be given to this statement is that while policies have focused on social reform and empowerment of women, men have been excluded from the process of change as partners in the evolution. Little education/sensitisation has been directed towards men to explain why and how gender relations need to evolve. Men instead feel that they are targeted as perpetrators of inequality instead of being considered as partners in the process of evolution.

ANALYSIS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP

Indications are that professional men in Mauritius do not hold strong stereotypes about women with respect to there being co-workers or superiors in the workplace. Marriage is still considered to be the final destiny for the woman and as fathers; men seek to undertake that action which will facilitate a good marriage for the daughter. As the institution of marriage itself is becoming unstable (a good match may not last after all) it is becoming essential that women be educated and become economically self-reliant. There are a wide variety of about what jobs are suitable for women. However professional men are concerned about the quality of family life and childcare and feel that family life is being subjected to neglect. The men were cautious not to blame this state of affairs on women empowerment, stating diplomatically *'someone has to do the job.'* There were views stated were, *'ideally, when the children are small, they should be looked after by their mothers as the mother alone could provide quality care that infants and young children require.'*

FOCUS GROUPS - GRASS ROOTS MEN

Profile. Education. Incomplete. Primary. Occupation. Unskilled workers. Labourers.

Age range. 25 years. 45years

Number. Seven.

Ethnic/religious background. Hindu, Christian and Muslim.

The grass roots men were not very willing to talk on the subject and needed a lot of coaxing. They stated that gender issues did not concern them.

MAINSTREAM FINDINGS

Strong Stereotypes about women

Grass roots men have strong stereotypes about women. They are of the view that women have become very arrogant and assertive. And those men are being

marginalized. The women have their equality but do not talk to men with respect. They tend to order and command.

1. Disapprove of women working outside the home

The mainstream views of the members were that women should not go out to work. There was enough work for women to keep them busy in the home. A non mainstream view was that women get exploited at work and are at risk to all kinds of hazards such as exploitation of labour; sexual harassment;

It is only if there was no alternative (example that the husband failed to provide or that he was unwell or that the woman was a widow, only under such conditions was employment of women justified.

2. Strong views on women and childcare

Grassroots men maintain that women are better suited to looking after children. Childcare was not a man's job. Men could help but not take over the main responsibility. Men do help their wives with childcare and baby-sitting while the wife is busy in the kitchen.

3. Abortion

Mixed feelings on abortion. Morally the group stated that it was not right. But also conceded that it could not be helped at times.

Family planning should be the responsibility of women. Non-mainstream answers maintained that it was important that men too take their responsibility.

4. Gender Relations

Most men in this group stated that they would prefer to work under a male boss than a female. They concede that women could also do as well in politics as men.

Women should learn to talk to men with respect and learn to keep quiet at times.

Boys and girls were perceived as equals and the attitudes were that education was important for both boys and girls. Both genders are given an equal opportunity to develop themselves.

5 Problems in Society affecting men and women

The mainstream responses of the group were that poverty was a big problem. The rich were getting richer while the poor remained the same or got poorer.

There was too much family breakdown. People do not respect each other and there was a lot of corruption among people who hold power. Those without power are unable to do anything about it.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE FOCUS GROUPS

It is to be observed that the 'Invisible' group are at the lowest hierarchy of social-economic class. There prevailed a feeling powerless ness among the group. Even at the home front, they feel marginalized because women have been empowered. Thus the resistance to women working may be interpreted as an effort to maintain control at the micro level institutions. Also, this group of men have been less exposed to working environments where both men and women work so the chances of reinforcement of gender stereotypes remains strong in the absence of alternative experiences.

6.5.3 FINDINGS OF WOMEN'S' FOCUS GROUPS - THE VISIBLES

The findings of the women's focus group are different. First, the women interlocutor's **leaders**.

- There has been a vast improvement in the conditions and status of women. All members of the group were aware and convinced that legal reforms, free education and expansion of educational facilities together with economic progress have brought about a marked change in the conditions of women
- All the achievements have not led to a better quality of life for women. Women are over burdened by double and triple workloads. Women have changed, made adaptations to enter the world of work along sidemen, but there has been little change in men's behaviour and attitudes.
- The quality of family life has suffered and this affects women and their well-being.

THE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

"It is true that women have evolved as a result of increased educational opportunity, better legal status and increased participation in the labour force at all levels. However, at the end of the day, what they have got is more wealth, but greater burden from dual workloads and loneliness." One key participant who is a media person, leader of women organizations and has also been in politics stated, *"I see the future of women quite sad and bleak as women age. They are overburdened by on work, have poor marriage relations and as the children leave home, find themselves alone on their own with few friends and support. In many cases the husband may not even be there, the marriage is likely to have become dysfunctional if not ended up in divorce, separation or widowhood. So, can women have gained".* In the views of the focus group the conclusions are, *'If women have evolved economically, have they lost out socially and emotionally as a result of the economic progress.'* According to the visible focus group, the reality is *"We cannot really claim that women lives are better and that women are happier and better off than in the past, when they had fewer opportunities and facilities."*

The views of the focus group tend to indicate that the marital relationship is less happy than in the past, or at best just as unhappy. *“ Now that women have their own income to fall back on, men feel less committed to provide for the women. The quality of communication between men and women leaves much to be desired. In fact, families are not communicating very much these days, whether between husbands and wives or parents and children. It is not due to lack of time.”* One member asserted that *“I notice that women who worked as maids had long hours of work. They raised other people’s children and at the same time managed to keep close to their own children. They gave their children quality time.”* There were other explanations from the focus group on how this happened, such as the role of the extended family, but all members accepted this reality.

‘Men do not show care, affection and consideration to women. Women may be working, having equalled rights and financially secure, but most marriages are unhappy relationships. Women are making all the sacrifices. They are not enjoying life. They are always denying themselves in the effort to make everyone happy, particularly the husband. Ok, they derive satisfaction if the children do well. But what is their life, just a routine monotony in most cases. Women are not getting the emotional support from their husbands. There are exceptions, but in general it is becoming a sad reality.’

One group of members expressed the view that women primarily because of women’s efforts to limit their fertility have achieved the evolution and progress. *“Women made great sacrifices at personal costs sometime (like anger of husband) to achieve smaller families. It is the persistence and efforts of the women themselves, despite opposition, that enabled women to improve the economic circumstances of their families through small family size and later, as a result of small families, were able to contribute towards economic activity through participation in the labour force. If women had not adopted family planning - do you think she could have gone out to work?”* A member who has nearly thirty years in family planning made this statement. There was agreement in the group on the views stated.

In the views of the focus group members, ideally

“ It is best that women stay at home and look after the children when the children are small”.

The above view is a point of common agreement between both the men and women leaders and interlocutors.

“There should be some scheme to help women out financially when in child bearing phase. There should also be the opportunity for flexible working hours and part-time employment.”

The visible women focus group felt that Mauritian women have made great achievements in education and work. But the sad reality is *‘that women also tend to imitate the behaviour of men and become as insensitive if not more, to the needs of women. Women have their strength as carers also. This should not be forgotten. There is a fulfilment in raising a family well, which cannot be compared to any achievements made in the public and economic spheres of life. Women tend to forget this in their race towards equality and economic gain. Society should recognize the role women play in raising children and their contribution towards the making of the citizenship. It is because society overlooks this very important contribution and responsibility of women to the well being of society, thus marginalizing women's role in the social sphere.*

The focus group offered little by way of solutions on how the marginalisation could be overcome.

The data reflects that women in professional positions are facing stress in managing both home and work. Also, there is greater importance given to economic contributions to development and less to social development. Both social and economic development is essential and interdependent.

H. FINDINGS FROM THE RODRIGUAN FOCUS GROUP

AGE GROUP - YOUNG-3, MIDDLE AGE-2

The focus group from Rodrigues was very small, four women and one man. They are volunteers with the Rodriguan branch of the MFPA and represent the teaching and nursing professions. They can all be considered as visible because they are in positions to influence others and work for government.

According to the focus group discussions of the Rodriguan group.

There has been considerable change in the conditions of the population and it includes women and girls.

- More girls are going to school than they did in the past.
- But overall, the group felt that the island of Rodrigues had not achieved development comparable to Mauritius.
- There exists very little by way of leisure and recreation available to the Rodrigues, particularly women.
- Girls and women are still naïve and tend to easily get trapped by the sweet talk of men who may not necessarily be committed

- There is still a lot of poverty in Rodrigues. There are not enough jobs for both men and women.
- There has been a little improvement in the conditions of women with respect to domestic violence since the law came into force as the law to some extent now deters men.

The group discussions

“The average Rodriguan man does not respect the woman very much. Woman is considered to be inferior, fickle and naïve most cases. Women are not smart enough and it is easy for a man to fool them. Women need to be better educated and informed so that they are more vigilant. It is a pity to see how young school going girls just get carried away by the sweet talk of a male. There is too much gossip in society, which oppresses women because the gossip invariably focuses on woman. Women’s lives are still drudgery. There is a lot of domestic violence due to alcoholism and most of the time when women complained, the police would just tell the woman to go back and forget about it. The fact is that many policemen are known to beat their wives and tend to have extra-marital affairs. It is only now that they are paying more attention to complaints registered by women because of the efforts made by the Ministry. There is still a lot of poverty in Rodrigues. People are not well educated and there are not many jobs for both men and women.”

THE MALE MEMBER (A TEACHER) EMPHASIZED THAT

“There has to be a lot of education and counselling done for women, particularly young boys and girls if the conditions of girls are to improve. Young girls need to be made aware of their anatomy and value themselves as individuals instead of letting themselves be treated as sexual objects and becoming pregnant at a young age.’

The Rodriguan focus group felt that women had progressed as a result of the interventions and training provided by UNICEF and the Ministry of Women but they could not compare themselves with women in the Island of Mauritius who had, a lot of opportunities and ‘distraction’. (Leisure and recreation). Although Rodriguan women enjoy a good health status, the focus group felt that progress in education has been slow and women experience a lot of poverty and deprivation. *“The life of the women in Rodrigues is hard”.’ Most men do not show consideration for women. The burden of family and child raising falls on women. A lot of education and effort is required to change the attitudes of men.’*

GRASS ROOTS WOMEN

Members present. 35

Locality Black River.

Age group- mixed but dominance of middle aged.

Profile-The women labourers, factory workers and housewives.

Findings.

- There has been a marked change in the status and conditions of women over the last three decades. It's due to economic development, improvement of facilities and infrastructure as much as to education and employment facilities.
- Families have more money and goods of all kinds are easily available.
- Young women thirty years ago were very submissive before the male members of their families even if he was younger. Also women respected the elder's members in the family and had more respect for their mothers in law. The group was of the opinion that all this has changed and young girls of today are very assertive and do not give in. The views of the group are that girls are beginning to become very arrogant. Asked if this was a good thing, the response was that neither man or woman should be arrogant
- The group felt that lives of agricultural workers had not changed very much although there had been positive change with respect to salaries but also hostility point out that there is a rise in cost of living.
- It was a good thing that women worked but overtime is not a good thing as the family gets neglected. It is acceptable to a reasonable point if the women are not married. (For young girl)
- There is a growing problem in families because of use of alcohol. There is an absence of leadership which elderly people provided in the past but now young people do not like to live in extended families.
- Marriage is very important for girls but because these days it is difficult to guarantee the success of a marriage, it is desirable that women are given opportunity to learn to be self-reliant.
- The focus group discussions reflected that it was not out of conviction and belief in gender awareness that education and employment are seen as desirable, but rather as a practical approach to empowering girls to be prepared for life. However, younger women, who seemingly had more education, spoke from reference to equality and equal rights for men and women.
- Young women today have all facilities compared to women thirty years ago when there were very few facilities and people were generally very poor. Money is easier to come by now than in the past when it was a rare commodity.

Group discussions

The question. How have the conditions of women evolved over the last three decades?

‘There is a big difference in the conditions of women between now and thirty years ago. One cannot really compare. Today girls have all kinds of opportunities, which they did not have thirty years ago. There is education for one and all. Girls can speak their mind. In our time, we just stayed quiet and obeyed our parents (older women speaking). We did not have the courage to argue. Today girls are not like that! They speak their minds and will not submit.’

WHAT HAS MADE THIS CHANGE?

‘It is the culture. They meet friends at school. There is the TV. Thirty years ago, the girls were generally timid, they grew up like that. The girls raised in the contemporary culture do not give in.’ Women who work do not accept to live with in laws. If they do, they will not submit to the mother- in -law and husband like the women did thirty years ago. If in laws say one harsh word, the daughter in laws of today will retaliate by ten stronger words! The older generation is no match, they must accept and give in (*reste tranquille*). Of course all are not like that, but this is the trend.’

HOW HAVE YOUR LIVES EVOLVED?

For those in the agricultural sector, the answers were that life has not changed greatly as far as work is concerned. (*nou la vie pareille. Pena grand changement dans travaille qui nou faite. Oui nou gagne plis l'argent mais depense aussi augmente*) But they get more money and women today can get many facilities like washing machines and other household appliances and videos. Transport facilities are easily available than in the past. (*Gagne tout kit chose astere, faud de ki ena l'argent*). Today women also have greater freedom in spending their money. In the past one had to consult and seek permission of family. People were very careful with their money. Young people today do not understand the value of money. Life is easy for the young women of today. They did not have to struggle like us. There was a lot of poverty. We dared not raise our voices against authority-vested members in the family, which included brothers. Even if the brother happened to be younger than you’

Among the Hindus and Muslims, the marriages were arranged and the women married early. ‘If there was no “*demande*” for the girl by the time she was eighteen years old, the family would get very worried.’

WHY HAVE REALITIES CHANGED?

“Thirty years ago most families married off their daughters by age seventeen-eighteen years. This was the norm. People were poor. Having an adult girl child who was dependent on the family was a strain for the family. Opportunities and facilities for development of girls were limited. (*Nou system ti coumme sa Dimoune ti misere aussie. Ki pou faite avec ene gran tifi dans la caz? Bizin mariye li!*) “Girls are educated now and have all kind of opportunities which were not there thirty years ago. There has been development and change. Today it is important that a girl is trained to be self-reliant. There are so many opportunities available for girls. A girl must therefore learn to stand on her feet and be self-reliant. Marriage and a good husband are also important. But one cannot be sure of the sustainability of the marriage. (*tifi bizin conne dibout lor so propre efforts. "Astere pas capave dire qui qualite mari li pou gagne et ki ena dans so destine. Ene femme pas pou passe autant misere si en femme conne depend lor li meme. Ena tout qualite facilite astere. Marriage, li aussi important pour ene femme mais ene femme bizin conne depend lor li meme"*)

“Because of the cost of living, boys also want to get married to girls who are educated and can go out to work.” A girl who earns her own money will not accept all kinds of injustice and ill treatment. This also creates problems in marriage relationships.

How have relationships evolved between men and women?

“Thirty years ago, it was rare for women to question their husbands and a woman would rarely openly disobey her husband. There were men who treated their families well, gave all their income to the family. Also, many families suffered because of the arrogant authoritarian attitudes of the men who squandered their money on alcohol and other wrong use. We still have the same problems today. Couples have greater freedom to talk and interact. Women are more able to raise their voice against injustice and participate in family decision-making. Many men also help in the household work. There are many new laws which make it difficult for men to ill treat women. Women are not as much submissive vis-à-vis men as they were thirty years ago. The young girls today hold on to their views.”

I. CONCLUSIONS OF KEY FINDINGS ON EVOLUTION OF WOMEN BASED ON IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Since independence, Mauritian society evolved from an agricultural mono-crop society into a modern industrialising economy. Coupled with this process of social and economic change is globalisation of values technology and markets. Thus, changes in the status and position of women have occurred as a result of both internal change process and external stimulus. The change from agricultural to an industrial society affects the role of women and this in turn, inevitably affects .

It is a process of give and take, which creates disequilibrium to start with but eventually, should lead to equilibrium as adjustments are achieved by both men and women to accommodate change. The transformation from agricultural society to an industrial society has occurred with greater rapidity in Mauritius compared to the process experienced by the now industrial societies of the world.

The key changes that the evolution has brought for Mauritian women are reduced women's economic dependency on men. Women have welcomed these changes. The younger generation of women expressed particular aversion to have to be economically dependent on men.

Women welcomed the opportunity for education and equality in the legal status. The opportunity for education has had an impact on the thinking and attitudes of women and also affected men's attitudes towards women. Younger women stated that men respected women more now compared to the past. The manner of addressing women is on basis on equality.

Women expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of life. Middle aged and older women expressed more dissatisfaction than younger women. The gains made through economic empowerment, education and equality are offset by increased workloads and the physical and psychological stress emanating from the overload. Perhaps it is the stress factor that made respondents overlook the gains and achievements with respect to increased life expectancy and improved physical health care.

Women expressed that marital harmony is threatened by growing promiscuousness among men and women.

The demands of a consumption oriented society erodes the value of earnings. So women questioned the gains that they achieved through access to employment and economic self-reliance, Women have little money to spend on themselves. The earnings go towards the home and the children.

The quality of life of women is also diminished by the increased problem of alcoholism among men. Women too are falling prey. The quality of family life is threatened with such problems.

THE SURVEY AND FINDINGS

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

1. SAMPLE DESIGN

To complement the qualitative study of interviews of focus groups, a quantitative survey was carried. Based on available resources and prior knowledge, a sample size of around 500 respondents was considered adequate. The unit of inquiry, i.e., the respondent was any person aged 18 years plus. Information was collected through interviews. The sample was based on a multi-stage design, involving stratification at geographical and community levels, systematic sampling to select households, and cluster sampling at household level.

The survey was carried in October 1999 after the conduct of a pilot survey to check the proposed questionnaire and methodology.

2. SAMPLE SIZE

In total, 507 respondents that were identified from 197 randomly selected households were interviewed.

2.1 Selection of representative areas

The sample of respondents was based on a multi-stage sample design. The first stage was the selection of a number of areas representing the rural as well as the urban areas of the country. These areas were: Camp Caval, Vacoas, Reduit, Beau Songe, Souillac, Plaines des Papayes, Coromandel, Riche Terre, Tranquebar, and Grand Baie.

Each selected area was under the responsibility of an Interviewer. There were two Supervisors, each in charge of 5 Interviewers. The Chief Supervisor was responsible for the whole fieldwork.

2.2 Sampling of households

The Interviewer for each selected area made a complete listing of all households residing in his/her area as per listing sheet given at Appendix 6.7.1, and collected details required for stratification at the 2nd stage. These details included household size and community.

The households were listed and sequentially numbered. The households were then classified on specially designed data sheets (see Appendix 6.7.2), such that households with similar characteristics were grouped together. Then the selection of the 20 households was made by circular systematic sampling. This method consists in determining a random start number between 1 and N (N being the number of households listed in the selected area concerned). The random start determines the first selected household, the remaining ones being selected to correspond with every Kth unit thereafter on the list (K being the value of the sampling fraction $N/20$, rounded to the nearest integer). This procedure was continued by following the list in a circular fashion until 20 households were selected.

After the selection of households, all persons aged 18+ were selected from each of the 20 selected households. In total, 507 respondents were interviewed. The sample is representative of all persons aged 18+ of the country as regards to region, sex and ethnic group.

3. PROCESSING OF DATA

The data are verified manually for completion. When there were missing items, the Supervisors returned the forms to the field interviewers for completion. A second level of verification was done at the Computer laboratory. Then the data are entered into SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Scientists) Data Entry module. The data are validated.

4. ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

There are three parts for the analysis and presentation, as shown in Appendix 4. The first part contains frequency tables with percentages. The second part deals with the test of hypotheses. The third part contains advanced statistical analysis, like Principal Components analysis or Factor Analysis.

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

The survey aimed to test a number of hypotheses about gender relations and attitudes. These are presented in this section.

Any discrepancy in the total percentages from 100.0 is due to non-response, which is no more than one percent. Often, the superfluous percentage for 'No' is included for clarity.

Generally, when there is no significance from a Chi-squared test for a table it is not reported. However, sometimes they have been included because they have been specifically requested or they make the text easier to understand. Similarly, some columns have been obvious or understood.

The chi-squared test gives significance at 1% level means there is an error of 1 %.

In rejecting a true hypothesis. The value is the sum of the squared differences between the cell values and the corresponding expected value, with the required degrees of freedom. A Chi-squared test rules out the possibility of chance and, when significant, the difference for is real.

4.2 Principal Component Analysis

Gender, Values and Goals in life

Pair-wise correlation of the eleven factors reveal the important combination of factors, i.e., those factors whose correlation coefficients are greater than 0.4.

Again, the Extractor Method of the Principal Component Analysis separates the important factors (whose correlation coefficients are greater than 0.4) from the unimportant ones.

The table of total explained variance shows that the above factors can be reduced to two new independent sets of particular goals see the component matrix.

Finally, a regression analysis of sex on the two independent sets of factors, and a t-test for equality of means are performed to determine whether there is any significant difference in the way males and females express themselves with respect to the independent set of factors.

THE SURVEY FINDINGS

This section presents the findings and analysis of the data collected. A total of 507 individuals were interviewed through the questionnaire. Section 6.1 presents the characteristics and responses by frequency, and section 6.2 the analysis of cross tabulations.

THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SURVEYED POPULATION

1. ETHNICITY AND RELIGION

Table VI.13 represents the ethnic and religious composition of the respondents. Hindus comprised about 53%, Muslims 17.6%, General Population 22.1%, Chinese 4.1% and Franco Mauritians 3.4 %. Compared to Census Data 2000, the sample reflects quite accurately on the ethnic make-up of the country. The general population includes people of European origin, African origin and Chinese. The general population is Christian by faith. So is the majority of the Chinese population although they are also Buddhists. Religion and ethnic background have important bearings on gender relations and the position of women in society. All religions represented herein stress on obedience and subservience of married women before their husbands.

TABLE VI.13
THE ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Category	No.	%
Hindu	268	52.9
Muslim	89	17.6
Chinese	21	4.1
General Population	112	22.1
European -Mauritian	17	3.4
Total	507	100.0

2. URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION

Most of the respondents (98%) have lived most of their lives in Mauritius, see table VI.14.

TABLE VI.14
HAVE YOU LIVED MOST OF YOUR LIFE IN MAURITIUS?

	No.	%
Yes	496	97.8
No	2	0.4
Missing	6	1.2

Table VI.15 shows that around 39% of the respondents were from the urban region and 61% were from the rural region.

TABLE VI.15
SAMPLE OF URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION

Region	No.	%
Rural	310	61.1
Urban	197	38.9
Total	507	100.0

The 2000 Census reported that the resident population of The Republic of Mauritius stood as follows.

TABLE VI.16
URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION, CENSUS DATA 2000

Region	No.	%
Rural	669779	57.3%
Urban	498716	42.7%
Total	1.068495	100

Hence, in this study sample, there is a slight over-representation (3.8%) of the rural population and a little under-representation (3.8%) of the urban population as compared to the census data 2000.

3 HOUSEHOLD STATUS

Table VI.17 shows that nearly 40% of the respondents were heads of households who might be in a position of authority to influence attitudes and thinking about gender relations. The 'Yes' category refers to heads of households and 'No' to other members of households, as interviews were conducted by selecting households.

TABLE VI.17
STATUS OF RESPONDENTS WITHIN HOUSEHOLDS - HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS

Category	#	%
Yes	200	39.4
No	303	59.8
Missing	4	0.8

4. AGE STRUCTURE OF RESPONDENTS

Table VI.18 shows the age structure of the respondents. Eleven percent of the respondents were below the age of 20 years and about 13% were above the age of sixty. The rest were in the age group 21 to 59 years. (The population was not sampled according to age groups but by households).

TABLE VI.18
AGE PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Age	No.	%
Under 16	2	.4
16 – 20	35	6.9
21 – 30	131	25.8
31 – 40	124	24.5
41 – 50	104	20.5
51 – 59	46	9.1
60 and above	64	12.6
Missing	1	.2
Total	507	100.0

The majority of the respondents (nearly 71%) were clustered in the age group twenty one to fifty years. Nearly one-third of the respondents were in the age group 16 to 30 years, that is, this group were born after independence, covering the period of study.

5. OCCUPATION

Table VI.19 reflects the occupational background of the respondents. The findings show a fair variation: 24% were housewives, around 8% retired persons, about 4% students, 7% professional, and around 69% in the semiskilled and clerical grades.

TABLE VI.19
OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE

Occupation	No.	%
Student	20	3.9
Housewife	124	24.5
Retired	39	7.7
Unemployed	21	4.1
Self-employed	18	3.6
Prof /Management	36	7.1
ClerkTec	176	34.7
SaleOperAgri	176	34.7
Other	3	0.6
Total	507	100.0

The 2000 Census Report¹⁸⁰ shows that only 2.9% of the resident population comprise the major group 2. The classification of occupational profile is presented differently in the 2000 Census report. However, on the basis of the last census, it is noted that the above findings show an over-representation of the professionals in the sample of this study.

6. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT PROFILE

The findings in table VI.20 show that around 5% of surveyed population had no formal schooling, another 14% had some education, 22% had primary schooling, 11% had attended some secondary schooling, around 43% had secondary education, and around 4% had some tertiary training.

TABLE VI.20
EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Education	No.	%	Valid %	Cum. %
No Formal Education	26	5.1	5.2	5.2
Some primary	71	14.0	14.1	19.3
Primary	111	21.9	22.1	41.4
Lower Secondary	58	11.4	11.6	53.0
Upper Secondary	216	42.6	43.0	96.0
Diploma	5	1.0	1.0	97.0
Degree	15	3.0	3.0	97.0
Missing	5	1.0		
Total	507	100.0	100.0	

¹⁸⁰ Housing And Population Census Data [HTTP://ncb.intent.mu/cso/report/hpcen00](http://ncb.intent.mu/cso/report/hpcen00)

7. MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

Table VI.21 shows the marital status of the respondents. The majority (64.7%) was married; 22.7% were single and the rest were in the category of widowed, divorced and separate.

TABLE VI.21
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS BY MARITAL STATUS

Status category	No.	%
Single	115	22.7
Married (1 st marriage)	328	64.7
Remarried	7	1.4
Widowed	28	5.5
Divorced	6	1.2
Separated	10	2.0
Other	3	0.6
Missing	10	2.0
Total	507	100.0

However, in the 2000 census, the situation was as shown in table VI.22

TABLE VI.22
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS BY MARITAL STATUS, CENSUS 2000

Married (all categories)	43.27%
Married (all categories)	43.27%
Divorced	0.65%
Separated	1.57%
Unmarried parent	0.17%
Widowed	5.60%
Single	47.00%

There are discrepancies in at least the two broad categories of married and single people. This should not be interpreted that the sample was biased. It is to be noted that persons aged less than 18 years were not included in the sample. Table 8.1.10 shows the sample population. Sixty-five percent of the sample was married and only 22% were single. The under- representation of the single population arises from the fact that the sample excluded young children who form part of the single population within households. By looking for older respondents, the likelihood of their being married also increases.

8. TYPE OF MARRIAGES

Table VI.23 shows that there were an almost equivalent number of arranged and non-arranged marriages.

TABLE VI.23
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS BY TYPE OF MARRIAGE

	No.	%
Arranged by family	191	37.7
By choice	199	39.3
Not married?	117	23.1
Total	507	100.0

9. NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

Table VI.24 shows the number of children in the family. Thirty percent of the respondents had no children, 14% had one child, 38% had two or three children, and the remaining 13.6% had four or more children.

TABLE VI.24
RESPONDENTS BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Number of children	No.	%
0	153	30.2
1	73	14.4
2	140	26
3	65	12.
4	36	7.1
5	24	4.7
6	7	1.4
7	2	0.4
8	3	0.6
9	4	0.8
Total	507	100.0

The findings from the study sample substantiated that 40% of the respondents had two and less children. Only 2.8% of the sample had more than six children. *Small family size affects the activities of women within households.* Thirty percent of the respondents had no children and 62% had four or less children. On average, a family had 1.63 children.

According to the census data, the average household size was estimated to be 3.89 persons per household (1155240/296832 households). In this sample respondents were requested to indicate the number of children they had and not the household size. Total fertility rate in 2000 was 2%¹⁸¹.

¹⁸¹ Data from Housing and Population Census and Vital Statistics.<http://www.ncb.intent.mu/cso/report/hpcen00>

10. OCCUPATION OF SPOUSE

Only about 26% of the respondents stated that they were not economically active. Housewife category accounted for 19.5% of respondents, students 2% and retired 4.5% (see Table VI.25).

TABLE VI.25
OCCUPATION OF SPOUSE

Occupation	No.	%
Student	1	0.2
Housewife only	99	19.5
Retired	23	4.5
Unemployed	8	1.6
Self employed	10	2.0
Prof, Sen Off, Man	36	7.1
Clerk, Tech	36	7.1
Sale, Oper, Agric	146	28.8
Other	5	1.0
No spouse	143	28.2
Total	507	100.0

Here, representation of economically active women population is found to be higher than what is concluded from the census data and the survey on the Economic Activities of Women (MEPD 1996).

11. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Table VI.26 shows that only 3.2% of the respondents stated that they had no formal education. Twelve percent had some primary education. Around 29% had studied up to secondary level and about 3% had tertiary educational qualifications.

TABLE VI.26
EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Education	No.	%
No formal education	16	3.2
Some primary	59	11.6
Completed primary	92	18.1
Lower secondary	42	8.3
Upper secondary	146	28.8
Diploma	3	0.6
Degree	11	2.2
Missing	138	27.2
Total	507	100.0

However, the 2000 census had reported that the population having studied up to tertiary level was only 1.6% (19,675 people) of the population.

FINDINGS ON UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER TERMINOLOGIES

FAMILIARITY WITH AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERMS GENDER, FEMINIST, AND WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

Tables VI.27, VI.27, VI.28, VI.29, VI.30, VI.31 and VI.32 below summarize the results. An overwhelming majority of respondents, i.e., 72.4% were unfamiliar with the term gender and claimed not to have heard of it before. Of the 27% that had heard of the term, only 2.85% of respondents were able to give an accurate explanation. For the majority of respondents, gender is not a common term and the understanding of the term is not accurately understood.

However, respondents have a better understanding of the term 'Feminist', (with 42% of respondents answering 'yes') and the terms 'Women and Development' (54% of respondents had heard of the term 'Women and Development'). But, the responses indicate that only around 6% were able to explain accurately the meaning of the terms while 6.5% of respondents gave wrong answers. The rest, 26% provided vague replies, which could be rated as having a weak understanding of the term 'Feminist.' Generally, 65% of respondents had accurate to weak knowledge of the terms 'women and development'.

The conclusions drawn are that there is a poor understanding of the terms 'Gender' and 'Feminist' in Mauritian society. The terms 'women and development' are better known and understood.

TABLE VI.27

UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM GENDER

Response	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Number	138	367	2	507
Percent	27.2	72.4	0.4	100

TABLE VI.28

DEFINITION OF GENDER

Value Label	Frequency	Percent	Cum. %
Fairly accurate	14	2.8	2.8
Some knowledge	12	2.4	5.2
Vague knowledge	78	15.4	20.6
Do not know	25	4.9	25.5
Bizarre, Off mark	9	1.8	27.3
don't know)	369	72.8	100.1
Total	507	100	

TABLE VI.29

FAMILIARITY WITH THE TERM FEMINIST

Response	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Number	211	296	0	507
Percent	41.6	58.4	0	100

TABLE VI.30

ACCURACY OF UNDERSTANDING OF TERM FEMINIST

Value Label	Frequency	Percent	Cum. %
Very accurate	1	0.2	0.5
Fairly accurate	32	6.3	15.1
Some knowledge	132	26	75.7
Radical perception	1	0.2	76.1
Do not know	18	3.6	84.4
Wrong perception	33	6.5	99.5
Not heard of the term feminist.	290	57.2	100
Total	507	100	

TABLE VI.31

FAMILIARITY WITH THE TERM 'WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT'

Response	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Number	273	231	3	507
Percent	53.8	45.6	0.6	100

TABLE VI.32

UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERMS WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

Value Label	Frequency	Percent	Cum. %
Very accurate	37	7.3	13.6
Fairly accurate	89	17.6	46.2
Some knowledge	54	10.7	65.9
Weak knowledge	44	8.7	82.1
Do not know	32	6.3	93.8
Wrong perception	13	2.6	98.5
Not heard of the term	238	47	100
Total	507	100	

DISCUSSION

Does it matter whether people have a good understanding of the terminologies used?

At this point, one may wish to question the relevance of seeking from the population an understanding of the terms gender, feminist, and women and development. Where lies the utility? Well, much of the agenda on Gender and the ensuing social changes involving gender relations and incorporating the gender perspective has been spearheaded through government planning and intervention, backed by international support. The thinking must filter down to the people, from the policy makers to those that execute, right down to grass roots - to people who are part of the process. Therefore, successful outcomes of planned change require that there occur some public involvement and ownership of the agenda on gender and development. If terms are not properly understood, it will affect the involvement of the people who are supposed to benefit from the gender oriented development process. Despite the three decades of gender accountable development process, the study indicates that public knowledge of basic terms and what they represent is weak. When people do not have a clear understanding of terms, it gives rise to misinterpretation, builds insecurity and resistance. For most people gender means women and their development. This is not adequate and correct knowledge.

VIEWS AND ATTITUDES ON CHANGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE SITUATION OF WOMEN
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In this study, some hypotheses are formulated on the changes and achievements in the conditions of women in Mauritius. The hypotheses are reproduced below in bold under appropriate headings.

EDUCATION, LEGAL REFORMS AND WOMEN'S STATUS

"There has been an improvement in the status of women as a result of improved education and legal reforms."

Most Mauritians believe that over the last thirty years, there has been an improvement in the conditions of women as a result of improved education and legal reforms. Eighty-eight percent (which is very significant) of the respondents, answered positively to both legal reforms and education as contributing factors in the improvement of women's conditions.

Almost the totality (97.2%) of respondents agree that education has benefitted women. The provision of equality in access to education is perceived as equality between the sexes. People are aware of the role of education in the evolution of

women. The social statistical indicators and the qualitative data also support this finding. Both men and women, both 'visibles' and 'invisibles' indicated that education was the dividing line in comparing women of the post-independence and the pre-independence eras.

Public investment in education has benefitted women and contributed in enhancing their status and position in society. Ninety-eight percent believe that education has given women an equal legal status. Responses indicate that most people are aware of the enhanced impact of legal reforms on the position of women in Mauritius. Also, with respect to property matters, nearly 96% of responses indicate that men and women should inherit property equally.

VIEWS ON ECONOMIC EQUALITY

"Economic power has given women confidence in themselves but also made women arrogant.

Eighty-nine percent of respondents hold the view that economic empowerment of women has occurred. Consequently, 91% believe that women enjoy self-confidence and have become arrogant. Gender-wise, 54% of men and 40% of women strongly believe in the above hypothesis.

As women become empowered through education, the improvements in levels of knowledge are also accompanied by changes in self-confidence and independence of thinking. In the qualitative interviews, the group of invisible men stated that the younger generation of women displayed less respect for others and wanted to dominate others. Can such thinking be interpreted as a cause of disharmony at the level of the family and community? If men's attitudes remain unchanged, and women change from being submissive and dependent to being confident and assertive, then this change in itself will present a challenge to males who have been socialised to expect women to be submissive and dependent under male authority. It reflects that social change has been piecemeal and unharmonized, thereby excluding males in the process of change as opposed to including them as partners. Much of the gender relations have changed as a natural process while a good part was planned. Have we gone wrong in the planned process overlooking the needs of the males?

GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

"Higher education is more important for boys than girls."

About 73% of the respondents, and about 69% of men and 77% of women, rejected the hypothesis that higher education is more important for boys than

girls. Alternatively, 26% of the respondents, and 31% of men and 22% of women, favour the above hypothesis.

Interestingly, more rural people than urban people rejected the hypothesis. As the educational level increases, more people tend to reject the hypothesis.

"Men and women are equally intelligent."

About 90% of the respondents agree that men and women are equally intelligent. Both men and women equally believe in the hypothesis. Ethnically, almost all (99%) in the General Population believe in the hypothesis. However, in the Franco-Mauritian community, the split was remarkable: 59% agree and 41% disagree.

"Men are naturally superior to women."

Paradoxically, 71% of the respondents, and 81% of males and 60 % of females, strongly believe in the hypothesis that men are naturally superior to women. The cultural variations to this hypothesis show that 74% of Hindus, 70% of Muslims, 69% of the General Population, 62% of Chinese, and 59% of Franco-Mauritians support the hypothesis.

Geographically, 77% of the rural population compared to 61% of the urban population believe that men are naturally superior to women. In fact, more rural men than urban men believe so. A breakdown by gender shows that 65% of rural women compared to 53% of urban women are in favour of the hypothesis.

Paradoxically, despite 90% of the respondents holding the view that men and women are equally intelligent, 70% of the respondents still believe that men are naturally superior to women.

As education level increases, there is a diminishing support for the hypothesis. The implications are that education needs to be targeted at cohorts with less education. Alternatively, it can also be inferred that patriarchal thinking is stronger among people with less education.

"It is fair to give preference to men over women when it comes to recruitment for jobs."

Nearly 66% of respondents believe that it is fair to give preference to men over women when it comes to recruitment for jobs. Nevertheless, 91% of the respondents agree that there should be equality of opportunity in employment and that there should be a legal guarantee to this effect. More women than men support this view

POLITICAL POWER AND EMPOWERMENT

"Most people believe that women can be equally good leaders as men and therefore there ought to be more women employed in leadership and top management positions including Prime Minister."

Seventy-six percent of the respondents hold the view that women make equally good leaders as men. More women than men (49% compared to 28%) believe this to be true. However, only 48% of respondents agree that Mauritius is ready to have a woman as its Prime Minister.

"Women are not as reliable as men."

Sixty-five percent of the respondents disagree with the statement that women are not as reliable as men.

"There should be more women in top management positions."

Around 64% of respondents agree that there should be more women in top management positions.

"That women should not have authority over men in the workplace."

Forty-seven percent of the respondents subscribe to the view that women should not have authority over men in the workplace.

Finally, some contradictions are noted. Despite the fact that 76% of respondents agree that women make equally good leaders as men, 56% subscribe to the hypothesis that women are too indecisive to be good leaders. Sixty-one percent of men and fifty-three percent of women support the hypothesis. More rural than urban (42% vs. 66%) subscribe to this hypothesis. The higher the education, the lesser is the support for the hypothesis. The findings indicate people who have less education do not favour prejudice and stereotypes about women being less able as leaders. The implications that emerge are that upgrading education levels of the population is an effective strategy for mainstreaming gender change and equality.

FAMILY AND WORK

About 91% of the respondents hold the view that it is better for women to go out to work to improve the economic status of the family than to stay at home. Eighty-three percent of respondents believe that workingwomen are too stressed. However, 71% also believe that if women stayed at home and looked after the children instead of going out to work, family and society would function better. Forty-six percent of the respondents believe that men have more respect for women who stay at home (full-time housewives).

Ninety-five percent hold the view that if a wife is employed, the husband should share the responsibility for cooking, cleaning and childcare. In fact, nearly 90% of the respondents subscribe to the view that women are by nature, better suited to cooking, housework and childcare.

Again almost all (99%) of the respondents believe that family life is equally the responsibility of men and women. Sixty-one percent of the respondents believe that it is the responsibility of the father to discipline the children.

RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Thirty-three percent of the respondents believe that, when there is disharmony in the home, it is always the woman's fault. Around 65% of the sampled population support the view that whenever there is a disagreement among a couple, it is best for the family if the wife submits to the husband's point of view.

About 61 % of the respondents share the view that **"women are the weaker sex and they normally want to please women."**

"It is normal for a husband to punish his wife if she is not carrying out her responsibilities."

Forty-nine percent of the respondents agree with the above statement. On other related issues, 51% believe that **"marriage and family life runs smoother if the wife earns less than the husband."** However, about 83% of the respondents subscribe to the view that **"a woman should feel free to disagree with a man whether it is at home or at work."** Eighty-one percent of respondents also support the view that **"men and women should have equal economic and social freedom."**

However, there exist some contradictions on the freedom issue. Sixty-three percent of the respondents believe that **"overall society will be more orderly and stable if women do not achieve too much freedom."**

MARRIAGE, REPRODUCTIVE MATTERS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND DYSFUNCTION

Nearly one half of the respondents support the view that **"arranged marriages work better to preserve family ties and family stability compared to love marriages."**

The response shows that there is a **"general disapproval of physical and verbal violence between spouses."** Only 18% of the respondents find verbal violence between couples an acceptable condition and 12% accept physical violence. Forty-one percent had **"witnessed violence in their families."** Fifty-six percent state that **"there is more physical violence in contemporary Mauritian society."** But only 27% stated that **"there were families in their neighbourhood that experience physical violence."**

On the matter of **birth control**, 78% of respondents affirm that **"Mauritius made progress because women practiced family planning."** However, only 48% of the respondents supported the view that **"legal abortion should be made available to women."** Further, nearly 78% of responses support the view that **"a wife should never use contraception to prevent pregnancy without the permission of her husband."**

The research also sought views of the population on alcohol use and misuse. Almost all respondents agree that **"alcohol abuse is a major social problem in Mauritius."** Thirty-one percent of the respondents affirm that **"men drink and become alcoholic because their work environment stresses them."** Twenty-two percent subscribe to the view that **"if women respected men better, the latter would not become alcoholic."** An overwhelming majority (85%) believe that **"women should not drink any alcohol."**

STATUS OF MEN

Nearly 40% of respondents affirm that **developments over the last thirty years have lowered the status of men in society.** Also, almost a totality affirms **that if a man does not take responsibility at home, the family goes to ruin.** In the qualitative data, views were expressed at the level of in depth interviews and focus groups that *'femme qui faire mari dans la caz astere la,'* i.e., women are the authority figures in the family now.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents also hold views that **women should not take alcohol.** Also, 51% of the respondents believe that it is better for the family and couple **if the wife earns less than the husband.** Sixty-three percent favour that **the independence and freedom of women be curtailed.** Slightly over a third of responses point out that **development and progress over the last thirty years has lowered the status on men within the family.**

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

The data collected through the research reveal that there is a universal awareness among different classes of people, and that there has been a great improvement in the educational status of women. But still, a minority of respondents, around 27%, feel that Higher Education is more important for boys than for girls, irrespective of the fact that almost 90% of the respondents agree that men and women are equally intelligent. So there is still resistance to the idea of equality in higher education for both girls and boys. It can be implied from the findings that, among a quarter of the population, boys will continue to get preference over girls when it comes to choosing between limited resources for investment in higher education.

A gendered approach to development requires strategies that are aimed at changing negative attitudes and thinking about education being less important for girls than boys. Groups that are resistant should be targeted. The tertiary institutions should offer more scholarships and grants for needy women students so as to sustain the progress achieved.

WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT

The findings about attitudes towards women and employment are as follows:

Although almost all respondents agreed that **"there should be laws that guarantee equality of employment opportunities"**, paradoxically, 66% of respondents believe that **"it is fair to prefer men to women with respect to employment."** And almost half the respondents hold the view **"it is not a good idea that women have authority over men in the work place."** Also, **"the ambition of economic success is considered to be a male prerogative"** by 71% of respondents. There is at the same time almost a universal acceptance that **"women should contribute to the economic up-liftment of the family through employment."** but also believe that **"society and family would be better off if women stayed home to look after the children."**

These findings indicate that most people in Mauritius accept that women should seek employment to alleviate economic hardship but really it would be better for family and society if women with families stayed home to raise children. The findings confirm that over the thirty years of development, it has become acceptable that women go out to work but at the same time the traditional role and contribution of women within the home is highly valued.

Development process must acknowledge the importance and social contribution of child rearing functions. Family policy should provide guidelines. This facilitates the achievement of good child care practice, and happy and functional family life. The challenge to a gendered approach to planning requires that a holistic approach has to be developed that accounts for roles and tasks of citizens

over lifespan, and is holistic in accommodating the need for self fulfilment, economic security, and the building of strong families and communities. Here in lies the sustainability of gendered approach to development. If the policy is to achieve maximum utilization of the labour force, which means full time employment of women, then along side we need to develop family and child care policy to ensure that rights of children and their welfare are not jeopardized. Resistance to women occupying leadership positions and having authority over men has to be overcome. Further research needs to be done as to what forms the basis of the thinking that women should not have authority over men in the work place. The findings are symptomatic of strong patriarchal thinking on power relations between men and women.

Also the qualitative data point out that prevailing attitudes to women and work are that women need to work as an economic necessity, and it is also not fair that the skills and talent of women be wasted by denying them opportunities to exercise their right to work. But the family too is important, and someone has to look after the children and home. Hence, the key responsibility to care for children must rest with women.

Both qualitative and quantitative data confirm that women are facing too much stress as a result of the increased burden of home and work responsibilities. There is agreement that men should take on a greater share of responsibilities for childcare and other home responsibilities. The qualitative study maintained that change is taking place but at a slow rate, and that men do not sustain the commitment of sharing the domestic chores. They are easily prone to opt out of it and eventually it all falls back to the women. It must be realized that the presence of excessive stress will affect women both at the level of the home and at work. The gendered approach also requires that there is an equitable distribution of work and responsibilities for both genders. The answer lies in the structure of the economic and family system.

POLITICAL POWER AND GENDER

Two thirds of the respondents believe that women can be equally good leaders as men. But nearly one half of the respondents believe that Mauritius is not yet ready for a woman as Prime Minister. This is symptomatic of discrimination on grounds of biology. There is still discrimination against women in the political sphere although women are present in Mauritian political parties and the political mechanism. Both qualitative and quantitative data point out that there is a resistance to allowing women to become too powerful.

The gendered approach requires an emphasis on qualities and efficiency for political functions, and the biological identity should not be a consideration. Several consultants have pointed out to the need to inform and conscientize

political parties and politicians to bear out the commitment to gender equality in political system.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND GENDER

The findings reveal that nearly 52% of the respondents (more men than women) disagree that **"abortion should be made available to women."** Further, nearly 80% of the respondents hold views that **"a wife should never use contraceptives to prevent pregnancy without the consent of the husband."** There is acknowledgment that **"the progress that Mauritius has achieved is partly due to the fact that women espoused family planning."** Also, the findings reveal **"there is still a strong resistance to giving women full control and authority in matters of reproductive health."** Even in the qualitative interviewing, there were no clear views on abortion. More men than women resisted abortion. More men with less education were against abortion.

FAMILY RELATIONS AND GENDER

The findings show that within marriage, the patriarchal power pattern persists. The qualitative study and secondary data sources indicate that failure to conform on the part women can lead to withdrawal of the husband from marital responsibilities, and the result is that women then find themselves in a position of having to cope alone. One half of the respondents subscribe to the view that it is normal for a husband to punish his wife if she fails in her responsibilities. This indicates that equality in marriage may be provided in law but not in practice. Sixty-five percent of the respondents state that when there is a disagreement between a couple, the wife should give in. Also, about one third of the respondents subscribe to the stereotype that if there is disharmony in the home, women are to blame.

GENDER, VALUES AND GOALS IN LIFE

Correlation analysis of the goals (see Questionnaire) shows how the goals are related to one another. For a large sample, a correlation coefficient of 0.4 or greater is considered important.

TABLE VI. 33

PAIRWISE CORRELATION OF FACTORS

Live fam Exp	Gr & Dev.	0.946	High ed.	0.403		
Growth & self dev.	High ed.	0.518	Live fam. Exp.	0.496	Good	0.485
Being rich			Mar. stal. fam.	0.460		
Being good			Mar., stal fam	0.510		
Pol.Influence		Nil				
Married, stable fam	Good	0.510	Higher ed.	0.496	Gr & du	0.460
Rel. and spiritual	Nil					
Travel & Irl Cul	Nil					
Secure jobs	Higher ed.	0.515				
Self-employment	Nil					

The goal of living up to family expectations is very highly correlated (0.946) to growth and self-development, and it is somewhat correlated to higher level of education (0.403). Growth and development is related (0.5) to the following goals: higher level of education, living up to family expectation, being good and being married and having a stable family. The goal of getting a higher level of education is associated with growth and self-development, getting a secure job, to marry and have a stable family, and to live up to family expectation. Having a secure job is associated with higher level of educational attainment. However, no association can be made with the following goals: being rich, politically influential, religious and spiritual, self-employed, and to travel and learn about other cultures.

Principal Components Analysis (PCA) extracts the coefficients of relative importance of the goals to the population. (See table VI.109)

TABLE VI.34

COEFFICIENTS OF RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS

Factors	Coefficients
Being good	0.606
Growth and development	0.601
Higher Education Level	0.601
Married and having a stable family	0.595
Political influence	0.525
Travel and learn about cultures	0.427
Being rich	0.402
Live to family expectations	0.396
Secure jobs	0.385
Being self-employed	0.299
Being religious and spiritual	0.262

On the one hand, being good, growth and development, higher education level, married and having a stable family are more important. On the other being self-employed, and being religious and spiritual are least important. However, political influence, travel and learn about other culture, being rich, live to family

expectations and having a secure jobs are somewhat important. Political influence rates high (0.525) in this group.

Further, according to the component matrix in the PCA, the goals are polarized to two new independent sets of factors. (See table VI.110)

TABLE VI.35
COMPONENT MATRIX OF CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

Factor 1		Factor 2	
Growth and development	0.774	Politically influential	0.695
Higher Education level	0.774	Rich	0.595
Married & stable family	0.689		
Being good	0.635		
Live to family expectation Secure	0.628		
Secure job	0.616		
Travel and learn cultures	0.494		

One set contains two goals of being politically correct and rich, and the other set containing the remaining factors (except being religious and spiritual) points in the other direction.

To obtain another view of the above analysis, the rotation method using Varimax with Kaiser normalization from SPSS 10.0 package is used. Compared to the component matrix (See table VI.111)

TABLE VII.36
ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

Factor 1		Factor 2	
Married & stable family	0.770	Politically influential	0.720
Being good	0.761	Rich	0.633
Growth and development	0.731	Travel and learn cultures	0.589
Higher Education level	10.730		
Live to family expectation Secure	0.560		
Secure job	0.535		
Travel and learn cultures	0.512		

the goal of travel and learn about other cultures has entered into the first set while "being religious and spiritual" is associated with the second set. Consequently, the strengths of our society hinge on the main goals: "to grow and develop oneself, to attain higher education level, to be married and have a stable family expectations, to have a secure job, and to be religious and spiritual." On the other hand, "seeking material things like being politically influential, rich, and to travel and learn about other cultures are also important. Again, political influence and being rich are very attractive.

Finally, a regression analysis of sex on the two independent sets of goals and a t-test for equality of means are carried out.

For main set of goals, the mean difference is very small (-6.833E-03) and consequently, the difference is not significant, i.e., there is no significant difference the way that the males and females express themselves about main factor (Factor 1).

For the smaller group of factors (Factor 2), the mean difference is 0.27975, and it is significant at more than 2 percent level. i.e., there is a significant difference in the way that males and females express themselves about Factor 2. Further, the group statistics table shows a mean of 0.1402 for males and -0.1396 for females. Hence, males favour Factor 2 whereas females resent it.

(Please note that multivariate analysis is subjective in the choice of the method used. Here the default method has been used.)

CONCLUSION

The data collected through this study reflects that there has been a change in the status and position of women in the Mauritian society over the last three decades, which has transformed the roles of women and impacted upon the social fabric of society. Sexist attitudes have weakened among educated cohorts. Women have been brought out from the seclusion and subordination that they experienced within the home and their role in society has expanded and become more visible. The progress achieved by women is welcomed. However, some changes are resented both by women and men.

While men may welcome the sharing of the economic responsibilities, they have some difficulties relating to knowledgeable and independent men. It is worse for men with less education. Progress comes with a price, and both men and women have to bear its costs. Marriage is no longer the only option for women although it is the final destiny but only after some semblance of self-reliance is achieved. Communities, which practice arranged marriages, are challenged with an increasing number of self-selecting mates.

Emerging from an agricultural to an industrial society, the Mauritian society is in the process of adapting to new ways of life and new thinking about men and women. The relationships are not determined by the men and women but by the economic, educational, social, political and media institutions of society that transform family life and gender relations. Now, individuals are aware that life is rapidly changing and women are changing, and that men have to change. Finally, women are learning that the change is not always to her advantage.

Some of the findings raise further issues. If women's position in the family remains subordinate, what are the solutions? Can marriage and family life thrive

on this arrangement in the 21st Century? Are respondents right in maintaining that equal power in family relations is destabilizing? Does it create unclear boundaries? Are men still the elite gender and unwilling to share power? Further research is needed in this area.

THE SURVEY AND FINDINGS

THE RESULTS OF THE HYPOTHESES

The survey aimed to test a number of hypotheses about gender relations and attitudes. These are presented in this section.

Any discrepancy in the total percentages from 100.0 is due to non-response, which is no more than 1percent. Often, the superfluous percentage for 'No' is included for clarity.

Generally, when there is no significance from a Chi-squared test for a table it is not reported. However, sometimes they have been included because they have been specifically requested or they make the text easier to understand. Similarly, some columns have been have been obvious or understood.

The chi-squared test gives significance at 1% level means there is an error of 1 %

A rejecting true hypothesis. The value is the sum of the squared differences between the cell values and the corresponding expected value, with the required degrees of freedom. A Chi-squared test rules out the possibility of chance and, when significant, the difference for is real.

CONDITIONS OF WOMEN

HYPOTHESIS 1

MOST MAURITIANS AGREE THAT OVER THE LAST THIRTY YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE CONDITION OF WOMEN AS A RESULT OF IMPROVED EDUCATION (Q19) AND LEGAL REFORMS (Q20).

Most Mauritians believe that over the last thirty years, there has been an improvement in the condition of women as a result of improved education and legal reforms. 88%, which is very significant, answered yes to both questions on legal reforms and education. Almost the totality (97.2%) of respondents agrees that education has benefited women and given women an equal legal status. (98%) The provision of equality in access to education is perceived as giving women equality.

Responses indicate that most people are aware of the enhanced impact of legal reforms on the position of women in Mauritius. Also, with respect to property matters nearly 96% of responses indicate that men and women should inherit property equally.

The hypothesis that was tested is that legal and educational reforms have improved the conditions of women. Eighty per cent of responses answered yes to both questions. People are aware of the role of education in the evolution of women. The social statistical indicators and the qualitative data also support this finding. Both men and women, both 'visibles' and 'invisibles' indicated that education was the dividing line in comparing women of the post independence era and the pre independence era. Public investment in education has benefited women and contributed in enhancing their status and position in society.

TABLE VI.37
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 19-20

Q19		Q20		Q19		Q 20	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
493	12	452	54	446	07	47	05
97.2%	2.4%	98.2%	10.7%	88%	1.4%	9.3%	1%

97.2% of the population agreed to Q19 and 98% to Q20, and 88.0% to both Q19 and Q20. This is highly significant.

There is very strong evidence that supports hypothesis 1. Out of the 10.3 % who expressed mixed responses (YN, NY), 9.3 % favoured improved education but not legal reforms.

There is a significant difference in response at 1 % level to the above issue between educational levels.

Table VI.34 reveals that people within a given education level largely favour the hypothesis. People with no formal education tend to disagree. (33.3%) with hypothesis One. It is to be inferred from this that people with no education have most likely seen little improvements in their life and the conditions of women. However, we need to be careful, as only 25 respondents out of 507 had no formal education.

TABLE VI.38
EDUCATION VARIATIONS LEVELS

Level	#	YY		YN,		NY		NN	Total.#
		#	%	#	%	#	%		
No formal	21	84.0	2	8.0	2	8.0			25
Some Primary	64	90.1	6	8.5	13.5	1.4			71
Primary	95	85.6	15	13.5	1	09			111
Lower Secondary	54	93.1	3	5.2	1	1.7			58
Upper Secondary	194	89.8	21	9.7	1	0.5			216
Diploma	002	40	3	60.0	0	0.0			05
Degree	13	86.7	02	13.3	00	00			15
Total	443	88.4	52	10.4	06	1.2			501

People within a given education level largely favour the hypothesis (see YY), except for Diploma level but there are too few to justify it.

TABLE VI.39
EDUCATION LEVELS (PERCENTAGES)

Level	YY	YN	NY	NN
	%	%	%	%
No formal	4.7	3.8	33.3	
Some primary	14.4	11.5	16.7	
Primary	21.4	13.5	16.7	
Lower secondary	12.2	5.8		
Upper secondary	43.8	40.4	16.7	
Diploma	0.5	05.8	00	
Degree	2.9	03.8	00	

There is a significant difference at 1 % level in responses due to different educational levels. People with upper secondary education largely agree (44%) with hypothesis 1 and they largely (40%) favour Q19. People with no formal education tend to disagree (33.3%) with hypothesis 1, as they probably have not seen any improvement in the condition of women.

GENDER AND ETHNIC VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS ONE

There was no significant difference arising from gender and ethnic variations.

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

HYPOTHESIS 2

HIGHER EDUCATION IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR BOYS THAN FOR GIRLS (Q23)

TABLE VI.40
RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS TWO

Category	#	%
Yes	136	26.9
No	369	73.1
Total	505	100.0
Missing	1	0.4

73.1 percent of the population rejects the above hypothesis at 1 % level of significance.

TABLE VI.41
GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TWO

	Yes		No		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Male	78	31.2	172	68.8	250	100.0
Female	58	22.7	197	77.3	255	100.0
Total	369	73.1	136	26.9	505	100
Missing	02					

There is a significant difference in gender response at 5 % level. More women (77.3%) than men (68.8%) rejected the hypothesis.

REGION VARIATIONS BY URBAN AND RURAL CRITERIA

TABLE VI.42
REGIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TWO

Region	#	%	#	%	Total	
					#	%
Urban	78	39.8	118	60.2	196	100
Rural	58	18.8	251	81.2	309	100

There is a significant difference in regional response at 1 % level. More rural people (81.2%) than urban people (60.2%) rejected the hypothesis, i.e., more rural

people than urban people believe that boys' education is not more important than girls'.

From the gender table above, hypothesis 2b is rejected as 68.8% of men disapprove it. More men (31.2%) than women (22.7%) believe in the hypothesis.

From the gender table above, hypothesis 2b is rejected as 68.8% of men disapprove it. More men (31.2%) than women (22.7%) believe in the hypothesis.

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.43

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TWO

Level	YY		NN			
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No formal	5	55.6	4	44.4	9	100
Some Primary	13	46.6	15	53.6	28	100
Primary	16	31.4	35	68.8	51	100
Lower Secondary	10	37.0	17	63.0	27	100
Upper Secondary	32	26.7	88	73.3	120	100
Diploma	0	0.0	2	100.0	2	100.0
Degree	2	18.2	9	81.8	11	100
Total	78	31.5	170	68.5	248	100.0

There is a significant educational level difference in response at 2 % level. As education level increases, people tend to reject the hypothesis, i.e., they say that education is not equally more important for boys, maybe it is equally important for both sexes.

HYPOTHESIS 2B

MOST MEN BELIEVE THAT HIGHER EDUCATION IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR BOYS THAN FOR GIRLS (Q23)

From the gender table above (6.9.3.2) hypothesis 2b is rejected as 68.8% of men disapprove it. More men (31.2%) than women (22.7%) believe in the hypothesis.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.44
HYPOTHESIS TWO BY REGION

	Yes		No		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Urban	43	43.9	55	56.6	98	100
Rural	35	23.0	117	77.0	152	100
Total	78	31.2	172	68.8	250	100

Also, there is highly significant (1 % level) regional difference. More rural people say no.

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS

This is highly significant at 1% level response at educational levels.

TABLE VI.45
VARIATIONS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

Level	YY		NN		Total#	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
No formal	05	55.6	04	44.4	09	100
Some Primary	13	46.5	15	53.6	28	100
Primary	16	31.4	35	68.8	51	100
Lower Secd.	10	37.0	17	63	27	100
Upper Second.	32	26.7	88	73.3	120	100
Diploma	00	00	02	100.0	02	100
Degree	02	18.2	09	81.8	11.0	100
Total	78	31.5	170	68.5	248	100

ECONOMIC POWER

HYPOTHESIS 3

ECONOMIC POWER HAS GIVEN WOMEN CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELVES (Q21) BUT ALSO MADE WOMEN ARROGANT (Q22).

TABLE VI.46

RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS THREE

	Q21		Q22		Q21		Q22	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
#	470	35	253	252	237	19	233	16
%	93.1	6.9	50.1	49.9	46.9	3.8	46.1	3.2

93.1% of the population believes in hypothesis Q21. Very Strong evidence! But the population is equally divided (about 50 %) on hypothesis Q22.ie.

However, 46.9 percent of the population believes that hypothesis 3 is true and only 3.8 percent reject it. 49.3 % have mixed feelings and 46.1 % agree to Q21 but not to Q22. The remainder 3.2% believe that economic power has not given women confidence in themselves but has made them arrogant. 6.9.5.1 Gender variations.

TABLE VI.47

GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS THREE

%	YY	YN	NY	NN	Total
Male		54.4	40.8	4.8	100
Female		39.6	57.6	2.7	100

There is a significant difference in response due to gender at 1 % level. 54.4% of males compared to 39.6% of females totally believe in hypothesis 3.

TABLE VI.48

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS THREE

	YY	YN	NY	NN	Total
No formal					100
Some Primary					100
Primary					100
Lower Secondary					100
Upper Secondary					100
Diploma					100
Degree					100
Total					100

This is significant by level of education at 2 % level.

INTELLIGENCE

HYPOTHESIS 4

MOST PEOPLE AGREE THAT MEN AND WOMEN ARE EQUALLY INTELLIGENT (Q24)

TABLE VI.49
RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS FOUR

	#	%
Yes	452	89.2
No	53	10.5
Total	505	99.7
Missing	2	100.2

89.2 % of the population believes in hypothesis 4. This is very strong evidence of gender equality. The objective of this question was to test if social attitudes and thinking considered women to be less intelligent.

VARIATIONS BY CULTURAL IDENTITY - CULTURAL IDENTITY OF RESPONDENTS TO HYPOTHESIS FOUR

TABLE VI.50
CULTURAL (ETHNIC) VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS FOUR

Category	Yes		No		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hindu	252	94	16	6	268	100
Muslim	73	83	15	17	88	100
Chinese	20	95.2	01	4.8	21	100
Gen. Pop.	97	99.4	14	12.6	111	100
Franco M.	10	58.8	07	41.2	17	100
Total	452	89.5	53	10.5	505	100

There is significant difference in response due to ethnicity at 1 % level. The Franco-Mauritian community thinks slightly differently: **59% agree and 41% disagree to the hypothesis**. Other communities have a higher rate of agreement on the issue.

GENDER VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.51
GENDER VARIATIONS IN RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS FOUR

Category	Yes		No		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Male	222	44.0	29	5.7	251	49.7
Female	230	45.5	24	4.8	254	50.3

Men and women equally believe strongly in hypothesis 4. i.e. men and women are equally intelligent. There is no significant difference in gender response.

222 out of 251 men (88.4 %) believe in hypothesis 4. So hypothesis 4a that 'Men disagree that women and men are equally intelligent' is rejected with very strong evidence.

SUPERIORITY

HYPOTHESIS 5

MEN BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE NATURALLY SUPERIOR TO WOMEN (Q26).

TABLE VI.52

HYPOTHESIS FIVE

Category	#	%
Yes	358	70.6
No	148	29.2
Total*	506	99.8
Missing	1	.02

70.6 % of the population strongly believe in the hypothesis 5, i.e. ‘men believe that they are naturally superior to women’, is true. This is highly significant and challenges thinking on gender equality. However this only reflects that men believe that they are naturally superior but does not confirm that they are. What such thinking reflects is strongly patriarchal thinking and attitudes and belief in the superiority of males even when supporting the view that men and women are equally intelligent. Can be equally intelligent but still one gender may be considered inferior or superior to the other despite equality.

GENDER VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.53

GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS FIVE

	Male		Female		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	204	80.9	153	60.2	357	57.0
No	48	19.1	101	39.8	149	43.0
Total	252	100.0	254	100.0	506	100.0

There is very strong significant difference at 1 % level in gender perspective. More males (80.9 %) than females (60.2%) believe that men are naturally superior to women. But more than half of women still believed in the superiority of males.

Under the null hypothesis that there is no difference gender-wise to the hypothesis, the expected cell frequency is 126.5. Allowing for continuity correction, chi-squared (1df) is ----, which is significant at 1% level. We reject the

null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis that there is very strong significant difference in gender perspective at 1 % level.

TABLE VI.54
CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONS

Identity	Yes (%)	No%
Hindu	73.5	26.5
Muslim	69.7	30.3
Chinese	61.9	38.1
Gen. Pop.	68.5	68.5
Franco M.	58.8	58.8
Total	70.8	29.2

There is no significant difference by ethnicity.

There is strong significant difference at 1% level by ethnicity.

The Franco-Mauritian community thinks somewhat differently (58.8%).

VARIATIONS BY URBAN-RURAL CRITERIA

TABLE VI.55
CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONS

	Urban		Rural		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	120	61.2	238	76.8	358	70.8
No	76	38.8	72	23.2	148	29.2
Total	196	100.0	310	100.0	506	100.0

There is significant difference at 1 % level by region.

76.8% of the rural people compared to 61.2% urban people believe in the hypothesis five, i.e. 'men think that they are naturally superior to women.

TABLE VI.56
VARIATIONS BY REGION AND GENDER

	Male	Female
	Yes %	Yes %
Urban	69.4	53.1
Rural	88.9	65.0

There is significant difference at 1% level among males but no significant difference at 5% level among females.

There is significant difference at 3 % level in urban population and 1% level in rural population.

88.9% rural men compared to 69.4% urban men believe in the hypothesis.
65% rural females compared with 53% urban females support the hypothesis.

TABLE VI.57
EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS FIVE

Level	% Yes
No formal	88.5
Some Primary	80.3
Primary	71.2
Lower Secondary	69.0
Upper Secondary	69.4
Diploma	60.0
Degree	20

There is a significant difference at 1 % level by educational level. As the educational level increases, there is less support for the hypothesis (from 89 to 20 %).

TABLE VI.58
VARIATIONS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND GENDER

Level Level	Male % Yes	Female % Yes
No formal	77.8	94.1
Some Primary	78.6	81.4
Primary	88.2	56.7
Lower Secondary	96.3	45.2
Upper Secondary	81.8	53.7
Diploma	50.0	66.7
Degree	18.2	25

Further, there is a highly significant difference at 1% level in response by educational level gender-wise. Males with lower secondary level (96 %) and females with no formal education level (94%) favour more the hypothesis

Primary and secondary educated people provide more support for the hypothesis at 1 % level.

LEADERSHIP

HYPOTHESIS 6

‘Most people believe that women can be equally good leaders as men (Q28) and therefore there ought to be more women employed in leadership and top management positions (Q29), including women prime minister (Q30).’

TABLE VI.59

HYPOTHESIS SIX

	Q28		Q29		Q30		Q28		YYN		YNN	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	YYY	NNN	YYN	YNN	Yes	No
#	387	118	322	183	241	265	194	88	143	79		
%	76.3	23.3	63.5	36.1	47.5	52.3	38.8	17.6	28.2	15.6		

76.3% of the population believes in Q28, 63.5 % in Q29 and only 47.5% in Q30.

Investigating those who have mixed feelings about it. However, 38.3% really believe in hypothesis 6 while 17.6% reject it totally.

TABLE VI.60

EXAMINING THE MIXED FEELINGS

	YNN			YNN		
	YNY	YYN	NYN	NNY	YYN	YNN
#	30	105	8	8	0	57
%	5.9	20.7	1.6	1.6	0	11.1

20.7% of the population agrees to Q 28 and Q 29 but not to Q 30.

11.2% of the population agree to Q 28 but disagree to both Q 29 and Q 30.

However, only 5.9% of the population agree that women can be as good leaders as men and can be prime minister but would not accept that more women be employed in leadership and top management positions.

TABLE VI.61

GENDER VARIATIONS IN HYPOTHESES SIX

	YYY	YYN	YNN	NNN
Male	28.0	24.4	22.0	25.6
Female	32	33	2.2	9.4
Total	38.5	28.4	15.7	17.5

There is significant difference by gender (1% level). More females (48.8%) agree totally with the hypothesis than males (28.0%). 25.6% of the males disagree totally to the hypothesis. For the mixed feelings, Q30 seems hard to accept.

TABLE VI.62
CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS SIX

	YYY	YYN	YNN	NNN
Hindu	38.8	27.4	13.9	20.3
Muslim	24.7	30.3	21.3	23.6
Chinese	42.9	23.8	19.0	14.3
General Population	51.4	28.8	11.7	8.1
Franco Mauritian	23.5	35.3	35.3	5.9
Total				

There is significant difference by ethnicity (1% level). The General Population, the Chinese and Hindu communities are more agreeable to the hypothesis whereas about one fifth of the Muslim and the Hindu disagree completely with the hypothesis. More Franco-Mauritians tend to have mixed feelings.

WOMEN ARE TOO INDECISIVE TO BE GOOD LEADERS**HYPOTHESIS 7****MEN FEEL THAT WOMEN ARE TOO INDECISIVE TO BECOME GOOD LEADERS (Q32)**

TABLE VI.63
POPULATION'S VIEWS TO HYPOTHESIS SEVEN

	#	%
Yes	286	56.4
No	217	42.8
Total	503	99.2
Missing	4	0.8

56.4 % said 'yes' that women are too indecisive to be good leaders. This reflects a gender bias and may explain for the glass-ceiling situation with respect to representation of women at higher levels of decision-making and power.

TABLE VI.64
GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS SEVEN

	Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	152	60.6	134	53
No	98	39.0	119	47
Total	250	99.6	253	100

Consider the response of males. 60.8% of the men believe in hypothesis 7 that women are too indecisive to become good leaders. A majority, and not a minority, of men believe so. Hypothesis 7 is rejected at 1% level.

Women are about equally divided over this issue. There is no statistical significant difference from women's response.

URBAN RURAL VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.65
REGIONAL –URBAN RURAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS SEVEN

	Yes	No	Total
Urban	42.3	57.1	99.4
Rural	65.9	34.1	100.0

There is a significant difference at 1 % level between urban and rural response. More rural people (66%) favoured the hypothesis than urban people (42.3 %).

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS

Yes, women are too indecisive to become good leaders.

TABLE VI.66
EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS SEVEN

Attainment	% Yes
No formal	84.6
Some Primary	54.9
Primary	56.0
Lower Secondary	65.5
Upper Secondary	53.7
Diploma	40.0
Degree	26.7

There is significant difference in response at 1% level by educational level. The more educated believe less in the hypothesis i.e., the higher the education, the less support for the hypothesis.

EMPLOYMENT**HYPOTHESIS 8**

IN EMPLOYMENT, IT FAIR THAT MEN ARE PREFERRED TO WOMEN (Q26) BECAUSE MEN ARE NATURALLY SUPERIOR TO WOMEN (Q25).

TABLE VI.67
RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS EIGHT

	Q25		Q26		Q25		Q26	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	YN	NY
#	333	173	358	148	266	81	92	67
%	65.7	34.1	70.8	29.2	52.6	16.0	18.1	13.2

65.7% of the population support Q25, 70.8% Q26 and 52.6% both (hypothesis 8). This is significant at 1% level of significance. 16 % reject it and 31.3 % have mixed feelings. 18.1 % agree with Q25 but not with Q26, and 13.2 % with the other way round.

GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS EIGHT

TABLE VI.68
GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS EIGHT

	YY	YN	NY	NN
Male	58.6	31.5		10.0
Female	46.7	31.4	22	22
Total	52.6	31.4		16.0

There is very strong evidence (at 1 % level) in gender difference. More males (58.6%) support the hypothesis, and as expected more females (22.0%) disagree totally with it. Both genders have equal mixed feelings

TABLE VI.69
EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS EIGHT

Attainment	YY	YN NY	NN
No formal	88.5	7.7	3.8
Some Primary	64.8	22.5	12.7
Primary	48.6	34.2	17.1
Lower Secondary	46.6	37.9	15.5
Upper Secondary	50.9	34.3	14.8
Diploma	40.0	40.0	20.0
Degree	20.0	20.0	60.0

There is very strong evidence (at 1 % level) of difference due to the level of education. As the educational level increases, support for the above hypothesis erodes (from 88.5 to 20.0%).

REGIONAL-URBAN RURAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS EIGHT

TABLE VI.70
URBAN-RURAL VARIATIONS

Region	YY	YN NY	NN
Urban	46.4	37.2	16.3
Rural	56.5	27.7	15.8

There is some evidence at 5 % level in regional difference. There is more support from the rural (56.5%) than the urban population (46.4%).

GENDER EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT AND INHERITANCE

HYPOTHESIS 9

MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE IN THE EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN (Q27) TO INHERIT PROPERTY EQUALLY (Q36) AND IN EQUAL RIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT (Q50)

TABLE VI.71

RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS NINE

	Q27		Q36		Q50		Q27		Q36	Q50
	Yes	No	Yes	No			Yes	Yes	YYY	YNN
#	465	41	486	20	414	90	386	5	92	21
%	91.9	8.1	95.9	3.9	82.1	17.9	76.1	1.0	18.0	4.2

An overwhelming majority believes in each hypothesis and in the joint hypothesis 9.

76.1% of the population believes very strongly in hypothesis 9. Only 1% rejects it totally.

TABLE VI.72

EXAMINING THE MAJOR PART (18.1%) OF MIXED FEELINGS

	YYN	YNY	NYN
#	66	8	18
%	13.0	1.6	3.6

13.0% of the population agree with Q27 and Q36 but disagree with Q50 (socio-economic freedom of equal right to employment). These views and attitudes may be explained by the thinking that a man is the principal wage earner for the family and thus responsible for supporting the family.

CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONSTO HYPOTHESIS NINE

TABLE VI.73

CULTURAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS NINE

	YY	YN/NY	NN
Hindu	82.1	14.9	2.2
Muslim	73.3	20.0	2.2
Chinese	90.9	-	9.1
General Population	82.1	14.3	3.6
Franco Mauritian	87.5	12.5	-

There is strong evidence of difference in ethnicity at 1 % level. The Chinese community is very clear about the hypothesis and 90.9 % support it and 9.1 % disagree to it. Muslim is less supportive (73.3%). It may be implied that norms of patriarchy are stronger among the Muslim community than other groups?

There is strong evidence of differences in ethnicity at 1 % level and in region at 3 % level.

DOMINANCE**HYPOTHESIS 10**

MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT IT IS NORMAL FOR MEN TO ASSERT THEMSELVES OVER THEIR WIVES.

(Q 51, Q 46, Q 57, Q 58, Q 59)

TABLE VI.74**RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS TEN**

	YYYYY	NNNN	Mixed	YYYYN	YYN	YYNNN	YNNNN
#	106	20	374	111	110	97	56
%	20.6	3.9	75.2	21.9	21.7	19.1	11.0

21 % of the population believes strongly in hypothesis 10 and 4 % reject it completely. The majority (75.2 %) has mixed feelings. Further analysis reveals that 22% have problems with any one or two parts and 19% with any three parts of the compound hypothesis.

GENDER VARIATIONS - HYPOTHESIS TEN**TABLE VI.75****GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TEN**

	YYYYY	YYYYN	YYN	YYNNN	YNNNN	NNNNN
Male	64.2	51.4	52.7	34.0	48.2	35.0
Female	35.8	48.6	47.3	66.0	51.8	65.0

There is significant difference by gender at 1% level. More men (64.2%) than women (35.8%) support the hypothesis (that it is normal for men to assert themselves over their wives.) totally. The finding reflects that women are less accepting of dominance and control in marriage relationships.

TABLE VI.76**ETHNIC VARIATIONS**

	YYYYY	YYYYN	YYN	YYNNN	YNNNN	NNNNN
Hindu	28.1	20.6	20.2	17.2	10.5	3.4
Muslim	16.9	27.0	23.6	22.5	9.0	1.1
Chinese	20.0	10.0	15.0	15.0	20.0	20.0
General Population	10.3	25.2	21.5	24.3	15.0	3.7
Franco Mauritian	5.9	17.6	52.9	11.8	0.0	11.8

There is significant difference by ethnicity at 1% level. The Franco-Mauritians and the General Population give less support to the complete hypothesis. Half of the former have problems with some two sub-hypotheses. The Chinese community seems to disagree more to the hypothesis

VIOLENCE

HYPOTHESIS 11

MOST PEOPLE ARE ACCEPTING VERBAL VIOLENCE (Q60) BETWEEN SPOUSES BUT NOT PHYSICAL VIOLENCE (Q61).

TABLE VI.77

RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS ELEVEN

	Q60		Q61		Q60		Q61	
	Yes	No	Yes	No			Yes	Yes
#	92	413	444	61	78	47	14	366
%	18.1	81.5	87.9	12.1	15.4	9.3	2.8	72.2

A huge majority (82%) rejected verbal violence (Q60), and 88% physical violence

15.4 % of the population strongly believes in accepting verbal violence but not physical violence, and 9.3 % strongly reject verbal violence but accepts physical violence.

The majority (75.0 %) has mixed feelings: 72.2 % say no to verbal violence and no to physical violence (i.e., reject both forms of violence).

TABLE VI.78

REGIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS ELEVEN

	YY	YN/NY	NN	TOTAL
Urban	17.9	77.9	5.1	100
Rural	13.9	74.1	12.0	100
Total	5.4	75.2	9.3	100

There is significant difference by region at 3 % level. A large majority (about three quarter of the urban and rural populations) has mixed feelings. More urban people (17.9%) compared to rural (13.9) agree to the complete hypothesis. However, more rural population (12.0%) than urban population (5.1%) is totally against hypothesis 11.

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS HYPOTHESIS ELEVEN

TABLE VI.79
EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS ELEVEN

Attainment	YY	YN NY	NN
No formal	23.1	76.9	0.0
Some Primary	27.1	68.6	4.3
Primary	13.5	69.4	17.1
Lower Secondary	12.1	82.8	5.2
Upper Secondary	12.0	78.7	9.3
Diploma	20.0	80.0	0.0
Degree	20.0	73.3	6.7

There is a significant difference at 2% level between responses due to educational levels.

HYPOTHESIS 11A

There is more physical violence in contemporary Mauritian families (Q62).

TABLE VI.80
RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS ELEVEN A

	#	%
Yes	284	56.0
No	220	43.4

56 % of the population believes that there is more physical violence Respondents were asked to state whether they thought that there was more physical violence than in the past. Just a little over half of the respondents believe this to be true. Violence at family level has only gained more publicity over the last one decade and the findings tend to reflect that there is an increasing awareness and non-acceptance of physical violence. It is hard to say how the situation has evolved because there is no comparative data to compare people's perception of prevalence of physical violence. As awareness increases, there will be less acceptance of physical violence, leading to greater pressures to develop policy and services that will intrude into the private spheres of social living.

HYPOTHESIS 12

CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY IS CHARACTERIZED BY INCREASING VIOLENCE (Q63, Q64).

Q63 (There are many families experiencing violence in the neighbourhood)

Q64 (Have you witness violence in your family?)

TABLE VI.81

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TWELVE

	Q63		Q64		Q63		Q64	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	YY	NN	YN	NY
#					87	244	69	122
%					17.2	48.1	9.9	24.1

17.2 % of the population strongly believes that hypothesis 12 is true whereas 48.1 % rejected it completely. 34 % have mixed feelings and 24.1 % disagree with Q63 but agree with Q64.

CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.82

CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TWELVE

%	YY	(YN, NY)	NN
Hindu	16.8	38.4	44.8
Muslim	18.2	37.5	44.3
Chinese	9.5	23.8	66.7
Gen. Pop.	18.3	21.1	60.6
Franco M.	23.5	47.1	29.4
Total	17.3	34.2	48.5

There is significant difference by ethnicity at 4 % level. The Chinese community perceives less violence and the Franco-Mauritians more. 47.1% of the latter have mixed feelings but are more inclined toward witnessing violence in the family.

ALCOHOLISM

HYPOTHESIS 13

ALCOHOLISM IS A MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEM (Q67)

TABLE VI.83
RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS THIRTEEN

	Yes	No
#	479	25
%	94.5	4.9

94.5 % of the population believes that alcoholism is a major social problem. This is a very highly significant result.

DRINKING AND MARGINALIZATION OF MEN**HYPOTHESIS 14****MEN DRINK BECAUSE THEY ARE MARGINALIZED (Q68, Q70, Q65).**

‘Men drink and become alcoholic because they are stressed by their work’ (Q68).

‘If women respected men better, man would not become alcoholic (Q70).’

Development over the last 20 years has lowered the position and status of men within the family (Q65).

TABLE VI.84
EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS FOURTEEN

	Q68		Q70		Q65		Q68	Q70	Q65	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	YYY	NNN	YYN	YNN
#	159	346	112	393	202	303	48	492	64	201
%	31.4	68.2	22.1	77.5	39.8	59.8	9.5	37.9	12.7	39.8

There is significant evidence that the population do not support the individual statements Q68, Q70, and Q65. When combined, only 9.5 % support hypothesis 14.

23.3% agree with Q68 (Men drink and become alcoholic because they are stressed by their work) but not with the other statements; 11.6% disagree to Q68 and Q65 but not with Q70; and 8.7% disagree with Q65 (Development over the last 20 years has lowered the position and status of men within the family) only.

There is a significant difference at 1% level between urban and rural response

VARIATIONS BY OCCUPATION HYPOTHEIS FOURTEEN

TABLE VI.85
OCCUPATIONAL VARIATIONS

	% YYY YYN YNN NNN			
Student	10.0	10.0	60.0	20.0
Housewife	9.7	12.1	49.2	29.0
Retired	18.4	18.4	39.5	23.7
Unemployed	4.8	0.0	33.3	61.9
Self employed	11.1	00	44.4	44.4
Professional Mgt	5.6	22.2	19.4	52.8
Clerk, Technical	4.7	7.8	43.8	43.8
Sales, Operators, Agri. workers	10.2	14.8	34.7	40.3

There is significant difference in occupation at 2% level. More unemployed (62%) disagree to the hypothesis completely. More retired people (18%) agree to the hypothesis totally.

WOMEN AND ALCOHOL INTAKE

HYPOTHESIS 15

MOST PEOPLE FEEL THAT WOMEN SHOULD NOT TAKE ANY ALCOHOL (Q67)

TABLE VI.86
RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS FIFTEEN

	#	%
Yes	430	84.8
No	75	14.8

About 85 % of the population believes that women should not take any alcohol. This is highly significant!

GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS FIFTEEN

TABLE VI.87
GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS FIFTEEN

	#	%
Male	42.2	7.5
Female	43.0	7.3

Both sexes feel equally strongly in favour of Hypothesis 15. Of the 15 % of the population who agree that women could take alcohol, both sexes are equally agreeable.

There is no significant difference gender-wise on the hypothesis.

RESPONSIBILITY

HYPOTHESIS 16

IT IS ACCEPTABLE IN SOCIETY THAT THE HUSBANDS SHOULD SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF COOKING, CLEANING AND CHILDCARE (Q54, Q56, Q57).

Q54 (If a wife is employed, her husband should share the responsibility for cooking, cleaning and child care).

Q56 (Family life is equally the responsibility of men and women).

Q57 (A wife should never use contraceptives to prevent pregnancy without the husband's permission).

TABLE VI.88

RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS SIXTEEN

	Q54		Q56		Q57		Q54	Q56	Q57	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	YYY	NNN	YYN	YNN
#	489	16	505	0	404	100	392	0	108	83
%	96.4	3.2	99.6	0	79.7	19.7	77.3	0	21.1	16.3

There is very strong evidence that 96.4% of the population favour each of the chores;

99.6% believe that family life is the responsibility of both men and women; and 79.7% agree that a wife should never use contraceptives to prevent pregnancy without the husband's permission.

However, 21% disagree with Q57 (A wife should never use contraceptives to prevent pregnancy without the husband's permission) and 16.3% agree with Q54 (If a wife is employed, her husband should share the responsibility for cooking, cleaning and child care) but not with both Q56 (Family life is equally the responsibility of men and women). And Q57.

When the chores are combined, 77.3% of the population believe very strongly in hypothesis 16. But nearly a third (32.7%) have mixed feeling.

TABLE VI.89

MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT HYPOTHESIS SIXTEEN

	YYN			YNN		
#	96	0	12	22	4	57
%	18.9	0	2.4	4.3	0.8	11.2

18.9 % of the population agree that husbands should share in cooking, cleaning and child care; that family life is equally the responsibility of men and women but disagree that a wife should never use contraceptives to prevent pregnancy without the husband's permission. 11.2 % accept that husband should share cooking; cleaning and child care but not the other chores.

CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.90

CULTURAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS SIXTEEN

%	YYY	YYN	YNN	NNN
Hindu	83.6	16.4	0.0	-
Muslim	74.2	24.7	1.1	-
Chinese	42.9	52.4	4.8	-
General Population	78.0	20.2	1.8	-
Franco M.	47.1	52.9	0.0	-
Total				

There is significant difference by ethnicity at 1 % level. The Chinese and Franco-Mauritian communities favour the hypothesis less strongly. They have problem with Q57.

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS SIXTEEN

TABLE VI.91

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHEIS SIXTEEN

Attainment	YYY	YYN	YNN	NNN
No formal	96.2	3.8	0.0	-
Some Primary	82.9	14.3	2.9	-
Primary	77.3	21.8	0.9	-
Lower Secondary	82.8	17.2	0.0	-
Upper Secondary	72.7	27.3	0.0	-
Diploma	60.0	40.0	0.0	-
Degree	80.0	13.3	6.7	-

There is significant difference by level of education at 5% level. People with no formal education give more support to the hypothesis.

AT HOME OR AT WORK

HYPOTHESIS 17

MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT WOMEN SHOULD STAY AT HOME (Q52) BUT DUE TO ECONOMIC REASONS, IT IS BETTER THAT THEY GO TO WORK (Q39)

TABLE VI.92
RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS SEVENTEEN

	Q52		Q39		Q52, 39			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	YY	NN	YN	NY
#	455	50	460	46	415	6	44	40
%	89.7	9.9	90.7	9.1	81.9	1.2	8.7	7.9

About 90 % of the population believe that women should stay at home but the same proportion believe that, due to economic reasons, it is better that women go to work.

However, when faced with this apparent contradiction, still 82 % of the population agree with hypothesis 17 and 16.6 % have mixed feelings: about half of them (8.7) agree that women should stay at home and not go to work even for economic reasons, and the other half (7.9 %) believe that women should not stay at home and should work.

There is significant difference by ethnicity (1% level), age-group (1% level), region (5% level), occupation (1 % level), and by level of education (1% level)??

The realities are that economic necessity is a modern condition and necessitates that women work. Traditional attitudes are still strong. If economic necessity was not a push factor, then responses favour that women stay at home. Both men and women support these vies as the following table reflects.

GENDER VARIATIONS IN RESPONSE

TABLE VII.93
GENDER VARIATIONS HYPOTHESIS SEVENTEEN

Gender	YY	(Y, N)	NN
Male	80.9	17.5	1.6
Female	83.5	15.7	0.8
Total	82.2	16.6	1.2

There is no significant difference by gender. Both sexes support the hypothesis strongly.

ETHNICITY AND GENDER VARIATIONS IN RESPONSE TO HYPOTHESIS SEVENTEEN

TABLE VI.94

GENDER AND ETHNICITY VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS SEVENTEEN

%	YY		NN		YN	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Hindu	111	111	1	1	22	22
Muslim	34	40	2		8	
Chinese	6	8	0	2	4	-
General Population	44	46	0	10	9	-
Franco M.	8	7	0	1	1	-
Total						

REGION AND GENDER RESPONSE

TABLE VI.95

REGION AND GENDER VARIABLES TO HYPOTHESIS SEVENTEEN

%	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Yes	38	46	74	78	75	153	116	131	247

ARRANGED MARRIAGES ARE BETTER THAN LOVE MARRIAGES**HYPOTHESIS 18**

The general feeling in Mauritian society is that arranged marriages are better than love marriages (Q53).

TABLE VI.96**RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS EIGHTEEN**

	#	%
Yes	247	48.7
No	257	50.7
Missing	3	0.6

The population is almost equally divided on this hypothesis.

GENDER RESPONSE TO HYPOTHESIS EIGHTEEN**TABLE VI.97****GENDER RESPONSE TO HYPOTHESIS EIGHTEEN**

	%	Yes	No
Male	46.4	53.6	
Female	51.6	48.4	

There is no evidence to reject the hypothesis, so accept it. 51.6% of females compared to 46.4% of males favour the hypothesis

CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONS**TABLE VI.98****CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS EIGHTEEN**

	%	Yes	No
Hindu	63.8	36.2	
Muslim	47.2	52.8	
Chinese	33.3	66.7	
Gen. Pop.	24.8	75.2	
Franco M.	0.0	100	
Total		49	51.0

There is very high significance at 1% level by ethnic group. 63.8% of Hindus agree with the hypothesis and so do 47.2% of Muslims. It is less popular among Chinese and the General Population and among the Franco-Mauritians, it is a no-no.

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.99
CULTURAL VARIATIONS HYPOTHESIS EIGHTEEN

Level	%	Yes	No
No formal		61.5	38.5
Some Primary		72.9	27.1
Primary		50.5	49.5
Lower Secondary		29.3	70.7
Upper Secondary		42.8	57.2
Diploma		20.0	80.0
Degree		73.3	26.7

There is very high significance at 1 % level due to difference in level of education.

People with lower secondary education and Diploma holders do not support the hypothesis.

ABORTION

HYPOTHESIS 19

MOST PEOPLE SUPPORT THE LEGALIZATION OF ABORTION (Q4)

TABLE VI.100

RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS NINETEEN- ABORTION

	No	%
Yes	243	47.9
No	263	51.9
Missing 1	0.2	

There is no evidence to reject the hypothesis. The population is equally divided.

51.9 % disagree to the hypothesis.

There is no significant difference by gender.

There is significant difference by ethnicity at 1% level.

CULTURAL IDENTITY VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.101

VARIATIONS BY CULTURAL IDENTITY TO HYPOTHESIS NINETEEN

%	Yes	No
Hindu	59.3	40.7
Muslim	29.2	70.8
Chinese	52.4	47.6
Gen. Pop.	39.6	60.4
Franco M.	17.6	82.4

There is significant difference by ethnic group at 1 % level. 59% of Hindus and 52% of Chinese favour the hypothesis; the other ethnic groups reject the hypothesis with the strongest opposition (82%) from the Franco-Mauritians. More Christians and Muslims oppose the hypothesis.

AGE GROUP VARIATIONS

TABLE VI.102
VARIATIONS BY AGE GROUPS - HYPOTHESIS NINETEEN

Age	Yes	%
<= 16	50	50.0
16 – 20	45.7	54.3
21 – 30	52.7	47.3
31 – 40	41.9	58.1
41 – 50	46.2	53.8
51 – 59	56.5	43.5
>= 60	49.2	50.8
Total	48.1	51.9

Finally, there is no significant difference by age group.

GENDER VARIATIONS IN HYPOTHESIS NINETEEN

TABLE VI.103
GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS NINETEEN

	Yes	No
Male	49.8	50.2
Female	46.3	53.7
Total	48.0	52.0

There is no significant difference by gender.

TABLE VI.104
REGIONAL VARIATIONS

	Yes	No
Urban	53.1	46.9
Rural	44.8	55.2

There is no significant difference by gender at 5 % level. 53.1% of urban people compared to 44.8% of rural people agree to the hypothesis.

SEXISM**HYPOTHESIS 20****SEXIST ATTITUDES ARE WEAKENING (Q43, Q45, Q48).**

Q43 Whenever there is disharmony in the home, women are always blamed.

Q45 Women are the weaker sex and they normally want to please men.

Q48 Men need more freedom than men.

TABLE VI.105**RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS TWENTY – SEXIST ATTITUDES**

	Q43		Q45		Q48		Q43, Q45, Q48			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	YYY	NNN	YYN	YNN
#	165	341	259	246	260	243	87	131	133	151
%	32.5	67.3	51.1	48.5	51.3	47.9	17.3	26.1	26.2	30.1

About two-thirds (67.3%) of the population rejects statement Q43 (Whenever there is disharmony in the home, women are always blamed), but nearly half (51%) agree with statements Q45 (Women are the weaker sex and they normally want to please men) and Q48 (Men need more freedom than men).

17.3 % support the hypothesis fully and 26.1% reject the hypothesis completely. 30.2% accepts Q43 only, and 26.2% rejects Q48 only.

There is significant difference by gender (1% level), occupation (5 % level) and by level of education (1% level).

GENDER VARIATIONS IN RESPONSE**TABLE VI. 106****GENDER VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TWENTY**

	YYY	YYN	YNN	NNN
Male	62.1	63.9	48.3	27.5
Female	37.9	36.1	51.7	72.5

There is high significant difference by gender at 1% level. More males (62.1%) agree with the hypothesis completely whereas more females (72.5%) disagree to the hypothesis.

OCCUPATIONAL VARIATIONS

There is significant difference by occupation at 5 % level.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL VIEW

TABLE VI.107
EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TWENTY

Level	YYY	YYN	YNN	NNN
No formal	30.8	26.9	34.6	7.7
Some Primary	30	15.7	27.1	27.2
Primary	17.1	24.3	28.8	29.7
Lower Secondary	20.7	31.0	20.7	27.6
Upper Secondary	11.7	31.5	31.0	25.8
Diploma	0	0	80.0	20.0
Degree	6.7	13.3	53.3	26.7

There is significant difference by level of education at 1% level. People with lower education tend to agree to the hypothesis that sexist attitudes are weakening.

MEN'S ROLE IN FAMILY**HYPOTHESIS 21****THE ROLE OF MEN IS VERY IMPORTANT IN THE FAMILY (Q44).****TABLE VI.108****RESPONSES TO HYPOTHESIS TWENTY ONE – MEN'S ROLE**

	#	%
Yes	454	89.5
No	51	10.1
Missing	2	0.4

This is highly significant at 1% level. 90% of the population agrees that the role of men is important in the family.

There is significant difference by occupation (2 % level) and by level of education (??? 1% level).

OCCUPATIONAL VARIATIONS -HYPOTHESIS TWENTY ONE**TABLE VI.109****OCCUPATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TWENTY ONE**

%	Yes	No
Student	80.0	20.0
Housewife	94.3	5.7
Retired	94.9	5.1
Unemployed	90.5	9.5
Self Employed	83.3	16.7
Professional Mgt.	77.8	21.2
Clerk, Technical	81.3	18.8
Sales, Operators,	92.6	7.4
Agri. Workers		
Other		

There is significant difference by occupation (2 % level). Professionals, students, clerks and technicians, and self-employed provide less support. The professionals provide the least support. The implications are that in the professional category women are likely to be overburdened with the responsibility of the home indicating professional men have less time for home matters.

EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS - HYPOTHESIS TWENTY ONE**TABLE VI.110****EDUCATIONAL VARIATIONS TO HYPOTHESIS TWENTY ONE**

Level	Yes	No
No formal	96.2	3.8
Some Primary	95.8	4.2
Primary	93.6	6.4
Lower Secondary	96.6	3.4
Upper Secondary	84.3	15.7
Diploma	100.0	0.0
Degree	73.3	26.7

There is significant difference by level of education (1% level).

GENDER VARIATION

There is no significant difference by gender. Views of men and women are similar as revealed by the sample survey.

ETHNICITY/CULTURAL VARIATION

There is no significant difference. Views on men and women from different cultural backgrounds show similarity in views and attitudes concerning the importance of the role of men in the family setting. But there are significant differences by occupation.

SURVEY OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT IN MAURITIUS

PART111: GENDER, VALUES AND GOALS IN LIFE

SUMMARY

Principal Component Analysis (Factor Analysis) reduces the eleven goals to two new independent sets or factors.

- to attain higher education level
- to be married and have a stable family,
- to be good.
- to live 10 family expectations.
- to have a secure job and
- to be religious and spiritual

are the strengths of our society. On the other hand, seeking material things like:

- to have political influence.
- to be rich and
- to travel and learn about other cultures.

are also important. There is no significant difference in the way that males and females express themselves about Factor I ('good') but there is a significant difference in the way that males and females express themselves about Factor 2 and males favoured Factor 2,

INTRODUCTION

There are eleven questions and respondents have to rate their life goals on a four point scale ranging from

1. Not very important,
1. Important enough,
3. Important
3. Very important.

From a sample of 507 respondents, with a negligible non-response rate of 0.6 percent, the results are summarized in the table (already submitted - see preliminary analyses):

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

How are the goals related to one another? The correlation table shows pair-wise correlation coefficients (CCs). With a large sample, any $CC > 0,4$ is considered important.

TABLE VI. 111
PAIRWISE CORRELATION OF FACTORS

Live fam Exp	Gr & Dev.	0.946	High ed.	0.403		
Growth & self dev.	High ed.	0.518	Live fam. Exp.	0.496	Good	0.485
Being rich			Mar. stal. fam.	0.460		
Being good			Mar., stal fam	0.510		
Pol.Influence		Nil				
Married, stable fam	Good	0.510	Higher ed.	0.496	Gr & du	0.460
Rel. and spiritual	Nil					
Travel & Irl Cul	Nil					
Secure jobs	Higher ed.	0.515				
Self-employment	Nil					

Living up to family expectation is very highly correlated to growth and self-development(0.946), and correlated to higher level of education (0.403). Growth and development is related (0.51) to higher level of education. Living up to family)! Expectation, being good and being married and having a stable family. The goal of getting a higher level of education is associated with growth and self-development, getting a secure job to marry and have a stable family and to live up to family expectation. Having a secure job is associated with higher of education attainment. However no association can be made with the following goals: being rich, politically influential, religious and spiritual, self-employed and to travel and learn about other cultures.

PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS**EXTRACTION METHOD**

How important are these goals for the population? A factor Analysis is indicated. The Principal Component Analysis extracted the coefficients of relative importance in the following table of communalities:

TABLE VI.112
COEFFICIENTS OF RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS

Factors	Coefficients
Being good	0.606
Growth and development	0.601
Higher Education Level	0.601
Married and having a stable family	0.595
Political influence	0.525
Travel and learn about cultures	0.427
Being rich	0.402
Live to family expectations	0.396
Secure jobs	0.385
Being self-employed	0.299
Being religious and spiritual	0.262

In a large sample, coefficients about 0.4 or greater can be considered important. So being self-employed, and being religious and spiritual are less important.

Further, the table of total variance explained, shows that the above factors (goals) can be reduced to two new independent sets of factors (that together explained 46 % of the total variance) with values 3.598 and 1.502, both being greater than 1 (significant).

How are the goals polarized to the two new factors? The component matrix table shows the correlation coefficients that indicate the relative importance to each factor.

TABLE VI.113
COMPONENT MATRIX OF CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

Factor 1		Factor 2	
Growth & development	0.774	Politically influential	0.695
Higher Education level	0.774	Rich	0.595
Married & stable family	0.689		
Being good	0.635		
Live to family expectation	0.628		
Secure job	0.616		
Travel and learn cultures	0.494		

Also, to have political influence and be rich are strengths in the other direction.

VARIMAX – ROTATION METHOD

To obtain another view of the above analysis, the rotation method using Varimax with Kaiser normalization from SPSS 10.0 is used.

TABLE VI.114
ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

Factor 1		Factor 2	
Married & Stable family	0.770	Politically influential	0.720
Being good	0.761	Rich	0.633
Growth & development	0.731	Travel and learn cultures	0.589
Higher Education level	10.730		
Live to family expectation	0.560		
Secure job	0.535		
Being religious and spiritual	0.512		

It is noted that the goal 'To be religious and spiritual' is now included under Factor I, and 'To travel and learn about other cultures' has shifted to factor 2. Good. Anyway, it was less than 0.5. Again, the goals of 'To grow and develop oneself, to attain higher 1 education level, to be married and have a stable family, to be good, to live to family expectations, to have a secure job and to be religious and spiritual are still the strengths (> 0.5) of our society. Here the relative importance has shifted lightly.

On the other hand, seeking material things like being politically influential, rich, and to travel and learn about other cultures are also important. It seems political influence and being rich are very attractive! .

REGRESSION

How does gender influence the two sets of new factors! A regression analysis of sex on the two factors and a t-test for equality of means show that

- For Factor 1, the mean difference is very small (-6.833E-03), and consequently, the difference is not significant, i.e., there is no significant difference in the way that males and females express themselves about Factor 1.
- For Factor 2. The mean difference is 0.27975) and is significant at more than 2 percent level. i.e., there is a significant difference in the way that males and females express themselves about Factor 2, further, the Group Statistics table

shows a mean of 0.1402 for males and -.1396 for females. Hence, males favoured Factor 2 to females.

Note: Multivariate analysis is subjective in the choice of the method used. Here the default method has been chosen!

CONCLUSIONS

The data collected through this study reflects that there has been a change in the status and position of women in Mauritian society over the last three decades which has transformed the roles of women and impacted upon the social fabric of society. Sexiest attitudes have weakened among educated cohorts as revealed by the survey. Women have been brought out from the seclusion and subordination that they experienced within the home and their role in society has expanded and become more visible. The progress achieved by women is welcomed and also some changes are resented, both by women and men. While men may welcome the sharing of the economic responsibilities, relating to knowledgeable and independent women presents some difficulties for men, more so for those with less education. Progress comes with a price and both men and women have to bear its costs. Marriage is no longer the only option for women although it is the final destiny but only after some semblance of self reliance is achieved. Arranged marriages in communities that followed these systems are giving way to self-selected mates. Mauritian society is at a point of emerging from an agricultural society to an industrial one and in the process of adapting to new ways of life and new thinking about men and women and the relationships between them which are not determined by the men and women but by the economic, educational, social political and media institutions of society which transform family life and relations between men and women. Individuals are now aware that life is rapidly changing, women are changing and men have to change. Women to are learning that the change is not always to her advantage.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND
REFLECTIONS ON THE WAY
AHEAD

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS ON THE WAY AHEAD

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY

This Research sought to test hypotheses about gender realities and measure changes in attitudes towards gendered development in Mauritius. The research was expected to inform us of the level of awareness of gender concepts and issues in Mauritius and the conclusions that may be drawn about the evolution in the situation of women. Using both secondary and primary sources of data, the research sought to understand the transformations and changes with respect to status, attitudes and life goals, access to power, and mainstreaming of women in economic and social domains of living from both the micro perspective as well as the macro level achievements of the national objectives and the new paradigms to the understanding of the evolution and development of women than the ones popularly known.

The starting point of this research has been the internationalisation of the Mauritian experience in gender development. This required an understanding of ongoing development and changes in this area and establishing the position of Mauritius in it. Studying the evolution in gender relations is challenging because gender relations are all-inclusive and permeate into multiple domains of social living. For example, the control of fertility makes it possible for women to be freed from the continuous drudgery of housework, improves the health of women, allows her to take up employment outside home and broadens her social contacts and spheres of interaction. Similarly, it can be claimed that multiple benefits and outcomes accrue from changes like access to education, improved legal status, health care and so on. Simply put, change in one domain has a ripple affect in other areas of living. Thus, attempting to cover the multifaceted aspects of gender development in one single research study has been ambitious. Although the study cannot claim to have covered all ground concerning the evolution of women in detail, a fairly good indication of the progress made in the various fields has been gained for this study. Children's issues are part and parcel of the broad gender context and certain aspects of this are highlighted in this chapter.

This concluding chapter is organized as follows. Section A provides the backdrop to the recommendations. Some selected results from the survey re-appear in the boxes in the

end of Section A. Section B provides the international perspective and the new paradigm for achieving gender equality. It also highlights the international perspective to many of the issues facing Mauritius. Finally, Section C focuses on the recommendations under the broad headings used in Chapters 3,4 and 5 namely political empowerment, women and the economy and women and social empowerment like education and health which also link up to the Gender Focal Point contained in the Beijing document.

A. BACKDROP

Gender Equality is critical to development and development is critical for gender development. UNDP 2000

“Equality is a sign of maturity in the process of an ever increasing ability to integrate and unite rather than to separate and individualize.”

Ref Danesh, HB Violence Free Families, Building Block of a peaceful Civilization.1995. Bahai Studies Publications. Page 04

GENDER EVOLUTION

It is evident that there has been an evolution in the roles and activities of women. Change in it self is nothing new. The process of change is acted out in each woman’s lifetime as well as between generations of women. This arises out of the process of change in age-related norms and roles. Changes over the life span are experienced by both men and women but are more prominent for women than it is for men. This means that the roles boys play when they are children are what they are expected to play as they get older. The maturing process is more dramatic for girls. Then there are the differences that have always existed between one generation of women and another. This means that change occurs at the individual growth level and also at the level of society over periods of time.

The experiences of three generations of Mauritian women in contemporary society, provides evidence of the marked differences in the living realities between elderly men and women and the younger generations. Similarly, the study also tells the story of older women today in relation to their own youth say fifty years ago in terms of education, health and the level of comfort and access to facilities that they enjoyed.

One of the most important factors marking the evolution of women in Mauritius, over the past four decades, has been political and also the change in the structure of the economy itself, which has taken place over a relatively short span of time.

The political socio-economic changes of the past three decades have had a ripple effect on the thinking and attitudes of women towards work, family and children, as well as in behaviour and relations between men and women. The expansion of the media institutions and the impact of modern technology have enhanced the process of gendered change.

The impetus to change also came from international factors and global developments have acted as a 'push factor'. Changes in the status and conditions of women have emanated from expectations about an independent Mauritius, the Human Rights Charter and international advocacy on the need to pay attention to women as a factor of development and as a factor in development process, thus setting the scene for change. International advocacy emanating from the International Women's Year and the follow up action through the UN Development Decade for women (1975 to 1985) gave a focus and speed to the process of gendered change. It spearheaded target-oriented development planning strategies for including women in policymaking and development, for the promotion of gender equality and the mainstreaming of women into the development process. Targets were set to achieve gender equality and mainstreaming in all spheres of living. Since, the inclusion of gender mainstreaming came as conditions attached to development assistance programs of the UN and other international agencies, they were expected to be effective mechanisms for achieving change in attitudes and actions at the national development planning process. An important outcome of international advocacy was the creation of a separate Ministry of Women's Affairs.

In Mauritius, concern about women has preceded the time of international advocacy, there has been a local humanitarian concern for the well being of women. During the pre-independence period, concern for welfare of women was expressed through expansion of social welfare, provision of maternal and child health care, training for women in social welfare centres. All these services emerged during an era of concern for the plight of women in Mauritius. (*Described in Chapter 3*). As part of the concern of the government and civil society, women's movements emerged at local level (Women's Associations in the rural areas existed since 1950's. During the 1970's Movement Liberation Femme, Lalit and the Mauritius Alliance of Women rallied women and started to collectively voice out their needs making demands for participation in the life of the country. The outcome of the collective efforts of both the public sector and civil society mechanisms that impacted on the institution of marriage and the family, as well as upon economic and political institutions.

THE GENDER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

“All action should promote an active visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policy and programs so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of effects on men and women.”

Beijing Platform of Action. 1995.

Gender development and mainstreaming have outcomes for power relations and for the working of social institutions, in particular on marriage and the family. Marriage is an institution of society as well as a social living arrangement for two independent individuals and both aspects are loaded with expectations emanating from their traditional roles. The freeing of sex from maternal responsibilities with better contraception has had an important influence on weakening women's bonds to traditional patterns of marriage. As part of the social evolution towards greater individualism, marriage in the more modern segments of most societies has moved from being a transaction between two families where the respective expectations of the woman and man were secondary to the expectations of the elders, the family and the community to a freer agreement between two individuals.

Another modern phenomena, is that instead of marriage being an institution providing for procreation and stability to women, it has become more individualized and is no longer seen as an institution that provides for life-long stability for women.

‘Today, you cannot really bank upon marriage. There is no guarantee that it will succeed and provide for life long security. It is important now to ensure that the girl can stand on her feet first; marriage can come later.’

View of an Urban Hindu woman (mother) aged 60

Younger Generation of women are themselves looking for more than stability and are often postponing marriage so as to satisfy their career ambitions. It could be, that by the time they consider marriage, they are seeking a means to overcoming the loneliness of existence, of experiencing deeper intimacy and of gaining the freedom both to redesign relatedness with a wider world and to engage in meaningful activities. But this modern concept of marriage runs counter to the established, traditional roles, attitudes and expectations of marriage. Thus the very conceptualisation of marriage has changed.

The girls today are different. They are more ambitious than the boys. They want a very equal relationship in marriage. They are very different from women of my mother's generation and even women of my generation. They question their men and are not submissive.

Views of an urban middle aged male catholic respondent.

As such marriage is becoming an institution where besides fulfilling current expectations, men and women seek to be free from various emotions – such as emotions of deprivation or discrimination. This is the ‘dominance-subjugation syndrome’ which women, more than men experience; only because of the stereotyping men and women experience from birth. Each partner therefore loads the other with expectations of support to seek psychological fulfilment, though the fulfilment that is being sought may not be clear to either of them. As a result today’s marriages have become rather fragile leading to higher incidence of a break down of the marriage. The nuclear family bears more strains today with two working members each bringing in their own load of stress which weighs down on the institution. In earlier times, much of these stresses were shouldered by the many members of the community which today is reduced in numbers. The more the institution of marriage is divorced from the larger family or the more nuclear and isolated it becomes from other members of the wider circle of the family, or even from the community, the higher the risk of a breakdown of the marriage. Today’s family has become highly vulnerable.

In the western industrial society, the home and the family are considered by sociologists to be the focus of struggle between men and women.¹⁸² It is the family that creates the home.

Families have always been subjected to change, for instance when children are born they have different roles at different ages, they marry and leave and so forth. These are normal cyclical changes families’ experience. Families also have been known to be reformed as a result of death of one spouse. Now more families are reforming due to divorce. Changes in families include stepparent and step siblings.

The male female relationships too have been changing. For man marriage and family provided a transition from dependence to independence and authority. For the women, under the traditional set up, it was always a status of dependence within the family. A good woman was always seen in the context of obedience to father or husband and attending to the family always a priority. These realities of women’s position within marriage and her economic and emotional dependence on the husband are changing globally and the trends are observable in Mauritius

¹⁸² Delmont, S. Ibid. Page 94.

also. Women too are moving towards more independence. With respect to relationships, sociologists¹⁸³ have researched family arrangements and roles. In the views of sociologist Dench, the traditional family, which corresponds to positional family, emphasizes the roles and functions of the members within marriage in relation to the position they occupy in the family. It is argued that the 'positional family' provides for stability. However it is less favoured by the young, some of whom may be childfree or women in full time work who prefer the 'personal' marriage which is based on deriving mutual satisfaction from the marriage relationships. Globally, the personal marriages are not just limited to heterosexual marriages but also marriages between people of the same sex which are now emerging. (Gays and Lesbians, these trends however are not yet visible in Mauritius.) This calls for readjustments to be made all down the road of marriage and not mere strict adherence to age-old norms and values, which in some cases seem to have lost all meaning.

However Dench and other sociologists now argue that it is easier for a partner, in particular, the man to opt out of the marriage relationship when personal fulfilment is not gratifying. Thus personal marriages will last only as long as the partners experience satisfaction failing which they contract out. The personal marriage therefore allows men, more than women, to '*escape from their moral and financial duties*'. The bio-emotion connection of the mother with the child, if there is one, and economic and social dependence makes it more difficult for women to contract out of the marriage and responsibility for child and family.

In the past, it was assumed that marriages would be life long, dissolved mainly through death. Now there is an increased awareness among parents¹⁸⁴, even in Mauritius, that marriage may not work. Although a good marriage is still the desired destiny for women, it is also realised that it may not last and it may not also happen. This presents a challenge to prospects of motherhood and sexual fulfilment. Women may want children without marriage. If women marry later or do not marry, what decisions do they take about sexual fulfilment? These are some of the questions which modern women of the younger generation in Mauritius face. The choices they make may not be acceptable to older women of the previous generations.

Girls today are too free in their relationship with men. They wear very revealing clothes and do not value virginity.

Women Focus Group, (aged 60) Petit Riviere.

The survey has indicated that this new ambivalent view on marriage was not attractive to older women in this research who condemned the attitudes of

¹⁸³ Dench.G,1996. Bernstein, B. referenced on pages98&99. in Delmont. S, Changed Women, Unchanged Men.2001.Open Univ.

¹⁸⁴ Findings from focus groups and in depth interviews.

younger women whom they considered would appear to be held by only a small segment of the younger female population. The young tend to show less restraint in their sexual behaviour. Most older women frowned upon the way younger women dressed, behaved or spent their money. They agreed that not all young girls fell into this mould of being and the majority of young people were serious, studied well and had high ambitions regarding their future jobs, place in society and marriage. The overwhelming concern of the young appeared to be to become economically self-reliant and have a good social status. Issues such as having sex before marriage, choice of marriage partner or independence were secondary and could be modified to meet their primary goal. It became clear from the study that while the older generation were more dogmatic and had fixed principles of life, the younger generation were quite pragmatic as regards women drinking, mixed marriage and sexual behaviour.

It is clear that in spite of following a western model of socio economic development, society is still largely traditional and conditioned by erstwhile beliefs, norms, practices and modes of conduct which remains mostly unquestioned in its larger routine application. The status of the family in society is often maintained by its adherence to these traditional values rather than by its direct contribution to society.

Statistically, more families are nuclear in Mauritius as in most westernised countries and divorce rates are increasing in Mauritius as internationally. But because of the cultural mix of the peoples of Mauritius who belong to all the key ethnic and religious groups in the world, Mauritius cannot be easily compared to any one country and the type of institution marriage represents compared to any western model.

For example, even if families are nuclear, in a number of cases, children from these families are left to the care of their grand parents the whole day while both parents are at work. Quite often the family is statistically nuclear, but many meals may be taken at the home of the parents. On the other hand, some couples continue to remain with their parents not because of any traditional ties but only to save enough money to buy their own home. Thus, all major decisions are taken by the couple with the support of the extended family and not by the oldest member of the family as is the case in traditional families. This is borne out from the survey.

What the responses from the Survey are yielding is that clear-cut categorization cannot easily be made about Mauritian families. In some respects the family is traditional and in other cases, personal and unconventional. The traditional seems to be changing to accommodate the need for generating higher incomes and to meet socio economic and status obligations. Thus whether a family remains traditional or goes nuclear depends on economic as much as cultural factors.

SURVEY RESULTS – FAMILY SET UP

As shown by the survey groups' discussions, 40 percent of the women interviewed were living within the traditional family set up while 20 percent were in a nuclear family. Only one woman had severed close ties with her family. In all the other cases, the links were from almost daily contact to meeting married sons and daughters every week.

But despite genuine efforts made by both men and women, both men and women keep regressing to older models. Men regress to the role of provider and controller of relatedness outside the home. Similarly, women tend to regress into the role of homemaker and mother from time to time. They expect husbands to continue to bestow love and care on them while at the same time women expect encouragement and support from their husbands while they take on new initiatives to demonstrate that they are equal partners in the marriage. A large number of the younger families would fall into this group. The third type of marriage refers to a union with both partners representing a gender-free identity and where equality and a sense of freedom liberate the partners from negative compromises and coercion. Both partners mutually avow and cherish a set of values, which they believe is essential for the sustainability of the family. Mauritian society is fast changing and opening out to new life styles among couples who wish to explore and discover each other as human beings or to design and create a new life space of harmony, mutual support and peace which is an important part of the new developmental paradigm incorporating gender sensitivity. It transpired from the Survey that older men and women have more traditional views than younger ones on a number of issues but not all.

SURVEY RESULTS - MAURITIAN SOCIETY

The survey has shown that education and legal reform have been considered as having led to progress of women by most of the surveyed population who have had some education themselves. And this progressive nature of Mauritian society is demonstrated by the Survey with about 73 % rejecting the hypothesis. "*Higher education is more important for boys than for girls*". Although there are some variations in the response between men and women and by region, the differences are not very significant. There is a significant educational level difference in response at 2% significance level. i.e. people with least education did not favour equal higher education for boys and girls.

The social fabric of society has changed over the last thirty years as a result of changes in the system or economic and the educational institutions. The developments over the last three decades have changed the mainstream patterns and roles of women but there has not been much change in the activities of men. Men always worked outside the home and were the main income earners. Nothing

much has changed with this. Men still work outside home and consider this to be their primary domain of activities and roles. They are still supposed to be the 'breadwinner' and head of the household.

Although things are changing, men continue to do very little of unpaid work, either in the home or the community.

- Looking after children is not for men. Response of an urban middle-aged catholic respondent - In-depth interview.
- In the survey 90% of respondents stated that women should stay home but can go to work due to economic necessity. Basic attitudes are that home is the natural domain for women.
- *'There is a clear indication that responsibility of childcare is overwhelmingly the responsibility of women.'* Page 77. *Work and The Family. ILO/CASR 2002.*

But women have changed. True, women continue to do most of the unpaid work in the home and community but they also work for wages outside the home and have some economic power. Women have taken on new roles but have not necessarily relinquished their traditional roles. These roles define their relations with men as dictated by the circumstances of their cultural, religious and social milieu. Women's interaction with men outside marriage has changed. It was very restricted in the past, now friendships at work include both males and females. It is not possible for women to relinquish their home making roles as long as women and society value the reproductive and child rearing roles. The result at this point of time is that there is a very mixed pattern of gender roles and gender relations.

SURVEY RESULTS - SHARED DOMESTIC ROLES

The findings from the survey reflect that 71% of respondents (Men and women) favour that women stay home to look after the children. This is very traditional. However, 91% of respondents believed that it is desirable that women go out to work to improve the economic conditions of the family. 95% also believe that if the wife is employed, the husband should share the responsibility for cooking, cleaning and childcare.

The recent research on Work and the Family the findings indicate that 58% of women respondents stated that their husband was "*useful in the home but 3% stated that their husband was never useful.*" This indicates that women are carrying on with their multiple responsibilities - CASR-ILO 2002.

51% of respondents believe that marriage and family works better if a wife earns less than the husband. 65% of respondents favoured that if there is a disagreement, it is best for the family if the wife submits to the husbands' views. Fifty percent of

the respondents stated that arranged marriages are to be preferred over love marriages as they work better to preserve family ties and stabilities. Survey findings reveal:

About 70% of respondents shared the view that household chores are equally the responsibility of both men and women. But nearly a third did not affirm the hypothesis.

WOMEN AND POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENT

Participation in decision-making has been a powerful tool for gender mainstreaming, internationally. Participation of women in politics has been minimal in most countries with the exception of the Nordic countries where emancipation of women started earlier and seems to have ingrained in the mores of the people. One of the reasons why political empowerment has not kept in pace with socio economic equality is that for women to enter into the political inner circle, there needs to be greater appreciation among their men peers on the ability of women to be active political subjects. What has been happening in most countries, and especially developing countries, is that when women began to agitate for greater empowerment, some concessions are made and changes in legislation and services were made available to them. It is only a few women who succeed in become active partners in formulating gender sensitive public policies. Women become objects of policy and are often not themselves formulating them. In fact, most internationally successful female politicians tend to steer quite clear of gender politics and compete as equals among male politicians.

Having close links to the political class has been important in developing countries to survive the cutthroat competition of the democratic process or any other political process. Research has shown that getting more women involved in politics requires effective participation and networking among government policy makers and NGO's. It will also mean that women will need to work with greater autonomy and transparency with effective monitoring to be accountable. There are several pre-requisites; including networking among civil society organisations and NGOs separate from the state, the state's commitment to women's equality and an atmosphere of openness about women's equality and about women's issues in the society at large. It also may require state support and guarantees media access for groups otherwise marginalized from power. Other requirements are the rights of citizens to information and participation, along with official tolerance of criticism of the state and room for compromises among social partners, and the ability to engage in "public action", which is the combined action of states, pressure groups and political activists in the public domain. In addition to these, women in particular may need resources to be able to monitor governments, international financial institutions and corporations in order to verify information about operations and procedures. Such resources need to be available on terms that do not compromise the autonomy of women's groups.

SURVEY RESULTS – HEADWAY IN POLITICS

The question may be asked, *How were some women in Mauritius able to cross the traditional thresholds and venture into a world dominated by men and where a woman had no role models of her gender to follow?* The qualitative data suggests that women who were able to make it to the top positions (political arena) were facilitated and inspired by their individual situations and circumstances and did not find themselves in the public arena as a result of any collective action. Behind 40 % of the women politicians interviewed it was the father/husband who had a vision for the daughter/wife, which often was contrary to social norms and expectations. Because the participation of women in politics has been individual driven as opposed to by collective action, the situation is that today women have not made great headway in attaining top decision making in the country.

This lack of progress in politics runs counter to their achievements in other sectors.

SURVEY RESULTS - WOMEN AS LEADERS

Findings from the survey reflect that 76% of the total respondents held views that women make equally good leaders as men. But only 28% of men believed this to be true. 61% of men and 53% of women also subscribe to the view that Mauritius is ready for a woman prime minister. The higher the education of the respondents, the greater the support for women in politics. The multipurpose household survey reported that when it comes to decision making about participation of family members in politics, 41.8% favoured collective decision-making, 21.5 husbands only and 1% wives only.

The reality is that the political arena has failed to attract women and recruit women in the same proportionate numbers as men. In fact, the trends have shown that instead of improving the participation of women in politics has declined or at best maintained status quo.

It appears that there is resistance to women becoming too powerful. For the gendered approach to bear fruit, the emphasis should be on the qualities of efficiency for political functions and for promotion within the system. The biological identity should not be taken as a negative consideration. Several consultants have already pointed out the need to inform and conscientise political parties and politicians to bear out their commitment to gender equality in the political system.

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

Women have contributed to Mauritius' economic success in several ways. Firstly, they constituted the bulk of the labour force in the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) sector prior to which women supported agriculture. And female activity rate has been rising. One of the difficulties faced by women is to maintain a balance between home and their employment. Careful attention should be paid to the equal participation and valuation of both partners so that housework is valued. How can we overcome this problem, i.e. how can we enhance the economic empowerment of women so that they can reach their full potential both at home and at work?

Under the traditional model, there was a polarization of roles. Thus social policy and social security strategy was to cover the breadwinner. Marriage was supposed to guarantee income security to women. Under the contemporary structure, women take on disproportionately more responsibility. The options for women are that they have a choice to put family first. In which case, they either work part time, or full time or do just unpaid work. (This means that they may end up with low incomes if doing part time work or no work) The other alternative can be that women put career first, reduce unpaid work and have few or no children.

The arguments using the citizenship perspective would support that women are second class citizens since they not only do a lot of unpaid work, but implicitly it is alright to ignore that unpaid work by not giving any significance to it. Women are also the poorer gender. So is it fair that the poor should do more than their share of unpaid work? If there is one gender inequality that stands out very starkly and prominently, it is the failure to recognize the unpaid work of women and overlook their role in homemaking and the care of children. Women's work in the home is marginalised.

The important role played by women in the economy has been undisputed but has it led to an improvement in the quality of life of women and society? It is clear from the above analysis that for women to enjoy fully the pride of achieving a fulfilling career in the labour market as well as in the home they need a wide range of back up services.

The recent research of ILO on work and Family in Mauritius reported that women and men differed significantly in their answers to what they would like most. Women wanted someone to help them at home: Men wanted more time for leisure.¹⁸⁵ 18% of respondents in the study. They found it most difficult to balance work and family responsibility. Lower paid workers found they were unable to purchase some of the support services needed.

¹⁸⁵ ILO. CASR 2002 Work and the Family University of Mauritius Press.

The most important is provision for the almost full time care of babies and part time and off and on care for children. The other important support required by women is for the care of older members of the family, to be able to redeploy their skills so as to become more useful to the families, spend time in creative leisure time activities or if infirm seek to rehabilitate themselves through existing health services.

SOCIAL PARAMETERS

EDUCATION

The research through this study has indicated that parents make no discrimination at a home level in the education of their daughters and believe that education is equally important for boys and girls.

Education and developing self-reliance are now considered very important for both boys and girls. Parents are increasing realizing that education and economic self-reliance for girls is a priority over marriage. Marriage must happen after achievement of self-reliance. Therefore, there is a change in the thinking of women and their expectations. For men, there has not been much of a change. Men always married after achieving some semblance of economic self-reliance.

It is not only that women too want to be self-reliant, but they want better jobs as well. Women want to move away from manual jobs. To achieve this, more education is required. Already, the results of examinations at different levels are indicating the superior performance of girls in examinations over boys. The empowerment of women has occurred through implementation of egalitarian legislation, diversification of employment opportunities and acceptance of education as being essential for both boys and girls. The greater empowerment of the woman has occurred at the level of both the public domain and the private domain of the family. The change that has taken place is that whereas in the past parents considered higher education and training as less important for girls, parents are now pushing girls to study further.

SURVEY RESULTS – EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

The in-depth interviews revealed that among working class families (unskilled and semiskilled workers) the girls are more motivated to study than the boys. And parents too feel that if the boy does not study, he can survive as there are several vocational and technical occupations, such as welding and pipe laying to choose from including manual work which are remunerative. These same options are not available to women. There is a social and cultural factor that has pushed up the demand for better education of girls. This remains linked to marriage. The belief

is that better education and training increases the chances of women getting a better marriage partner.¹⁸⁶

This is an area where women have made much progress. There is some need to improve the entry of women into the newer subjects like computer studies. The technical fields continue to attract fewer women and until a few women make a success of becoming technicians and become good role models. Science and Technology is where women show no interest while in all other areas they excel.

The enrolment ratios of women in the tertiary level have already risen considerably. Again, women tend to prefer the soft subjects like languages and social studies. It is women who have to take the challenge of developing the skills required by the labour market and into areas where the jobs and prospects lie.

HEALTH

It is an incontestable fact that there has been a sustained improvement in the health of the population over the last three decades. Many old problems of health have been resolved but new ones threaten the health of women and anaemia and malnutrition still persist on the scene. Mauritius still has a high infant mortality rate for a country having the development status that Mauritius has achieved. The explanations for the high infant mortality rates is linked to the health of the mother. (Slow foetal growth and immaturity) The estimated large number of abortions is another reason for worry over the reproductive health of women. The evolution in the nature of disease indicates that the principal causes of ill health emanate from non-communicable diseases resulting from changes in lifestyles and social habits. Mauritius has the highest rate of diabetes and hypertension and cancers are on the increase. The health of women is at increasing risk due to factors like increase in smoking, alcoholism and obesity. In fact the non-communicable diseases have debilitated the health scenario both for men and women and needs to be addressed urgently.

¹⁸⁶ Research. Focus group discussions.

TABLE VII.1
CAUSES OF DEATH REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

Cause	Male	Female
Circulatory System	44.8	50.8
Respiratory System	10.3	8.6
Neoplasms	8.7	10.3
Injury and poisoning	9	4.4
Diabetes mellitus	3.8	5.8
Renal failure	3.7	3.6
Pregnancy		0.2

Source : Women in figures – Page 10.2001

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA underlines the link between women's education and health reviewing the commitment to universal access to education and reproductive health services by the year 2015.

Reproductive health has today become a very serious issue with the scourge of HIV-AIDS which has rendered women and children more vulnerable than ever. The last two generations of women have chosen to have smaller families and the next generation will do the same provided education and reproductive health facilities remain the same or improve.

Developing countries that have invested in health and education have enabled women to make their own fertility choices and they have registered faster economic growth than those that have not. Mauritius has its fair share of this positive experience with family planning services accessible and where couples are now choosing the number, timing and spacing of their children so as to ensure that there are enough resources for each family member to prosper and thrive.

BREAST-FEEDING

Breast-feeding is a health issue which benefits both the mother and the child. However, increasing one of the saddest outcomes of industrialisation is the disuse of one of the most fulfilling and natural of human actions, that of breast feeding. The reasons for the drop are manifold and include employment and lack of awareness and preparation for breast-feeding. The practice can only be made more common by persistent sensitisation. Facilities in the work place have to be improved in a realistic way. In the US and other westernised societies, there has been a move to breast-feeding as a result of greater sensitisation. Another reason why breast feeding is regaining popularity is that as women are

better able to control the decision to have a child, more births are desired births which means women have their babies when they are prepared to make time available for them. Such decisions are only possible when women are empowered. Child bearing should not be an accident of a sex act but a concerted decision to create a new being and give it all the care needed.

ABORTION

This is a thorny issue and the survey has also not given a clear indication of whether society is for or against abortion as almost equal percentages were for both sides. It is clear from the statistics that abortion could actually be increasing as it is becoming easier to perform without risk. Are Mauritians actually using it as a means of family planning, if so why are we spending so much on the family planning programme? The bottom line is that all births should be desired births and if an abortion is required to end an unwanted pregnancy resulting from a rape or similar situation, it would appear to be justifiable. But who is to decide whether the birth is wanted or not? It is when the onus is shifted to a third party that abuse and inequality of access to abortion could arise. It is a sense of pity for the woman that is aroused when one hears about an abortion case that has been detected. She is probably poor and could not afford to go abroad to a country where abortion is legal or unaware of the more expensive shrewder doctors who know how to remain undetected. Is that what we call justice and equal access to all?

Another related issue is that of teenage pregnancy. The number of teenagers who get pregnant though few is growing. It is more likely that if teenagers begin to use abortion to get rid of their first pregnancy, they will continue to use it as a means of family control as they get older. It is therefore essential that if we want to reduce the use of abortion we must ensure that teenagers do not fall pregnant or do so only when they desire and have the support necessary to become a mother.

Box VII.1

TEENAGE PREGNANCIES REPORTED

Teenage Pregnancies were 39 in year 1999, 41 in year 2000 and 52 in year 2001, showing again an increase on a yearly basis. Percentage wise as compared to the population under the age of 18, child abuse in all these forms constitute roughly to 0.5% to 1%. However, these numbers mentioned are those that had been reported but it is believed that this percentage represents only a fraction of what is really happening as for every one case reported 5 to 10 may not be reported because of various reasons especially, fear of taboo, shame and stigmatisation or simply lack of understanding and awareness.

The pro-life group would argue to allow all births to take place because of the large demand for babies from childless families in Mauritius or abroad. But that raises the question of whether we want to become society that produces children to be packed off to other countries or even other families? Also, in the face of new reproductive health technologies, is it deemed necessary?

The issues are complex and there is no simple answer. It is clear that the situation cannot be allowed to continue as it is at present. Some suggestions as to what can be done are in Section C under recommendations.

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE AGEING WOMEN

This is a growing problem and the situation can only worsen as women enter higher profile jobs, more women enter the age of menopause as well as more often a lonely, love less old age. With the breakdown of the traditional network and extended family links, human contact becomes less frequent. How do we help the new ambitious yet family – sensitive women maintain a balance between the two seemingly opposition pulls. Women are in a state of transition. And we have to discuss their problems so as to enable them to find a balance.

As regards older women who may have left the labour market, the change in their status can make them vulnerable to many psychological fears about their usefulness in the family and in society. Menopause is as much a physical health problem as a psychological one and therefore counselling and discussion with other women and medical professionals is important.

The plight of the aged women is in many respects the most pathetic. She can easily become truly a burden to the family even for the more well to do families and quite often commands no respect for all the years of self-sacrifice that she has given the family. Once again, sensitising the families themselves and organising social welfare support for them offers the best solution.

Families must not be portrayed as social entities that only create costs for society. Families should be seen as the fundamental building block of society. Families should be viewed in the context of the very important social functions that they provide, such a raising, socializing and educating the next generation, caring for the elderly, and providing a supportive environment to all family members. Older persons must be recognised for their social, economic and political contributions. Their life experience can offer valuable approaches to various problems that the younger

generations face. The cutting edge of development is at the community level and the youth can bring a unique contribution provided they are supported at different stages of their growth and development.

Women face a lonely future as they grow older. Marriages are becoming empty.

Women Focus Group. The Visibles.

CHILDREN'S ISSUES AND MENTAL HEALTH

"The degeneration of mental health as underlined on World Mental Health Day is also associated with the increasing prevalence of child exploitation, violence and trauma throughout the world and it does not require an astute psychologist to tell us that gender issues are deeply and inextricable intertwined with children's issues."

Since child welfare is an integral part of family health, it is of utmost importance that the physical and mental health of children are taken on board right from birth through adolescence and early childhood.

The infant mortality rate for Mauritius has been fluctuating at around 20 0/00 until 2000 when it fell to 15, which is still high for the country with a socio economic status of Mauritius. It is linked to the health and social conditions of women.

The recent research on Work and family reported that 20% of women stated that the children looked after themselves.¹⁸⁷ (page 77) In 2000, the Continuous Multipurpose Household Survey had reported that 43% of women reported that no one looked after their children in their absence.

Reference Women in Figures, 2001. Government of Mauritius.

Children's issues and women's issues are inextricably woven together and often their welfare needs to be understood in the context of these links and fused interests. From the statistics showing the extent of the problem of violence and traumatic events on children are alarming in which the women's responsibility and concern is directly involved:

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*

International trends:

- (i) Between 14% to 42% of children worldwide have experience at least one traumatic event in their lifetime.
- (ii) World Health Organisation reports that 40 million children under the age of 15 are subject to abuse and neglect each year.
- (iii) Child abuse occurs in 30% to 60% of family violence cases that involve families with children.
- (iv) About 4 million adolescents have been victims of serious physical assault and 9 million have witnessed serious violence. According to official estimates in the USA, it has been estimated that between 2000 to 4000 child death occur annually because of child abuse and neglect. About a million children are being maltreated by their parents each year, as many as 200,000 sexually abused and 200,000 - 300,000 psychologically abused. In Mauritius, the extent of Domestic Violence is similarly alarming and adds to the mental health problem for women and children.

Box VII.2
TRENDS IN MAURITIUS – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Reports of abuse and neglect in children worldwide show that approximately 32% of children are under 5 years of age, 27% are between 5 and 9 years of age, 27% are between 10 and 14 years old and 14% are between 15 and 18 years.

The number of children both sexes included who suffered physical abuse by parents was 377 in 1999, 268 in year 2000, and 306 in year 2001. Physical abuse by others was 34 in 1999, 65 in year 2000, 61 in 2001.

Neglect of children of both sexes together with failure to thrive and abandonment by father, mother, both parents and by other guardians were as follows:

518 in year 1999

344 in year 2000

393 in year 2001

In such type of abuse there were more boys than girls.

Emotional Deprivation and Physical Abuse again in both sexes were as follows:

681 in year 1999

654 in year 2000

703 in year 2001, showing an increase on a yearly basis. More girls than boys were traumatised in this category.

The statistics of sexual abuse including sexual intercourse with minor under age of 16, attempt upon chastity, sexual harassment, sodomy, rape, incest and forced into prostitution were as follows:

134 in year 1999

153 in year 2000

135 in year 2001

The gross majority being of female sex.

The words of Daniel Goleman author of Emotional Intelligence has many insights into parental handling of the children's life.

"Perhaps the most disturbing single piece of data in this book, 'Emotional Intelligence' comes from a massive survey of parents and teachers and shows a world-wide trend for the present generation of children to be more troubled emotionally than the last: more lonely and depressed, more angry and unruly, more nervous and prone to worry, more impulsive and aggressive.

If there is a remedy, I feel it must lie in how we prepare our young for life. At present we leave the emotional education of our children to chance, with ever more disastrous results. One solution is a new vision of what schools can do to educate the whole student, bringing together mind and heart in the classroom. Our journey ends with visits to innovative classes that aim to give children a grounding in the basics of

emotional intelligence. I can foresee a day when education will routinely include inculcating essential human competencies such as self-awareness, self-control, and empathy and the arts of listening, resolving conflicts and cooperation."

[Extract from book by Daniel Goleman entitled Emotional Intelligence - What it can matter more than IQ]

The data on child abuse and neglect represents only the tip of the iceberg. Children's mental health and well being are endangered in many ways as a result of not only abusive action but also as a result of lack of understanding and awareness on emotional needs of children's inability to meet and address emotional needs due to ignorance and maladaptation to change and the trauma of conjugal life.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

For most part of history, the problem of domestic violence remained shrouded in the private domain of the family. It is now justifiably, become a public concern and recognised internationally as a problem affecting the status and well being of women. The Beijing Platform for Action for achieving gender equality includes a focus on the need to address the problem of violence against women. It is not possible to mainstream equality in the face of continuation of violence against women. The social and economic costs of family violence are incalculable. The price of violence is high monetarily, damaged individuals and functioning. It must be publicly denounced as a threat to human development and well being. Media must portray men and women in egalitarian relationships (*Ref. Danesh HB Ibid*).

In Mauritius, the second half of the 1990s saw the initiation of significant action to protect women from domestic violence and preventive action directed towards the goal of elimination of violence against women. Legislative provisions were passed in 1997 to protect individuals from domestic violence.

The Protection from Domestic Violence Act 1997 makes provisions for protection through Protection orders, Occupation Order and Tenancy Order. The act has facilitated to break the silence related to abuse and violence against spouses but the zero tolerance culture has yet to set in. Many families and women are reluctant to report abuse and violence. Many retract after reporting.

TABLE VII.2
TRENDS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Reported cases as at Jan 2002	6009
Protection Orders issued	3006
Protection Orders refused	0965
Tenancy orders	08
Occupation orders	027
Protection orders withdrawn	225

Box VII. 3

The survey results have shown that around 82% of respondents disapproved of physical and verbal violence between spouses. 41.4% stated having witnessed violence in the family. However, 18% of respondents stated that they found verbal violence an acceptable condition between spouses and 12% were even accepting of physical violence

Despite the legislation and other policy-oriented action to combat domestic violence, the culture of violence has to be eliminated through continued education and monitoring of impact of the legislation and policies. It is still not mandatory for the perpetrator of violence to follow counselling and other behaviour modification treatment. Spouses who seek protection against domestic violence want the violence to stop, they do not want the marriage to end. Non-family member also perpetrate violence against women and children. Women are subjected to sexual harassment in overt and covert forms. The process of reporting of sexual violence is very stressful and difficult, a process through which a women is made to feel as if she were responsible for it and invited the sexual violence and aggression. This deters many women from reporting the violence. However women must come forward and they must also be supported. Recently, Public opinion has been raised as in the case of 'Sandra O'Reilly' who was gang raped several times in 2002. This case raised such national protest that the perpetrators were brought to justice. Much now depends on women themselves to report cases of domestic violence.

It also demands involvement of men in development of action to prevent violence against women. Men need to be targeted through education and awareness creation. The passing of the legislation has been a deterrent but only limited. There must be a strong public denunciation of domestic violence. The strategies for denouncing should be to sustain education and promote awareness and attitudes of peace and non-violence.

There are several shelters that exist in the country to offer assistance to women who are victims of domestic violence. The assistance granted to women through these centres needs to be improved through:

- Upgrading skills and knowledge of staff so that they can provide a more effective service to victims of domestic violence.
- Creating a regulatory framework of minimum standards of safety and care.
- A more pleasant and hygienic environment within the shelter.
- Strengthen capacity building of staff employed in the Protection From Domestic Violence Unit of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Affairs.

When discussing mental health of women and children, the issue of Domestic Violence needs special mention. This is an area where much has been done to improve the situation of women legally speaking. New legislation as well as amendments have been introduced which facilitate the establishment of a case against perpetrators of domestic violence and act as a deterrent to others. Domestic Violence includes child abuse and neglect as well as elder abuse and neglect.

In Domestic Violence, the known injuries suffered by children at the hands of one or both parents have resulted from parents throwing them, biting, beating, stabbing, burning, sexually violating, drowning and deliberately disfiguring their own infants and children. By far, the greatest number of injuries result from beatings with various kinds of implements and instruments for example straps, waist belts, sticks, electric cords, ropes, bottles, chair legs and spoons. Some children may even have been strangled or suffocated with pillows over their mouth or with plastic bags thrown over their head.

Not all neglected and abused children are taken to Physicians or hospitals for medical attention. Many maltreated children seen by Physician may go unrecognised and hence not reported. With all the statistics, probably only the upper proportion of a submerged iceberg is seen. The true incidence rates and distribution pattern of child abuse and neglect may unfortunately remain unknown.

An overview of the Mauritian situation for the last years regarding the number of cases of violence will show the pertinence of the issue. In fact, according to available statistics, for period 1995 to August 2002, there have been amongst others:

6974 cases of children with psychological problems
5126 cases of battered children by parents
1383 cases of abandoned children
1346 cases of children not attending schools
1303 cases of children victim of sexual abuse/rape
878 cases of undeclared children
261 cases of battered children by teachers

B. ESTABLISHING THE POSITION OF MAURITIUS IN THE MAP OF FEMINISM

Sara Delmont¹⁸⁸ states that feminism has had three phases so far. The first phase started from the middle of the nineteenth century to the first quarter of the twentieth century. The outcome of this '*wave of feminism*' got women's rights issues into the public sphere in the now developed countries. This early feminist sought equality but views about women's behaviour were '*puritan*' or orthodox with respect to behaviour, use of alcohol, sex and dress.

In Mauritius, during this period, Mauritius was just shaking off the shackles of extreme forms of inequality in society, that of slavery and the era of indentured (which some historians¹⁸⁹ have labelled as new system of slavery) labour had begun. Men were therefore themselves the under trodden and the position of women could only have been worse off as described in Chapter 3.

The second wave of feminism in the west, stretching from the 1918 to 1968 focused on achieving '*social reform and revolution in the private sphere*' of women's lives. The fight was for practical issues and the main achievements were Sexual freedom, Contraception and Social service support. In Mauritius, promotion of contraception and improved child and maternal health were very much on the national agendas during this period. The difference from the west was that the focus on women's issues was not due as much to demands from local feminists' groups as it was a more humanitarian approach of male decision makers themselves. Achievement of equality and end to discrimination and women's oppression within the private sphere had become public concerns, internationally.

It was during this period, in Mauritius, when political freedom and independence was fought. Women played a role in this fight but in a passive way. Unlike their foreign sisters, they did not have to fight for the right to vote as the political system gave them this right. They were not in a position to fight for personal freedom; as they lived within a highly closed patriarchal society. The majority of women during this period would not have believed that existence outside the strict traditions of the family home was possible.

The agenda for the third wave of feminism has been spearheaded universally through the UN system and other world for in most countries.

¹⁸⁸ Delmont, S. 2001. *Changing Women, Unchanged Men*. Page 09. Open University Press.

¹⁸⁹ Tinkler, H A New System of Slavery.

The endorsement by countries has not been always the same or unanimous. Countries have been selective in choosing aspects of gender mainstreaming and gender equality that fitted with the local sentiments and culture – some of which have been incorporated into the development planning exercise. Mauritius has also signed most of the UN and regional agreements for improving the conditions of women and has begun implementing some of the gender mainstreaming strategies.

The final stage has been marked by some backlash on women and government's efforts to achieve gender equality. Feminist thinking has been attacked by thinkers like Dench¹⁹⁰ and Fukuyama,¹⁹¹ who assert that the feminists are '*destroying the family and therefore society by encouraging women to abandon traditional family life.*' Based on his study of 221 persons, Dench has gone to the extent of affirming that '*feminism has gone too far and that men have become detached from society and their financial responsibilities for children.*'

Mauritius can be placed somewhere in beginnings of the second stage with only some of the younger segments of society seeking out to attain greater personal freedom and individual rights rather than adopt the family and community support sub-systems. At the public level, Government has honoured most of its international commitments and introduced the necessary legislation in most areas. At the national level, although some of the older men and women felt that with economic freedom, women had gained too much liberty and power which could destroy family stability, the majority still felt that it was the woman who had to make concessions for the sake of the family. Thus, it would appear that in Mauritius the reversion to the feminist movement has not been reached. It is possible that given the good sense of men and women here and the strong family attachment, the backlash referred to by Dench and Fukuyama will not occur in Mauritius.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Before we begin our recommendations for women and gender mainstreaming, it is necessary to understand the persistent models of women running through our mythologies and histories. These are:

- The virtuous woman who suffers. This is the type who will not raise her voice, adapt by being submissive and adopt the self-denial approach. This is the woman who nurtures others but receives little nurturing and support in return. This is her strategy for coping with the new situation.

¹⁹⁰ Dench G, 1996. *Transforming Men Cited in Delamont, ibid*,

¹⁹¹ Fukuyama, F, 1999. *The Great Disruption*. Profile Publishers. Cited in Delament. Ibid.

- The assertive woman who fights with a new morality. This is the type that asserts herself, whether in the home or community and questions all the injustices and discriminations.
- The domineering type who emulates the behaviour of male dominance and authority. She may end up being disliked by both men and women.
- The one who has spiritualised herself to suit the new paradigm and continues the struggle for equality, freedom independence, peace and harmony, whatever these may mean in the current context.

It is important to note that these four roles are not watertight. So women may exhibit any combination of the four patterns of behaviour or may change from one mode of behaviour to another depending on the issue that she is tackling. For example, she may be very submissive at home but be very assertive in the work place and in the community or vice versa. She may accept all injustices but be very firm about her religious convictions.

In the past, the majority of women fell into the first or fourth category with only a few in the second category. With empowerment, more women will move to the second category. At another level women may manifest several combinations of the different strands from all four models of behaviour based on the hundreds of struggle they fight daily. The issue that we are facing is '*Are women able to face the new alternatives and define a new locus for themselves?*' There is no doubt that here we have to initiate an intense but healthy individual search against the numerous collective scenarios that present themselves. The mode of behaviour that a woman chooses should help her integrate in her social and work setting with ease. It may be a mode, which have not been tried before but takes its roots from the tried and tested mode, which has proved to be a success in the past. It is an adaptation of the best strands of the past to soften and sweeten the legal and social powers that are available to women today.

At each critical moment, women have to make new choices and compromises, having also to accept the intended and unintended outcomes of their choices. They have to have the courage to travel beyond the crossroads. Indira Parikh and Pulian Garg¹⁹² remind us, 'we will have talked the old witch when we ask the question which road I take? And the witch answers, 'one road goes to the right; the road will take six months and a day. It is a widely travelled road, it has familiar landmarks and many travellers who can be companions; there are shelters for food and rest along the way; It is an easy road and a road of little effort; A known and familiar road which has existed

¹⁹² Garg and Pulian. Indian Women in Dialogue. Sage 1989

for ages. The other is a road is to the left, It is a road with many dangers, filled with troubled paths, barriers and turbulent rivers, high mountains deserts; Very few people dare go that way. In fact there is no road. You will have to create your paths. There are no landmarks and shelters. The road takes a year or more; It is a lonely one and you may not come out alive;" We have seen therefore that the search for the third identity will need to encompass the existential and psychological identity of women beyond the social roles. In that process the woman may find fulfilment and be able to actualise wider horizons.

This process of redefinition and seeking a new direction means that the woman has to accept both her and others as mature individuals, through re-articulation and growth processes. None of this relatedness is seen within a static and fixed mould. The commonplace media stereotypes shown in the 'usual run of the mill films' and soap operas normally reinforce conflicting and confrontational new psychodramas, keeping alive traditional outworn postures of parent child relationships and spousal relationships or relationships within kinship systems. Instead of sitting with these residues of hurt resentment and anger, women need to learn to vanquish all those factors responsible for past traumas and rebuild the family with a deeper understanding of emotional linkages. They are able to sow the seeds of a new heritage, a new philosophy.

These are the new women who create families where there is a space for all, fostering tolerance of differences amongst roles. They engender in the family the capacity to respond to individual feelings rather than the compulsions of the gendered roles (The Alternate family in Dench's model or Bernstein's personal family where each member negotiates roles and activities as best suits them.) They establish a context where conflict and hurt are as much a part of living reality as are moments of togetherness and well being. Slowly but surely, they chip away at the monolithic processes of social codes and visualize a new shape, form and colour; a meaning with which to create a new home. Their traditional roles of wife, mother, daughter, daughter in law, will all undergo great and deep transformation in the process of the psychological leap and vision.

Now at the beginning of the twenty first Century, what we are confronted with are a number of unfinished agendas and uncertainties, with no clear global patterns emerging to show the form that the evolution and development has yielded nor indications of what it ought to yield for women because it is a path that society has not walked. The western model of development does not seem to have a universal applicability for women and it has in fact created further complexities in its wake with greater isolation for men and women, broken marital unions and unfulfilled old age. The feminist movement of the sixties and seventies did not become universally acceptable and in contemporary times, arouses very little interest and debate. As shown in the

first section, Mauritian women have not reached the fourth stage in the road of feminism. The majority of Mauritian women are still in the second or third stages.

What this really means, is understanding the realities of their own parent's restricted horizons, their struggles and efforts and to find a meaning and an anchor in the self or the system. Their Socio-economic aspirations and frustrations and the exasperation of bringing up children arise from their lack of relevant modern models. In fact it means there is a need to free ourselves from ghosts of the past, take stock of present realities and deal with these realities from a point of wisdom and strength rather than as victims and captives of a dead and dying past.

This reality is a reality that encompasses evolution and growth across societies and cultures, away from the rigidities of social structures and the de-humanizing process of blind collective thinking. Men and women are thus seen beyond the roles of victims and oppressors walking through a continuum of cumulative historic experiences and experiencing the present as open free and full of choices. The vast panorama before the modern woman has its own magic of colours, fragrance and enchantments, beckoning her to take a step towards the unknown.

Every society and culture has some women who have crossed this threshold and created a space beyond the horizons. These women are the pioneers. They add more to themselves and make life and the process of living a little more wholesome, dignified and gracious than before. Each step on this path will mean dropping and making; leaving and recreating; reflecting and understanding; It would also mean the courage to experience a troubled present- the freedom to make a future choice and finally to let go the glut ridden fearsome past.

The approaches adopted for reducing inequalities and empowerment of women have included strategies of providing equal treatment, positive action and gender mainstreaming. Lees¹⁹³ explains gender mainstreaming as '*integrating equality into all policies.*' The mainstreaming approach recognizes differences between men and women and between men and men and women and women. Lees¹⁹⁴ further suggests that an operationalising of gender mainstreaming is called for.

Women are performing very many different roles and activities compared to what they did thirty years ago but there are no clear patterns about what a typical woman represents as an individual and social being. A cross pollination of gender stereotypes and gender roles has occurred. Some women

¹⁹³ Lees Theresa. *Mainstreaming Equality*. In Watson and Doyal, *Engendering Social Policy*. 1999. Open University Press.

¹⁹⁴ Lees Ibid

have been able to make progress and balance their domestic roles and roles outside the family in holistic manner with improved quality of life, while there are very many women still struggling to achieving a balance in their domestic and economic roles and are caught between norms of gender equality and the traditional norms of patriarchy into which they have been socialized as individuals. Bringing women as a group into mainstream of economic and political activity wherein they share power equally with men requires collective social action and change and finally wisdom.

The old wave of feminists was unclear about it through their puritanical thinking and rigid thought patterns. But the current wave is for more flexible equality both in the private and public domains. It has implications for behaviour patterns that are beginning to emerge.

- A number of new patterns have emerged, emanating from a rethink of values, mores and lifestyles. There was no blue print, which women could follow about their roles, status, activities and expectations in the process of women moving out of the homes and joining men as co-workers. In the Marxist and communitarian societies, the revolutionary thinking did provide some guidelines, i.e. the state would have a stake in the provision of day care support for employed women. In Mauritius, the intergenerational support has facilitated the entry of women into the labour force along with reliance on the market.
- Whether women are daughters, wives mothers and granddaughters, be it urban or rural, whether they work in offices or run homes, they have begun to evolve a new paradigm of self-development. Parents too are giving greater importance to securing training for girls that will make the daughter economically self-reliant. Women are part and parcel of the national and global process where new role models for women are being tried out on every scale, be it domestic, communal, national or international. In fact the clashes between role expectations and current realities are part of the natural tensions for today's women and are a major source of her pathos. The role model or role identification no longer rest with the family and community. It may surpass national boundaries and it is becoming more likely to be transformed by the global media and penetration of urban cultures and sub cultures.
- While tracing this journey of women to mature thresholds, the vast heritage of folklore myths and past role models lose their power to influence and mould. Is there a new identity, which women are struggling to fashion that is neither male nor female but intensely human? This identity encompasses and understands the earlier

stereotypes and seeks to transcend them. Thus in the dynamic push and pull factors of the society, the new woman is struggling for a new life force where she can build without suffering and where she can become a vibrant productive force without losing her essential being. The fundamentalists would often argue that tradition and history have set men apart and where many would follow the 19th century dictums that 'she is an impregnated dodo with nothing above and a total inability to fly'.

The importance of the change is to ensure that we work towards the development of a Concept of a '*quality individual*' has yet to become part and parcel of today's thinking. It is neither feminist nor macho but incorporates the best of both. Such thinking has not yet emerged but it is very much needed. Who shall spearhead it? How? Should it start in the family?

Social Policy must take initiatives to promote the new vision, using a multisectoral approach to spearhead the thinking at all levels of society. It requires among other initiatives the strengthening of human values education through formal and informal education systems.

This attempt of women to focus the issues on the social interaction level has often led to a dysfunctional confrontation with society, which in turn generates fear of survival. What women begin in a heroic mould, ends up with them denying themselves their legitimate space. They ignore their real resources and potential and get entrenched in demanding equality and an affirmation of their competence, indispensability and ability. The males respond by getting entrenched in their own need to bestow patronage, marginal support with the inadequate and insufficient resources at their command. This leaves women feeling marginal and secondary and of being included in a half hearted manner.

The current social and economic realities in the urbanized, globalise free market forces have only compounded the struggle of the woman for this third identity beyond the maleness and femaleness of the old order. The earlier agrarian societies had the advantage of a rich community life, group networking where men and women experienced their personhood within infrastructures they could identify with. These social infrastructures, by facilitating interaction, prevented frustration and aggression and sustained psychological well-being. E.g. observe the harsh realities of the 1940's and 50's which could have created a lot of social instability in the country but it did not.

VISIONING

Visioning requires developing new paradigms and criteria and recognizing the diversity of individuals. More than the male and the female factor, the focus should be on developing quality individuals and citizenship. The new vision should be neither male or female, nor patriarchal or matriarchal, but emphasize on human qualities, including greater spiritual awareness both at the individual and community levels.

Many women in Mauritius would tend to have limited aspirations about their roles in Mauritian development because they share the values of a patriarchal society for they have grown it in their cells.

This is evidenced by the findings in this research. 70% of the respondents strongly believed that men believe that they are naturally superior to women. 65.7% of the respondents supported the hypothesis, *"in employment it is fair that men are preferred to women because men are naturally superior to women."*

More men than women believe this to be true, but many women also believe that men are superior to women. It is in fact very important that their ideas and effectiveness in the society will need the support of other women's networks to examine this hypothesis and the reasons for it. Why do Mauritian women not have faith in themselves? Unless work is done to give women confidence in themselves, it will not be worthwhile to find places for women in positions of power. Women and women's NGO's need to network for a major sensitisation of women and their roles and capabilities. In fact questions of superiority and inferiority are deeply embedded in the psychology of our men and women and needs to be questioned and analysed in the light of modern research and psychological theories.

In order for women to participate more fully in development activities. Their increased involvement in the public sphere is a prerequisite. Women so called 'involvement' in the national sector plans usually relegates them to a passive situation of being 'trained' or 'employed' where they are not adequately consulted or involved in essential decisions. Many women in Mauritius would tend to have limited aspirations about their roles in Mauritian development because they share the values of a patriarchal society, they have from it in their cells. It is in fact very important that her ideas and effectiveness in the society will need the support of other women's networks to form a head brain of support and understanding.

The mainstream groups of women and NGOs who are accessible articulate and well connected will need to pull in the more marginalised groups since the poorest, the most disadvantaged and inaccessible groups have fewer

voices which are systematically excluded from the political and economic spheres. Foreign agencies operate mainly through official channels and bureaucracies have little understanding of women's grass-root initiatives or needs, and the way to direct them. Heavy administrative procedures and rigid and inflexible government machinery makes it virtually impossible for women to seek support.

We need in Mauritius a comprehensive understanding of the reality of our women's lives and the various opportunities that they have for improving their position. Bringing more females into the public sphere in itself signifies immense social change and we have to achieve that but the process has to progress further. It is clearly showing that women who combine the home and business or work interests have a new acceptability and can retain their family honour and status. The few in Mauritius who have made their mark realize clearly how prescribed and narrow their lives would have been without these new dimensions of involvement and decision-making. There is no doubt to be politically or socially active women must still run the gauntlet of criticism from their male relatives and even from conservative female relatives who adhere to social norms. The role of women development has cultural and ethical moorings, which cannot be neglected. Substantial shift in social values take aeons of time to happen and it also takes aeons of time for women to strengthen themselves morally and spiritually. It is not easy for women to tackle the various paradoxes and dilemmas that change in society bring in to their lives.

Many of the modern changes involve painful decisions for Mauritian women which diminishes her clout and her desire to pursue those changes whether it is to postpone marriage – have children, change life styles, move out on her own etc., '*Freedom*' in itself does not automatically bring the '*greater good*' to the largest number of women. In fact many women realize that life without the solidarity of the family and children behind her can be a lonesome, harsh life since she is prey to new forms of compromise and pressure which often crushes the stoutest of hearts and wills. There is no going back either to the 'ostrich' life of the past but the future needs must be met on new grounds of a shifting paradigm.

The New Paradigm

In the Secretary General's report on the work of the Security Council for year 2002, he reiterated his commitment to "*move the UN from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention*". Although his words pertain to prevention of conflicts in the world, it has as much relevance when we consider gender issues in its complexities.

Globalisation and technologies now available enable individuals and small groups of people to impact our world in ways only previously available to

nations. Collective decision making processes eclipsed the prevalence of our profound inter-relatedness and the individual moral responsibility that accompanies our humanity. Today's technologies magnify the capacity of individuals to dramatically affect the lives of other individuals even whole nations. We have witnessed how the errant behaviour of demented individuals can shatter our sense of security and order, leaving us without defences. Fortunately, the heroic reactions of some individuals at the cost of great personal sacrifice again reminded us that there are universal standards of ethical behaviour that bind us. In gender conflicts we need to move into more problem-solving modes and preventing deterioration in the understanding and containment of gender issues. We also need new role models of men and women who walk the talk and build trust and faith in their stances and postures.

The search for durable, self-generating solutions points us towards a focus on education around a global ethic that is premised on an interaction of Human Rights and corresponding Human Responsibilities. If well thought out, this shift from a culture of '*victims of the cycle of conflict*' to one of constructive contributors to the cycle of prevention portends the unleashing of tremendous potential. Strategic leadership is needed to eliminate misdirection and provide new direction and vision.

These universal ethical values and norms need to be integrated and consistently applied at all levels of society, from the individual level including parents and children, at the community level including politicians, school teachers, service organisations and so on as well as at national and international levels. The quality individuals nurtured by these universal ethics would produce the quality persons beyond the feminist or macho fix.

These persons would be driven by principle-centred thinking where quality would embrace thinking, acting, feeling as enunciated by Stephen Covey, Erich Fromm, Deepak Chopra and other thinkers of the latter part of the 20th century and early 21st century. The key to dealing with the challenges that face us today is the recognition of a principle-centred core within both our organisations and ourselves. The higher the consciousness the more the social, national and political will develops.

"Education of Character and Values" is the key to preventing the destruction of human resource development. If we do not solidly prevent the destruction of human resources development, we, the human family can never achieve and maintain permanent world peace, which has been a long-cherished wish of the entire human family. As we implement education policies and practices that clearly enhance human development of body, mind and soul through educating for academic excellence, skills excellence, and excellence of character, then the human family has a chance of achieving a world of peace.

[Extract from Women's Federation for World Peace International's Newsletter]

Silo¹⁹⁵'s principles supports the new paradigm of development and vision according to which, *"Things are well when they move together and not in isolation and The principle of action and reaction"* which reads, *"When you force something towards an end, you produce the contrary."* This new developmental paradigm needs to take the best and worst aspects of the patriarchal system into consideration weeding out its repressive ugliness through bold and sustained initiatives for economic freedom combined with a moral responsibility towards family and home so that the unity, harmony and sanctity of the home is not destroyed. The paradigm also envisages giving each member his own place in the sun and the respect that comes through sharing a life and nurturing a family.

Reshaping the social order through a gender realignment process is not to assume a reactionary stance and fight the strong patriarchal ingrained interests but to slowly open a new untried door of dialogue and understanding where humanizing elements must be ever kept in mind where intergenerational relations of family and community are not lost out nor the future of our children's interests destroyed through bitterness frustration and anger. Instead we will need to develop a sustainable, flexible open-reality -oriented approach [unprescribed by the narrowness of the earlier feminist stands] and connections, which allow the family maximum growth in its multi-dimensional interests. Encouraging, instead of pushing 'agendas' building relations instead of exacerbating conflicts of interests between men and women are all part of the process.

Sometimes just to show through statistics, through education, through research, through conscientisation, through advocacy, that women's rights, are human rights, that children rights are also human rights to bring in the all inclusive approach where we create a blame-free engendered society

¹⁹⁵ Silo, a South American is a philosopher who in his book ' The Inner Look' emphasized the role of the community and the individual in social and spiritual life

where coercion and subjugation become archival words and partnering and sharing the new passwords for a new gender ethic.

"Developing countries should not forever be held hostage to the research agendas by global market demand. If any form of development is empowering in the 21st century, it is development that unleashes human creativity and creates technological capacity.

Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means - if a very important one - of enlarging people's choices.

The most basic capabilities for human development are to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. Without these, many choices are simply not available, and many opportunities in life remain inaccessible.

Philosophers, economists and political leaders have long emphasized human well-being as the purpose, the end, of development.

Human development and human rights, including women's and children's rights are mutually reinforcing, helping to secure the well-being and dignity of all people, building self-respect and the respect of others."

[Extract from Human Development Report 2001]

Although we have moved further from the WID and WAD approaches, these should not just be cast aside as irrelevant. The approaches facilitated policy- makers and planners to see more clearly how women needed to have more resources and services to become beneficiaries of the development process. Policy makers saw the need to build capacity for women who were contributing more fully and effectively to development efforts. Quantifying women's work and making it visible to planners allowed more integrated approach in planning and showed that women were at the very heart of development. Women's "invisible" and "intangible" contributions were the very basis on which development was constructed but in a way that was deeply exploitative of their time and labour both paid and unpaid. This was clearly shown by the policies of structural adjustment.¹⁹⁶

As already shown in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, and the Human Development Reports of the United Nations Development Program referring to the

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period under review, far from failing to take women into account, the structural adjustment policies, the policies for greater privatisation and improving competitiveness are actually grounded in a set of assumptions, which assign certain roles and characteristics to women. Indeed, it becomes evident that both the components of the structural adjustment policies aimed at reducing consumption (the austerity measures reflected in the cuts in government expenditures in social services) as well as those aimed at increasing export-oriented production (the emphasis on the promotion of Free Trade Zones) are dependent on assumptions about the roles into which most women have been socialized. Women are expected to keep the wheels of industry rolling – generally by providing labour at a competitive cost – and at the same time maintain the family, while facing cuts in social welfare and services in health and education. Class, race, ethnicity and the level of the development of the society mediate these roles. It is for this reason that the term ‘gender’ roles rather than ‘women’s’ roles, is used to give specificity to the analysis and to reveal the differences between women, as well as men, of different social groups.

Moreover, it is because of the central importance of these roles in reproduction, in meeting the basic needs of the poorest sectors of the society, that policies, which place them in jeopardy, have negative consequences for the whole society, and ultimately for production itself. Production is not only dependent on the availability of capital, technology and markets but also on the physical, psychological and intellectual capacity of the labour force. All of these qualities are determined in the social sector, the sector in which women are key actors, not passive recipients of welfare services. Unfortunately, this critical link between women’s productive and reproductive roles is one which is typically overlooked, in conventional, growth-oriented models of development.

It is in the national interest of improving productivity and increasing economic growth, that the role played by women as mothers and homemakers be recognized. Supporting women - whether they be wives and mothers or single parents - is not a privilege they seek but a pre requisite for maintaining the family, which is the backbone of the country's moral health.

Besides, the WID/WAD approaches, as well as the more inclusive GENDER IN DEVELOPMENT (GAD) APPROACH, there is a need for an entirely new analysis of women in development which will knit issues of production and reproduction in both quantitative and qualitative terms, thus providing an alternative vision to the existing one.

THE ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS

In the Mauritian context, it is suggested that the following elements be taken into consideration when forging together 'An Alternate Analysis for Development'.

The following elements are suggested:

The analysis should recognize the differences between approaches or paradigms which aim at maintaining the *status quo* and those 'alternative' paradigms which seek to promote social change, while recognizing the limitations of an 'alternative' paradigm which remains focused on an economic, materialist, and positivist approach to the social sciences. The lack of explicitness about theoretical frameworks and paradigms has been a major contributor to the blurring of our analysis of development.

The analysis should be one, which attempts to relate experience at the micro level of the sector, community, project, or household, to the macro-economic level. A gender analysis of structural adjustment policies illustrates the ways in which macro-economic policies affect women's experiences at the level of the poorest household. Unless this experience is used to inform macro-economic policies, and vice versa (i.e. unless people at the micro level can analyse and understand their situation within a structural analysis) no meaningful change can be effected. This is what this research has explicitly done. It has gone down to the micro level and based on the fears as well as the 'feeling of well being' of people who put forward recommendations. It is however good to keep the words of the Human Development Reports well in mind to have a reality check.

"Human Development Reports, since the first in 1990, have published the human development index (HDI) as a composite measure of human development. Since then three supplementary indices have been developed: the human poverty index (HPI), gender-related development index (GDI) and gender empowerment measure (GEM). The concept of human development, however, is much broader than the HDI and these supplementary indices. It is impossible to come up with a comprehensive measure - or even a comprehensive set of indicators - because many vital dimensions of human development, such as participation in the life of the community, are not readily quantified. While simple composite measures can draw attention to the issues quite effectively, these indices are no substitute for full treatment of the rich concerns of the human development perspective."

[Extract from Human Development Report 2001]

We need a vision which is holistic i.e. one which seeks to integrate social, cultural and political dimensions into economic analysis. This has been borne out by the futility of focusing on economic production at the expense of the social sector (reproduction).

We need an analysis which recognizes the political nature of the processes of development, and that the concepts and causes of 'development' and 'underdevelopment' reflect imbalances of power within and between nations rather than the presence or absence of resources.

Finally, we need an analysis, which is feminist in orientation. We need to reject the separation of private and public domains; of the household from the economy; of personal and political realities; of the realms of feeling and intuition from that of rationality; above all we need to reject an analysis, which lies within the monetized sector of the economy.

This analysis emerged from Third World women at the end of the UN Decade for Women. This expanding network of women are proposing Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN),¹⁹⁷ and we have established a program of on-going research, training, communications, publications and advocacy extending from the grassroots to policy making at the international level.

We recognize that: '*Feminism cannot be monolithic in its issues, goals, and strategies, since it constitutes the political expression of the concerns and interests of women from different regions, classes, nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds.*' And, therefore, would have to be: 'responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women, and defined by them for themselves'. (Sen and Grown, 1987).¹⁹⁸

However, we see this diversity, built on a common opposition to gender oppression and hierarchy, as a first step in articulating and acting upon a political agenda which would include challenging all those structures, systems and relationships which perpetuate and reinforce the subordination of women, everywhere.

Most of all, we see feminism as a transformational politics, with the capacity to transform not only individual lives but all the structures of oppression and domination which shape women's lives, including racism, class and nationality.

The concept of feminism itself has been transformed. We argue that there is no issue – from the international debt to military budgets, from the

¹⁹⁷ Dawn- Association of Devi Jain, Pioneer of the New women's movements

¹⁹⁸ Sen , G and Grown.1987 title Alternative Visions?....

famines in Africa to the industrial disaster at Bhopal – which could not be illuminated by a feminist perspective. Our concern is not just for women, but also for our world. Our vision is of:

‘A world where inequality based on class, gender a race, is absent from every country and from the relationships among countries. Where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Where women’s reproductive role will be defined ... and where the massive resources now used in the production of means of destruction will be diverted to areas where they will help to relieve oppression, both inside and outside the home.’

(*Sen and Grown, 1987*).

Our work is just beginning. We link the past history of development policies to the strategies of the current systemic crises – in the production and distribution of food, water and fuel availability, international debt, militarism – and a growing conservatism opposing women’s changing roles. As we approach the 21st century, we hope that the perspectives of poor Third World women will be taken seriously in decision-making processes, from our households, communities, and workplaces to national, regional, and international levels of policy making.

The statements made by the members of the DAWN network, are not so different from many of the statements of those Europeans who have given leadership in the efforts to raise a sustainable and human world by alerting an unconcerned northern elite to the ‘*Limits to Growth*’; to those who call attention to ‘*Our Common Future*’ (Brundtland)¹⁹⁹; and to the interdependence of North and South.

But income inequality does matter. It matters in itself if people - and nations - care about their relative income status. It may also matter for instrumental reasons - that is, because it affects other outcomes.

¹⁹⁹ Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, 1994

- Inequality can exacerbate the effects of market and policy failures on growth and thus on progress against poverty. That makes inequality a special problem in poor countries, where imperfect markets and institutional failures are common.
- Concentration of income at the top can undermine the kinds of public policies - such as support for high-quality universal public education-that are likely to advance human development. Populist policies that generate inflation hurt poor people in the long run. Artificially low prices for water and sanitation mean that bankrupt public utilities never expand to poor neighbourhoods. If rich people support industrial subsidies or cheap loans for large landowners, that may reduce growth directly as well. Developing and implementing good social policies is especially difficult where inequality takes the form of concentration at the top combined with substantial poverty at the bottom-and thus the absence of a middle class that demands accountable government.
- Inequality is likely to erode social capital, including the sense of trust and citizen responsibility that is key to the formation and sustainability of sound public institutions. It can undermine participation in such common spheres of community life as parks, local sports leagues and parent-teacher associations of public schools. Street crime undermines communal life, and differences in income inequality across countries are closely associated with differences in rates of crime and violence.
- Inequality may over time increase a society's tolerance for inequality. If global pressures lead to increases in wage differences (for example, as the salaries of the most skilled and internationally mobile people rise, the social norm for what wage gap acceptable may eventually shift. If inequality matters for any of the reasons above, the possibility that it can worsen matters too.

[Extract from Human Development Report 2001-Past, Present and Future]

In 1982, at a time when the north-South dialogue had all but ceased, that visionary Italian of the Club of Rome, Aurelio Peccei,²⁰⁰ wrote in his foreword to the book *Making it Happen*:

‘At the root of the problem seems to be an incapacity or unwillingness to change our world outlook, our mentality and attitudes. At the very moment when fundamental change and innovation have become indispensable, we seem frozen in our ways of being and modes of doing.’

²⁰⁰ Peccei, Aurelio, *Making it Happen*, 1982.

The founder of the DAWN network, the Indian economist Devaki Jain, had an answer for this when she addressed the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris in 1983:

‘The more I dissect and analyse and derive and pursue, the more I see hurdles ahead of any attempt to regenerate a just and peaceful society. The tunnel does not find an end through reason alone. But I believe – it is my real belief – that with faith in the ability of humans to change their destiny through their own will and collective determination, I see the potential of a united women’s movement being a force in the world which can heal the divisions and thaw the confrontation and perhaps even the order – the economic and social order.’ (Jain, 1983).²⁰¹

RECOGNIZING THE ENDOCENTRICITY OF EXISTING PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

This calls for analysis of policy outcomes through analysis of social data and research evidence. For example, understanding what competitiveness means for gender outcomes. Competition can reduce wages of women who are already in low paid salary scales or cause them to lose their jobs. Long hours of work in the name of productivity are discriminatory towards women who already have a major responsibility and work load of the domestic sector. The impact of policies must be analysed for its impact on gender outcomes.

The mainstream groups of women and NGOs who are accessible, articulate and well connected will need to pull in the more marginalized groups. Such networking is necessary since the poorest, the most disadvantaged and inaccessible groups have fewer voices and are systematically excluded from the political and economic spheres. Foreign agencies operate mainly through official channels and bureaucracies have little understanding of women’s grass-root initiatives or needs and the way to channel them. Heavy administrative procedures and rigid and inflexible bureaucracy makes it virtually impossible for women to seek government support.

What this really means, is understanding the realities of our own parents’ restricted horizons as well as our own struggles to find a meaning and an anchor for ourselves within the system. Matching their socio-economic aspirations with the frustrations and the exasperation of bringing up children and coping with a supportive or non-supportive partner needs a

²⁰¹ *Abstract from Book ‘Changing Perceptions – Writings on Gender and Development Edited by Tina Wallace with Candida March

strong socio-spiritual foundation and conviction. In fact it means that we need to free ourselves from ghosts of the past, take stock of present realities and deal with these realities from a point of wisdom and strength rather than as victims and captives of a dead or dying past.

This reality is a reality that encompasses evolution and growth across societies and cultures, away from the rigidities of social structures and the de-humanizing process of blind collective thinking. Men and women are thus seen beyond the roles of victims and oppressor walking through negative continuum of cumulative historic experiences, she experiences the present as open free and full of choices. The vast panorama before her has its own magic of colours, fragrance and enchantments, beckoning her to take a step towards the unknown.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the main recommendations which are preceded by international experience for meeting some of the main targets that we have set for Mauritius. **Thus, the recommendations are also based on international experience and data and the national survey and analysis. Another requirement has been the need to assess the achievements made to date. Again, we have sought out the tools prepared by international organizations for measuring progress. This section has hence been organized under the headings of ‘Assessment tools’, ‘Women and politics’, ‘Women in the economy’ and ‘Women and Social parameters headings’ which have been used throughout this study.**

Gender Focal Points/Education; Health: Violence against Women; Conflict; Power and decision-making; Human Rights; media: Management of natural resources; Children and Youth.

4th World Conference on Women. Beijing. 1995.

1. APPLICATION OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS IN MAURITIUS/RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

As stated by Patricia Flore, Chair of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, targets and benchmarks are useful in the following ways.²⁰²

- *They make progress visible and measurable. Since agreements such as the Platform for Action are expressed in general terms, they provide means to its goal.*
- *They allow monitoring of trends, to see if there is progress*
- *They translate idealistic, ultimate goals into realistic stages or phases for sustained and strengthened efforts.*
- *They help determine responsibility for achieving targets*
- *They allow progress to be rewarded by general recognition*

There are many ways to assess the progress of women. One way is through statistics and indicators. A complete picture requires both narratives and numbers.

“Progress” indicates distance from or nearness to specific outcomes or targets desired/aimed for in each of the critical areas of concern (1999).

²⁰² UNIFEM Biennial Report, Progress of the World's Women 2000, United Nations Development Fund for Women

The process of gender equality and mainstreaming has already been initiated though 'gender' remains a term not understood by most persons, as this research has found. However, terminologies like gender mainstreaming are emerging as important tools at top level planning and policy making. What is required now is popularisation of gender mainstreaming and on going evaluation and research on the basis of which to measure progress and action thereon, which includes the following.

- Making progress visible and measurable. Since agreements such as the Gender Plan of Action are expressed in general terms, they provide means to its goals.
- Allow monitoring of trends, to see if there is progress, to understand how the programs implemented are working, yielding results or are not effective.
- Translate idealistic, ultimate goals into realistic stages or phases for sustained and strengthened efforts.
- Help determine responsibility for achieving targets. The mainstreaming of gendered development involves multi-sectored approach. Therefore responsibilities have to be clearly stated and owned. Gender mainstreaming requires social ownership of the agenda by civil society institutions also. Women through their collective structures must take the responsibility to keep up with the progress achieved at international levels.
- Allow progress to be rewarded by general recognition. Recognition is achieved through information sharing and dissemination activities. Women's Organizations such as the National Women's Council in Mauritius, and other women's organizations should be involved in the monitoring of the action plans and policy documents for women.

Gender disaggregated data serves as a powerful tool for monitoring and evaluations to assess outcomes in a transparent manner.

In terms of society and the role of women, measuring the empowerment of women within society is difficult because the concept itself is complex and multidimensional. It encompasses both tangible and intangible dimensions. In addition to concrete quantitative indicators, some qualitative assessment is necessary. The UN indicator framework uses indicators such as the ratio of girls' enrolment ratio to boys enrolment ration in secondary education; women's share of parliamentary representation; and women's share of paid employment in industry and services. The quantitative assessment has to be matched with a qualitative assessment of the extent to which a woman has a sense of control of her life, greater autonomy and independence and finding out the areas where there has been change over the past decade or so.

MAURITIAN EXPERIENCE

There has been considerable progress achieved according to the 3 quantitative indicators. The improvement in education enrolment of girls is comparable to boys at all levels as indicated in Chapter 5. Similarly women dominate the industrial sector and represent an important share of employment in the services sector. Albeit, the salary level at which they are employed in both these sectors needs to be taken into consideration. However it must be said that although women are moving up the salary level in these sectors, the progress has been slow.

It is at the political level that progress of Mauritian women has been lagging behind. But as seen from international data, even in some of the developed countries of Western Europe, political empowerment has been more difficult to achieve than socio-economic progress. In terms of the qualitative dimension, this study has shown that women consider that there has been an improvement in their lives over the past 3 decades; they are also in better command of their lives. Thus the qualitative aspect is positive and Mauritius can report some progress on the Women's Scoreboard as shown below.

TABLE VII.2
PROGRESS OF WOMEN SCOREBOARD, MID 1980S-1990S²⁰³

Country	Education	Employment	Politics	Per capita income	Income Equality	Determination
Mauritius	+	=	=	+	?	+
Botswana	+	+	+	+	?	+
Singapore	+	+	=	+	?	+
Jamaica	+	+	+	+	+	+
Norway	+	+	+	+	-	Na

Source: UNIFEM, Progress of the World's Women 2000(Pg Table 3.5)

Education:	Change in female net enrolment at secondary level 1985-97
Employment:	Change in women's share of paid employment in industry and services – early 1980's to mid 1990's
Parliament:	Change in women's share of seats in national parliament, 1987- 2000
Per capita income:	Annual average change in real per capita GDP, 1985 –1997
Income equality:	Change in distribution of income as measured by the gene coefficient. 19802 to 1990s
Debt reduction:	A reduction in the debt burden as measured by the rate of external debt to GNP, 1985 -1997
+ ---Increase in enrolment 1985- 1997	
- ----A decrease of deterioration	
= ----No change	
na ---not applicable: no external debt	
? --- no data was available	

²⁰³ UNIFEM, Coordinated by Diane Elson, Progress of the World's Women 2000, Biennial Report, 2000

The main recommendations for monitoring progress are as follows:

- The Ministry of Women, the University of Mauritius, the Mauritius Research Council and Government should continue to undertake qualitative and quantitative studies on the progress of women so that proper follow up is ensured. Aspects of women's lives affecting the care of children and the aged have to be given special attention.
- Mauritius has already initiated action to create disaggregated data and the process has to be sustained and mainstreamed in all domains for the fine-tuning of monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. Gender disaggregating of data on beneficiaries of self help, poverty alleviation programmes and other loan projects undertaken by banks like the Development Bank of Mauritius and even commercial banks like the Mauritius Commercial Bank or organizations like Small and Medium Industry Development Organization and the Chamber of Commerce will help evaluate and monitor the progress of women.
- The Ministry of Women itself needs to be restructured and reorganized to become more effective in attaining its stated objectives. The heavy-handed bureaucracy and utterly confused maze of rules and regulations has led to ineffectiveness and de-motivation. The National Women's Council, the Gender Bureau (now the Gender Commission) all needs to be reorganized and strengthened. They need to take a lead role in establishing guidelines for operations and policy so that the needs and demands of the local and grass root organizations can be met.
- Monitoring Gender mainstreaming Monitoring progress: The Ministry of Women, Child Development and Family Welfare and Government should continue to undertake qualitative and quantitative studies on the progress of women so that proper follow up is ensured. Aspects of women's lives affecting the care of children and the aged have to be given special attention. The gender commission should be strengthened through clarification of its objectives and action programs.

2. WOMEN AND POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENT/ RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

“ Constitutionally entrenched quotas are the best way of ensuring that targets for increasing the representation of women are met.”²⁰⁴

Commonwealth Secretariat (1998)

Several countries have introduced some form of quota system- legal or constitutional quotas- so as to increase the political representation of women. As of March 2000, the former, typically from 20 to 30 per cent, had been adopted in at least 25 countries; some of which are Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Guyana, Namibia and Norway. In France, a 1999 constitutional amendment instructs political parties to nominate equal numbers of men and women. And in the Philippines, an executive order encourages a minimum of 30 per cent representation of women in municipal assemblies.

Gender Mainstreaming means that every effort be made to broaden women’s participation in decision making at all levels of decision making. *Clear Political will is needed.*²⁰⁵

In addition, one or more major political parties have adopted quotas for women candidates in at least 6 countries: Austria, Germany, Italy, Mozambique, South Africa and Turkey. The Labour Party in Australia introduces a “target” that 35 percent of winnable seats in state and federal elections be allocated to women by 2002.

A pre-condition for greater accountability is the ability of women to be active political subjects rather than the objects of public policies. Beyond that, effective accountability requires autonomy, transparency, meaningful participation and effective monitoring. There are several pre-requisites, including:

- The existence of free and independent associations separate from the state. This requires a state commitment to women’s equality and an atmosphere of openness about women’s equality and an

²⁰⁴ Ibid, UNIFEM 2000

²⁰⁵ Gender in Development. UNDP Information Pack 2000

atmosphere of openness about women's issues in the society at large. It also may require state support and guarantees media access for groups otherwise marginalized from power;

- The right of citizens to information and participation, along with official tolerance of criticism of the state and room for compromising social partners, and the ability to engage in "public action", the combined action of states, pressure groups and political activists in the public domain;
- The resources to enable women to monitor governments, international financial institutions and corporations in order to verify information about operations and procedures. Such resources need to be available on terms that do not compromise the autonomy of women's groups.²⁰⁶

PROGRESS IN MAURITIUS ON POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Mauritius, it has been very difficult for women to obtain seats and then to win elections at both the national and local elections.

To making headway in Politics in Mauritius, some form of quota system appears to be necessary.

Parties should also be required to allocate tickets to political contestants on a proportionate basis; e.g. 30 % for women and 70 % for men. In the first instance, political parties will tend to give the safe seats to male candidates and the unsafe ones to females but if representation to Parliament is also on a proportionate basis, there will be a more genuine attempt to bring in more women to stand for elections. There needs also gender training and exposure for parliamentarians and ministers on the nature of political work commitment, vision and accountability since many political nominees are picked up from the public having little or no track record in social service and public service rendering them vulnerable and object of criticisms and sometimes even ridicule before the public.

It is strongly recommended that Government sets up a committee of parliamentarians, politicians, social partners and NGO's to debate the issue and make suggestions.

The Mauritius Research Council should conduct a study to analyse

- The number of women who have obtained tickets to stand for local and national elections over the past 3 main elections by party/independent
- The percentage of women who won the elections

²⁰⁶ Ibid UNIFEM Report

- The percentage who obtained ministerial or other portfolios
- The percentage which dropped out

Based on the data obtained it should be possible to establish some of the reasons for the lack of progress made by females in politics.

3. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WOMEN'S WORK AND PRODUCTIVITY.

If too much pressure is put upon the domestic sector to provide unpaid care work to make up for deficiencies elsewhere, the result may be a depletion of human capabilities. To maintain and enhance human capabilities, the domestic sector needs adequate inputs from all other sectors. It cannot be treated as a bottomless well; able to provide the care needed regardless of the resources it gets from the other sectors. Lack of attention to the domestic sector in economic policy-making is particularly harmful to women, since they currently have the responsibility for managing this sector.

Unpaid care work is the foundation of human existence, but it is overshadowed by the power of the state and increasingly, by the power of market forces.²⁰⁷

TABLE VII.3
TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC ROLES CONTEMPORARY ECONOMIC ROLES

	Men	Women	Men	Women
Paid work	Mostly	Very little	Same as	Changed
Greatly increased	Men before		Mainly fulltime	Often part time
Unpaid work	Exceptional	Women's work	Changed a little	Change
Same as before	Little	Home maker	Secondary	Primary

Income inequalities between countries have been accelerating since the early 1970s. An analysis of trends in world income distribution shows that the distance between the richest and the poorest country was about 44 to 1 in 1973 and 72 to 1 in 1992. In 1999, per capita incomes in East Asia had grown to three times that they were in 1980 while in Sub-Saharan African and other least-developed countries per capita incomes had fallen to below their levels in 1970.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, UNIFEM 2000

Feminisation of poverty has been underlined in the UNDP Human Development and other Reports. Women have a higher incidence of income poverty compared to men. Women's income-poverty is more severe than men's income-poverty; over time, the incidence of income-poverty among women is increasing compared to that among men.

Income-poverty refers to the lack of sufficient income to support an adequate standard of living. Its incidence is the proportion of the population whose income or consumption level falls below a nationally or internationally agreed poverty line. The widespread consensus is that comparing female and male-headed households isn't an appropriate way to measure the degree to which poverty is feminised (Fukuda-Parr 1999; Razavi 1999)

An alternative is to focus on dimensions of poverty pyramid in which personal consumption (PC) is only one element. Other elements are the enjoyment of common property resources (CPR) such as forests and rivers; state-provided commodities (SPC) such as health care and education and social security measures like widows and single parents support or old age pensions; and assets such as land and equipment. Besides these tangible dimensions, poverty also includes lack of dignity and autonomy and free time.

A particularly useful gender-sensitive indicator is the gender-poverty ratio, that is, the number of women per 100 men (or per man) in the population below the poverty line, or poorest fifth of the population.

Women have a higher incidence of income poverty compared to men. Women's income-poverty is more severe than men's income-poverty; in the lower paid occupations, women are over represented. The reasons for this would be found in the socio-economic analysis here in this report and also in the cultural factors underlined in all the chapters.

TABLE VII.4
% DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME DATA BASED ON HOUSEHOLD BUDGET SURVEY 1996/7

Income range	Male	Female	Both
<2000	7.9	33.8	17.2
2000 – 2999	8.1	20.2	12.4
3000-3999	11.2	13.2	11.9
4000-4999	12.5	8.5	11
5000-5999	10.2	5.4	8.5
6000-6999	9.9	4.1	7.8
7000-9999	17.2	7	13.6
10000-14999	11.6	4.5	9.1
15000-19999	4.8	1.9	3.8
>20000	6.4	1.3	4.7

	Rs	Rs	Rs
Average monthly salary/wage	7300	4600	6400
Median Monthly wage	5600	3300	5000

Source: Women in figures 2001. Page 15. Government of Mauritius Publication 2001

MAURITIAN WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The industrialization process in Mauritius has enabled women to enter the labour market in large numbers but this has only further increased their loads. Because of the lack of support from the spouse in taking on some of the domestic chores, many women find themselves more burdened than ever. Women, however, will not want to revert to being 'homemakers only' for various reasons; the most important being their search for economic betterment. It is also observed that men prefer to marry women who work since it enhances their own economic status, although they wish that their wives continued doing all the household chores as before. These ambivalent attitudes are responsible for creating much of the stress and tension of the present day family.

The impact of the globalisation process on women has not been studied in Mauritius but it is clear that women are the main sufferers even in Mauritius. As more local companies close down, many women find themselves unable to contribute to the family income leading to a loss of bargaining position within the family. All her unpaid work in the home is often overlooked. So why are Mauritian women not networking to represent their interests whenever a factory shuts down and at the recent African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA 2) conference when big business was present? Men have shown that they can come together to right what they considered was 'economic wrong', in the case of the White Sand Tours driver's case.

In terms of poverty as well, Mauritian women constitute the poorest segments of the population. They are either women of childbearing age who have been abandoned by their partners or older women who have survived their husbands and have been abandoned by their children.

The main recommendations for this sector are as follows:

There is a strong need to conscientise the state, the community and families themselves on the need to fill the intergenerational gaps within the family so that parents-in-laws, community members and neighbours become productive in the nurturing and care of the young. This will make the older members of the family and community feel useful while performing a nurturing role as caretakers of the

younger groups. Care taking and nurturing are the passwords of this humanized approach to welfare.

In order to develop an intergenerational policy that fits into the Mauritian complexity, a detailed study of the alternate approaches is required. State funding would be required in the undertaking of necessary preparation of a plan for older people to become useful members of society instead of being left to wither away in an old people's home or within the family without care and support. It is suggested that the Ministry of Health support the old and handicapped who are infirm and are incapacitated through mobile services. Three specific areas requiring research would be

- Study the ways and means of how older members of society could be roped in to help the youth in schools/clubs and community activities.
- Study means of using the knowledge and skills of older generation in the labour market /economy. Older people would be useful especially in ministries which depend on outreach programmes.
- Study and introduce schemes for tax rebates and concessionary loans to young couples to build extra rooms to provide for parents, which have been, mentioned in some development plans have to be reviewed.

The provision of appropriate infant and childcare should be given the highest priority. It is not simply a question of whether Mauritian women are productive or not. But the need to reconcile two seemingly opposing possibilities, which are providing Mauritian women with the opportunity to work while continuing to maintain the family and giving Mauritian employers the option to recruit single, unfettered foreign workers to keep the wheels of Mauritian industry, moving. At this juncture of the life of the EPZ, it almost looks as if the needs of women, which are also that of Mauritian society, cannot be fitted in with that of employers in the EPZ sector.

This issue needs to be examined in the wider context of the re-structuring of the EPZ and the formulation of industrial policy. Industrial development cannot be based on an unending local supply of cheap, young female labour but on older women with family responsibilities, which would prove to be more expensive. Supplementing Mauritian labour with cheaper foreign labour has proved to be an interesting alternative but for how long can we depend on foreign labour? At present, foreign labour in the EPZ represent some 15 percent of local female labour. (10,000 foreign workers as compared to 90,000 local female workers.) Greater effort should be taken to re-structuring the industrial sector so as to move into higher value niche markets in the high-income countries or into exports to the regional markets. This has been the stated policy of government for several years.

Moving into the production of higher value goods will guarantee higher incomes to employees but would like women employees to become more skilled and

possibly more polyvalent. Provision of appropriate training schemes has to be ensured.

In the agricultural sector as well women should be given the necessary technical guidance and financial support to become small agricultural entrepreneurs and market gardeners. The agro-industrial sector provides another venue for women.

The concept of productivity itself has to be reviewed in terms of industry, the individual and the family. What productivity means for a young man at the bottom of a challenging career is different from that of middle-aged women in a routine job with a family to look after. It is beyond the scoreboard of figures of hours put in and worked produced in the workplace. Some more analytical work on this aspect of productivity has to be started with the National Productivity and Creativity Council and the Mauritius Research Council.

Given the influx of recent industrial strikes and shut downs, to undertake studies to examine the impact of the globalisation process on women and on families. This is an activity that the Ministry of Women should have put in place two or three years ago. It is necessary to establish a unit in the Ministry of Women to keep track of these unemployed women so that they may be helped to find another job by being retrained if necessary or be encouraged to join the 'incubation scheme' started by SMIDO to launch into small-scale production themselves.

- Collect data of working hours, overtime payment, dismissals relating to failing to accept overtime by region, type and size of industry and management. There doesn't exist an employment agency for women. The Ministry of Women could consider either to set one up itself or to contract the job to an efficient women's NGO.

There are a few remnants of restrictive legislation and Remuneration Orders, which need to be amended/repealed. Those legislation/Remuneration orders, which need to be amended/repealed, are indicated below:

- Discrimination in pay which exist in the following remuneration orders, Tea Industry Workers (Remuneration Order) Regulations 1984, The Sugar Industry (Agriculture Workers) Remuneration Order) Regulations 1983, The Slat Manufacturing industry (Remuneration Order) Regulations 1983, The Field Crop and Orchard Workers (Remuneration Order) Regulations 1991, and Livestock Workers (Remuneration Order) Regulations 1983.²⁰⁸
- The Labour Act provides for paid maternity leave but it is restricted to three confinements only as the provisions were introduced at a time when government policy was to restrict family size to 3 children. Times have

ibid²⁰⁸ Patten, Pramila ; October 1991(pg 64)

changed and family size restriction is not a stated policy so the paid maternity leave provision should not be limited to only 3 confinements.

- As part of the overall drive to encourage women to cross the ‘glass ceiling’ and unglue themselves from sticky floors, the Ministries of Women’s affairs and Labour should draw up a ‘plan of action’ for women needing assistance. The first step would be for the Gender Commission to open ‘An Aid to Women prospecting for Promotion’ Window so that individual cases can be heard and discussed and a strategy of support drawn up. One case needing follow up is in the agricultural sector. Due to educational and other requirements few women agricultural workers rise to become ‘sirdars’ or foremen. Active steps should be taken by the to encourage women and to redress this situation.

In order to tackle poverty among women, it is necessary to establish women’s poverty profile. Mauritian women need assistance at two important levels. The first is during the period of family formation and care and the second is when they are elderly. The effectiveness of the existing social welfare programmes has to be established and a Plan of Action needs to be prepared to help women during these stages.

- Regular follow up of older women as part of the anti poverty programme is necessary. Poverty should not be simply seen as a means of providing the young and healthy of means to create incomes, it should also mean having regular monitoring of those who can no longer work and who have been abandoned by their families. It is the old who live alone and have no support who would appear to be the most vulnerable. There are around 6000 older persons living alone and the majority of them are women. Elderly women need to be protected through social security and supported to overcome loneliness and isolation.

4. SOCIAL PARAMETERS

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Developments over the last three decades have changed the status of women from being individuals who lived in the confines of the home and the shadow of their husbands/fathers, to that as income earners and independent minded and assertive individuals and as public figures. These developments create demand for education and training for women at different levels.

EDUCATION

Several international targets have been proposed as part of shaping the 21st Century. Unfortunately most of these targets have already been missed. The most serious of these missed targets have been:

BASIC EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN BY 2000

- *Goal agreed at World Conference on Education for All, 1990*
- *Need for additional international funding agreed; The UN target for donor assistance as a share of GDP is 0.7 %. This figure has not been reached and is somewhere around 0.4 % in the OECD countries and even lower for the some other developed countries.*
- *In real terms total aid for education sector lower in mid 1990s than before goal was agreed;*
- *Target date for achieving the goal put back to 2015*

MAURITIAN SOCIAL EXPERIENCE PLANNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the major factors affecting the social scene is the changing age structure of the Mauritian economy. As oft stated, the dependency ratio is going to become less favourable with the share of working to non working population falling to 3:1 within the next 10 years as compared to 7:1 today. This change in numbers of aged persons to young people is going to impact on the economy in general and on the provision of all the social services, pensions provisions and on women. All planning exercises have to take into account this new phenomenon. Women are going to be effected by this change more than men because there will be large numbers of them in the older age groups and we need to be prepared for this.

A comparative study on the changing age structures of countries, which can be socially similar to Mauritius, should be undertaken. Since the life expectancy rates of men and women are progressing differently, the sex compositions of future populations can be expected to change which will have important implications for the future development of socio-economic sectors. For example, the number of beds for older women as compared to older men in hospitals. An important outcome of the ageing process is the implication on the pension schemes. The studies undertaken to date on the impact of ageing on pensions have been of an actuarial nature. A more broad based analysis starting from population projections undertaken by the Central Statistical Office for country level as well as personal level planning would be useful. This will enable the population and women in particular to be prepared for the kind of changes that can be expected in the next few decades.

EDUCATION

Mauritius has made great strides in providing equal educational opportunities to both sexes. At the academic level, girls out perform the boys in examination achievement. However, their lifetime career success is bleak compared to their male peers. Although the reasons are obvious enough, the issue of how we can tap this formidable potential of women has not been considered.

Although there has been a transformation in the educational attainment of girls in Mauritius, there are still some shortcomings that do not put girls at par with boys. These inequalities emanate from the curriculum. Girls are drawn to subjects classified as soft options. In the domain of science and technology women are few in numbers. However, there is a change even if women are there in few numbers they are not marked by a total absence on science and technology courses. Educational reform in Mauritius has still a long way to address the glaring inequalities of opportunity whether we look at the teacher-training component, curriculum context or CPE failures and dropouts of the primary sectors. There is need to expand tertiary sector still further to open up wider range of studies and choices for women.

The main recommendations for the education sector are as follows:

- It is time, Mauritius undertook its own 'high achievers' study. It is organisations like the Mauritius Research Council, Non-Governmental Organisations that can attempt to understand the 'achievement factor' in Mauritius so as to be able to devise programmes for high academic /technical/ artistic performers to attain national recognition and make their full contribution to society. It will be necessary to conduct longitudinal studies on the laureates (both males and females) at the various school levels so as to ascertain their career paths. This will give a clear understanding of the flaws in the market for utilizing local talent and capabilities as well as to indicate the type of academic and non academic courses that lead to successful careers and life time achievement. Factors like personal character, ethnicity as well as other considerations and family and financial support which can influence career development can also be established.
- The State could make more facilities available for girls but much of such courses will need to be offered after regular working hours and it is still more difficult for social reasons to attend such programmes.
- Home economics courses in schools should be open to both sexes as catering and hotel management offers career prospects to both sexes.

Further the male sex needs to see that housework, as routine support to the family is essential to its sustainability.

In order to address existing inequalities in education, the following actions are required.

- An Action Plan designed to attract girls to join technical, science and vocational streams. Incentives of scholarships can be effective. The use of media to promote science and technology and Information Technology and to make young peoples aware of its importance and relevance in the modern world.
- Furthermore, studying the job market for girls with a certificate in science subjects as part of career guidance to encourage girls to take up science and IT subjects and inform them of the job opportunities.
- Another step could include providing more effective forms of gender-sensitive, educational and vocational guidance and counselling in order to promote equal access of girls and women to Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) courses.
- To review the school curriculum to remove genders stereotyping from curriculum and strengthens gender component in teacher training.
- The introduction of “Human Rights” in the school curriculum can be done and setting up of a Task Force to review the school curriculum and work towards the removal of stereotyping in schoolbooks. Thirdly, another measure could be by strengthening the gender component in the teacher-training program.
- The extension of teaching of science and technology subjects to senior school. This is a more radical and less democratic solution. But it can be used as an effective strategy to promote science subjects for both girls and boys. Information technology serves to make science subjects more learners friendly.
- Furthermore, studying the job market for girls with a certificate in science subjects as part of career guidance to encourage girls to take up science subjects and inform them of the job opportunities and highlight the importance of real life role models.
- Another step could include providing more effective forms of gender-sensitive, educational and vocational guidance and counselling in order to promote equal access of girls and women to Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) courses.

- Since there is a large number of dropouts after the primary school, it is important to address the issue of vocational guidance and support for students to act as a safety net. Proper counselling should also be given to these drop outs so that they are channelled to the vocational training courses which prepare them for their eventual entry into the labour market.

HEALTH

Notwithstanding the improving standards of health care, the White Paper on Health recognizes that *"---current resources and services are insufficient to meet the challenges of the pursuit of the best world standards in health and health services. The Action Plan aims at ensuring that the country has the vital services that are required and the capacity to deliver them in the most cost -effective way"*²⁰⁹

One of the most important problems facing women are non-communicable diseases which represent 74 percent of the total burden of disease in men and 76 percent in women and include diabetes, hypertension, cerebrovascular diseases, cancer, mental illness and substance related diseases linked to tobacco use and alcohol abuse.

An important strategy for combat NCD's is to enlist the collaboration of up to 80 percent of the population considered healthy so that they may be screened for NCD's. This has started since 2001 with the 'Caravane de la Santé' programme. This programme together with the proposed schemes for giving each citizen a health card and intensifying educational programmes should be implemented as part of the Health Action Plan.

In terms of cancer which accounts for about 7 percent of the burden of disease among women, the National Cancer Control Programme is already underway which provides for the early detection of cancer through screening, the upgrading of diagnosis facilities and the improvement in cancer therapy and palliative care.

Along with the above-mentioned areas, the care for the elderly has to be taken on board with the reinforcement of health check ups and support services for older women

- The Ministry of Health should mobilize senior citizens to creativity centres and other places to offer counselling and other services to their peers or the young.

²⁰⁹ Republic of Mauritius, White Paper on Health Sector Development & Reform, Ministry of Health & Quality of Life, December 2002

- Mental health has to be given greater focus for all age groups. Some of the negative connotations attached to mental ailments have to be dispelled through greater sensitisation programs. The Ministry of Women should encourage more NGOs to get involved in this area. The way forward lies in dismantling the stigma attached to mental health as a health condition. Health education must focus on mental health and promote public understanding of mental health. There is a need to study the incidence and impact of alcoholism in families. Older men and women are also rendered vulnerable to abuse and neglect. While older men usually have a spouse to look after them, older women lack such companionship and support. Social Infrastructure

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

- The introduction of Family life Education programmes for in school and out of schoolgirls and boys should be considered.

ABORTION

- A long overdue issue in Mauritius is that of abortion which should be seen in the context of human rights.

“Mauritius ranks among the few remaining countries where such severe restriction [against abortion] remain in the laws. Under no circumstances is abortion lawful. ---the provisions of the law contained in Section 235 [of the Constitution] are notable for its lack of enforcement except with rare exceptions.”²¹⁰

Since a large number of women with adequate financing and information are using abortion as a means of terminating a pregnancy successfully and another 6,000 or so are using it unsuccessfully yearly as they end up in the hospitals with complications, the real issue becomes one of safe and successful versus unsafe and unsuccessful abortion. *“By making abortion illegal we are in fact making one of the safest of all surgical procedures highly dangerous by driving it underground into the hands of unskilled and often unscrupulous practitioners.”*²¹¹

- Mauritius should honour its commitment to Article 12 of CEDAW, which requires states to eliminate discrimination against women in access to health services throughout their life cycle, particularly in the areas of family planning, pregnancy and confinement and during postnatal period.

²¹⁰ Presented by Mrs. Pramila Patten, Barrister-at-Law, Chairperson of Task Force, Task Force Report on Discrimination Against Women, October 2001

²¹¹ Ibid Patten, Pramila October 2001

Access to health care including reproductive health care is a basic right under the Convention and the latter has been defined as the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health, it also includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence as expressed in human rights documents., at the Cairo World Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995.

- The recommendation of the Task Force to repeal Section 235 of the Criminal Code and replace it with an Abortion Act which maintains that abortion remains unlawful but lays down the grounds where it is not unlawful which are maternal health, foetal disability cases, victims of rape or incest or those infected with HIV/AIDS virus.
- The long-term objectives should however be to de-criminalize abortion. This should however be preceded by considerable advocacy to ensure that de-criminalizing abortion is not perceived as accepting that abortion is used as a means of family planning.

OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In the case of domestic violence, the Task Force report of 2001²¹² sets out the necessary structure for the Ministry of Women's Affairs to deal effectively with these cases. Intensive training is required for the police, enforcement and family support officers and legal officers in dealing with domestic violence cases.

The main recommendations are

- Set up a family court to deal with all civil and criminal cases pertaining to the family.
- Given the difficulties divorced women face in obtaining alimony, to provide for the crediting of alimony directly to the bank account of the spouse in need once the order of the court has been given.
- Set up committees to (i) review the Legal Aid Act, Pensions and Family Allowance Acts (which contain some clauses which are discriminatory to women) and make recommendations for change, (ii) review legislation pertaining to the disabled so as to consolidate and improve provisions for the disabled, (iii) examine and make recommendations for allowing

²¹² ibid Patten, Pramila ;October 2001

statutory or voluntary organizations to take certain cases to court on behalf of women.

- Set up a one-stop centre in the main hospitals to provide medical care for victims of rape, domestic violence and other social ills.

CONCLUSION - EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP

The conclusions about the achievements in gender relations and gender equality show a progress. Women are heard more in both the public and private domains. Gender issues have gained prominence on national development agendas. Institutional reforms over the last four decades have been based on some foundations of gender equality. Mauritius has embarked upon sustained economic development and undertaken initiatives to address persistent gender inequalities. No one can deny that there has been improvement and the gap between men and women has been narrowed. But the mainstreaming of gender and gender equality across many dimensions of living is persistent. In gender relations men too are disadvantaged but disadvantages faced by women are more wide spread. This is why gender issues must remain in the debates on development and continued in analysis of gender in policy and its outcomes. Rigid gender roles are inefficient and impose costs to society. Gender roles will change as a result of impact of social and technological realities. It must be remembered that gender norms change more slowly than the factors that create the change. Poverty tends to maintain more gender inequalities.

In conclusion, as stated by Social Watch;

“The good news is that social indicators are showing significant progress in over 60 countries” this was the conclusion of Social watch, an organisation set up to evaluate progress towards fulfilment of commitments made at Copenhagen and Beijing at the end of five years. “The bad news is that progress is too slow to reach the goals in another 70 countries. 13 countries are in the same shape or worse off today than they were in 1990 and for almost 40 countries; the data is insufficient to say anything, which probably reflects an even worse situation.”

Through its annual report, Social Watch contributes to a process of citizen oversight of governments, UN agencies and multilateral organizations in their implementation of the Beijing and Copenhagen agreements. In 1999 this report stated, as it had the previous year:

“While the goals targeted are feasible, many countries have failed to make a sufficient effort. The assistance promised has yet to materialize, the participation of citizens is paltry and globalisation is not benefiting those who need it most.”

Progress has been made in Mauritius as well. All indicators point to this. Mauritius is fortunate that there have been regular follow-ups on the various international commitments. The most recent of these, the National Gender Action Plan provides a detailed easy to implement document of the actions required. The

appropriate mechanisms have been set up and it within the ambit of the Ministry NGOs and concerned institutions to implement them. However, the lacunae exist at the national and local level when although structure and platforms exist they are inappropriately used and sometimes virtually neglected. The management and organisational skills needs to be relooked at and imparted to make these structures effective. Lack of monitoring and evaluation reduces work to a pathetic heap of regurgitated figures and announcements amounting to nothing. This lack of direction and skills at different levels of management has made a mockery of the vision of some decision makers who wished to see women out of the morass of unnecessary suffering.

In conclusion, it may be said that Mauritian women have been both the subject and object of the social, legal and administrative changes that have given them the opportunities to achievements in their personal and professional lives. There are still existing frustrations as they are unable to face the challenges that they meet and make full use of the legal and other provisions available to them. Further capacity building, management training, upgrading skills in technology and IT will need to be implemented at all levels so that creative leadership and initiatives can be taken by women entrepreneurs, decision-makers, political leaders and opinion makers right across the different social spectrums of our society.

Today when the country is facing mega corruption scandals and the unholy machinations within the public and private sectors came to light, the role of women as reformists becomes important. Can women as the spiritual partners of men be strong enough to bring back some sense of justice and sense of ethics in our society? In addition to being the wife or mother who allows her professional requirements to be sacrificed to the needs of the man, she has now to be the moral mentor in the family, as well.

ADDENDUM 1

Update of tables in Chapters III to V

Annex Table V.2

	1990	2001	2002
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices			
(i) Value added by sector (million rupees)			
Primary	4,354	7,013	8,120
Secondary	10,878	32,641	35,713
Tertiary	18,972	70,324	79,592
Wholesale & retail trade; repair of motor vehicles motor cycles, personal & household goods	4,352	12,984	13,802
Hotels and restaurants	1,300	5,879	7,529
Education	1,392	4,817	5,147
Health and social work	829	2,986	3,237
GDP at basic prices	33,604	104,271	117,225
GDP at market prices	39,629	119,085	132,130
Per capita GDP at market prices (rupees)	37,429	100,311	110,093
Final consumption expenditure	+5.3	+4.1	+3.5
Households	+5.0	+3.5	+3.3
General government	+6.6	+7.1	+4.7
GDFCF(including aircraft & marine vessels)	+23.6	-8.2	+3.3
GDFCF(excluding aircraft & marine vessels)	+16.4	+1.0	-2.0

1. REVISED ESTIMATES | 2. PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES | 3. INCLUDES ALL STATISTICAL DISCREPANCIES

TABLE V.4: ACTIVITY RATES (15+ YEARS OLD) FOR SELECTED YEARS BY SEX AND AGE GROUPS

	1990	2001
Male	80.6	79.9
Female	34.7	41.0
Labour force Employment data		
Labour force (000)	433.0	538.5
Mauritians	432.0	522.0
Male	301.4	346.3
Female	130.6	175.7
Foreigners	1.0	16.5
Male	0.7	5.8
Female	0.3	10.7
Employment data		
Total employment	420.8	490.3
Male	292.9	321.6
Female	127.9	168.7

Source: *Http://govtstatistics.gov., Mauritius in figures*

POPULATION AND VITAL STATISTICS, SELECTED YEARS

	1990	2001
Total Resident Population	1,058.8	1,199.9
Male	529.1	594.5
Female	529.7	605.4
Median age	25.7	29.3
Vital statistics		
Live births	22,602	19,667
Deaths	7,031	7,966
Marriages	11,425	10,630
Divorces	549	...+
Crude birth rate	21.3	16.4
Total fertility rate	2.3	1.9
Crude death rate	6.6	6.6
Marriage rate	21.6	17.7
Divorce rate	1.0	..

Source: *Http://govtstatistics.gov., Mauritius in figures*

+1,191 in 1991

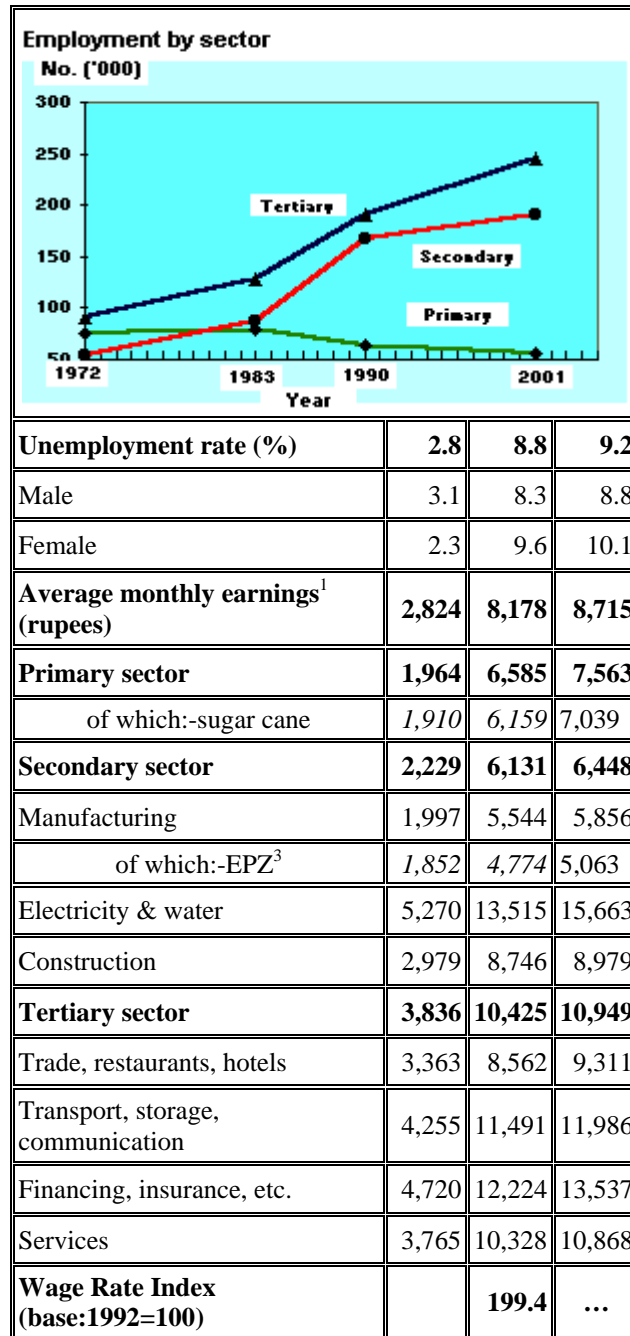
Education statistics, 2002

	Male	Female	Total
Pre-primary	18,739	18,243	36,982
Primary	51,006	49,381	100,387
Secondary	47,989	51,698	99,687
Tertiary (local)	2,849	2,461	5,310

ANNEX TABLE V.4 (CONTD)

LABOUR

	1990	2000	2001
Labour force ('000)	433.0	528.6	538.5
Mauritians	432.0	514.0	522.0
Male	301.4	342.2	346.3
Female	130.6	171.8	175.7
Foreigners	1.0	14.6	16.5
Male	0.7	5.0	5.8
Female	0.3	9.6	10.7
Activity rates (15+ years old)			
Male	80.6	79.8	79.9
Female	34.7	40.0	41.0
Total employment ('000)²	420.8	483.6	490.3
Male	292.9	318.7	321.6
Female	127.9	164.9	168.7
Primary sector	63.9	57.1	55.8
of which:-sugar cane	40.4	29.4	28.0
Secondary sector	166.9	187.7	190.0
Manufacturing	132.5	142.0	143.5
of which:-EPZ 3	88.8	89.8	91.1
Electricity & water	3.4	2.9	3.0
Construction	31.0	42.8	43.5
Tertiary sector	190.0	238.8	244.5
Trade, restaurants, hotels	47.0	86.4	89.3
Transport, storage, communication	26.7	30.8	31.6
Financing, insurance, business activities	11.4	21.4	21.7
Services	104.9	100.2	101.9



1 Provisional |2.1990 figures based on the International Standard Industry Classification (ISIC) ,Rev.2;
2000 and 2001 figures based on the National Standard Industrial Classification , an adaptation of the ISIC
Rev.3| 3. Export Processing Zone

ANNEX TABLE IV.1
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRIAL GROUP AND SEX, 2000 & 2001

(thousands)

Industrial group	2000			2001		
	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	41.6	14.2	55.8	40.7	13.8	54.5
Sugar cane	(21.7)	(7.7)	(29.4)	(20.7)	(7.3)	(28.0)
Mining & quarrying	1.2	0.1	1.3	1.2	0.1	1.3
Manufacturing	70.5	71.5	142.0	71.2	72.3	143.5
Sugar	(3.33)	(0.03)	(3.36)	(3.14)	(0.03)	(3.17)
EPZ	(29.1)	(60.7)	(89.8)	(29.9)	(61.2)	(91.1)
Electricity & water	2.8	0.1	2.9	2.8	0.2	3.0
Construction	42.0	0.8	42.8	42.7	0.8	43.5
Wholesale & retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles, personal and household goods	43.2	20.5	63.7	43.9	21.2	65.1
Hotels & restaurants	16.5	6.2	22.7	17.6	6.6	24.2
Transport, storage & communications	27.4	3.4	30.8	27.7	3.9	31.6
Financial intermediation	4.4	2.9	7.3	4.5	3.0	7.5
Real estate, renting and business activities	10.2	3.9	14.1	10.2	4.0	14.2
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	28.3	6.8	35.1	28.5	7.2	35.7
Education	11.3	11.4	22.7	11.2	12.0	23.2
Health & social work	6.7	5.9	12.6	6.6	5.7	12.3
Other community, social and personal services	12.6	17.2	29.8	12.8	17.9	30.7
Total	318.7	164.9	483.6	321.6	168.7	490.3

TABLE IV.16

CERTIFICATE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION (CPE) EXAMINATION RESULTS, 1989-2001 (REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS)

School candidates only

Year	Number Examined			Number Passed			% Passed		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
1990	30,637	15,560	15,077	18,481	8,948	9,533	60.3	57.5	63.2
1995	27,733	14,222	13,511	18,121	8,791	9,330	65.3	61.8	69.0
2000	28,058	14,444	13,614	18,617	8,836	9,781	66.4	61.2	71.8
2001	29,120	14,960	14,160	19,017	8,953	10,064	65.3	59.8	71.1

**TABLE IV.14 - CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION RESULTS –
REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS, 1989 - 2001**

Year	Number Examined			Number Passed			% Passed		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
1990	9,695	5,059	4,636	6,014	2,940	3,074	62.0	58.1	66.3
1995	12,089	5,683	6,406	8,494	3,919	4,575	70.3	69.0	71.4
2000	14,648	6,862	7,786	11,218	5,125	6,093	76.6	74.7	78.3
2001	14,247	6,563	7,684	10,918	4,884	6,034	76.6	74.4	78.5

TABLE V.18
UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS - ENROLMENT BY COURSE LEVEL, FACULTY,
GENDER AND YEAR OF STUDY, 2002/2003

Faculty & Course Level	Yr I			Yr II			Yr III			Yr IV			Total		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
Agriculture															
Total	75	30	45	30	13	17	87	40	47	22	10	12	214	93	121
Engineering															
Total	582	412	170	435	286	149	327	238	89	361	288	73	1,705	1,224	481
Law & Management															
Total	566	295	271	406	215	191	267	141	126	284	148	136	1,523	799	724
Science															
Total	261	127	134	298	122	176	272	141	131	51	22	29	882	412	470
Social Studies & Humanities															
Total	323	93	230	359	109	250	236	85	151	68	34	34	986	321	665
All Faculties															
M Phil/PHD	-	-	-	47	27	20	49	33	16	29	15	14	125	75	50
Master Degree	315	190	125	211	118	93	-	-	-	-	-	-	526	308	218
Degree	1,354	667	687	1,119	526	593	1,129	603	526	757	487	270	4,359	2,283	2,076
Diploma	92	64	28	151	74	77	11	9	2	-	-	-	254	147	107
Certificate	46	36	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46	36	10
Total	1,807	957	850	1,528	745	783	1,189	645	544	786	502	284	5,310	2,849	2,461

M: Male | F: Female | T: Total

**TABLE V –
RESIDENT POPULATION 15 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER WITH A POST-SECONDARY DEGREE, BY SEX,
BROAD FIELD OF STUDY OF HIGHEST POST-SECONDARY QUALIFICATION AND HIGHEST LEVEL OF
SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Country, Island, Sex & broad field of study	Total 2000
REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS	
Both Sexes	
All fields of Study	19,675
09 - 16 : Fine and applied arts	493
17 - 25 : Humanities	2,295
26 - 29 : Religion and theology	220
30 - 36 : Social and behavioural sciences	2,149
37 - 41 : Business administration & related fields	4,225
42 - 44 : Law and jurisprudence	661
45 - 49 : Natural science	1,608
50 - 53 : Mathematics and computer science	1,817
54 - 60 : Medical diagnostic and treatment	1,642
61 - 69 : Engineering	2,073
70 - 72 : Architecture and town planning	159
73 - 84 : Agriculture, forestry and fishery	609
85 - 87 : Home economics & domestic science	75
88 - 92 : Mass communication & documentation	86
93 - 99 : Other degrees	291
Field not stated	869
Male	
All fields of study	13,403
01 - 08 : Education science and teacher training	221
09 - 16 : Fine and applied arts	257
17 - 25 : Humanities	977
26 - 29 : Religion and theology	168
30 - 36 : Social and behavioural sciences	1,369
37 - 41 : Business administration & related fields	3,038
42 - 44 : Law and jurisprudence	441
45 - 49 : Natural science	1,132
50 - 53 : Mathematics and computer science	1,274
54 - 60 : Medical diagnostic and treatment	1,242

61 - 69 : Engineering	1,948
70 - 72 : Architecture and town planning	133
73 - 84 : Agriculture, forestry and fishery	462
85 - 87 : Home economics & domestic science	9
88 - 92 : Mass communication & documentation	49
93 - 99 : Other degrees	165
Field not stated	518
Female	
All fields of study	6,272
01 - 08 : Education science & teacher training	182
09 - 16 : Fine and applied arts	236
17 - 25 : Humanities	1,318
26 - 29 : Religion and theology	52
30 - 36 : Social and behavioural sciences	780
37 - 41 : Business administration & related fields	1,187
42 - 44 : Law and jurisprudence	220
45 - 49 : Natural science	476
50 - 53 : Mathematics and computer science	543
54 - 60 : Medical diagnostic and treatment	400
61 - 69 : Engineering	125
70 - 72 : Architecture and town planning	26
73 - 84 : Agriculture, forestry and fishery	147
85 - 87 : Home economics & domestic science	66
88 - 92 : Mass communication & documentation	37
93 - 99 : Other degrees	126
Field not stated	351

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