

Anushka Virahsawmy

## Gender and climate change



### KEY POINTS

- Women make up two of the eight key decision-making positions in the sector.
- Mauritius has put in place key strategies to address climate change;
- De-forestation legislation and enforcement is stringent;
- Many stakeholders are involved in sensitisation climate change awareness campaigns, including the media.



Signing the climate change petition at the Gender Justice and Local Government Summit. *Photo: Trevor Davies*

**Table 11.1: Women's representation in decision-making positions on climate change and sustainable development**

POSITION	FEMALE	MALE
Minister of Environmental Affairs (Tourism/ Wildlife)		1
Permanent secretary/DG		1
Minister of Agriculture		1
Permanent secretary/DG		1
Minister of Tourism		1
Permanent secretary/DG	1	
Minister of Fisheries/ Water Affairs		1
Permanent Secretary Fisheries/ Water Affairs		1
Other key persons	2 <sup>1</sup>	3 <sup>2</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>77</b>

Table 11.1 shows that women occupy three (23%) out of thirteen key decision-making positions in climate change and the sustainable development sector. There is a woman Director of Environment and a woman as the senior chief executive of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities.

In Mauritius, decision-making for the national response to climate change is made after consultation with different stakeholders including concerned ministries, private sectors, parastatal bodies, the general public and NGOs. The stakeholders are represented by both men and women where they participate equally in decision-making. Mauritius has an MID project (Mauritius durable island) which is piloted at the office of the Prime Minister.

### Institutional, legal and policy framework

Forest cover is low; most of the forest land has been cleared. Originally people used wood for cooking as well as construction of houses, small boats and for furniture. However, the use of wood has considerably decreased with the introduction of gas cookers, concrete buildings, fibre-glass boats and imported/processed wood. The legislation and enforcement regarding felling of trees or deforestation is stringent.

### Mitigation measures

- Solar Water Scheme 2008/2009 whereby grants of USD 300 were given for every solar water heater purchased at household level.

- Sale of 1 Million Compact Fluorescent Lamps at a subsidised price to residential consumers.
- Replacement of conventional lightings in public buildings, schools, hospitals by CFLs.
- Replacement of conventional lights for traffic signal equipment.
- Installation of two micro hydro power plants of 375kW each. As to date, one plant has been commissioned.
- Installation of five wind turbines of 275 kWh in Rodrigues.
- Encouragement of the use of more efficient and lower emission vehicles and construction of new roads to ease the problems of congestion.

### Adaptation measures

- Coastal protection - Construction of parking spaces to restrict vehicular access on the dynamic beach zone and removal of filao trees within the dynamic zone.
- Construction and upgrading of roadside drains to prevent flooding during torrential rains.
- Encouragement of rainwater harvesting.
- Encouragement of sustainable agricultural practices.

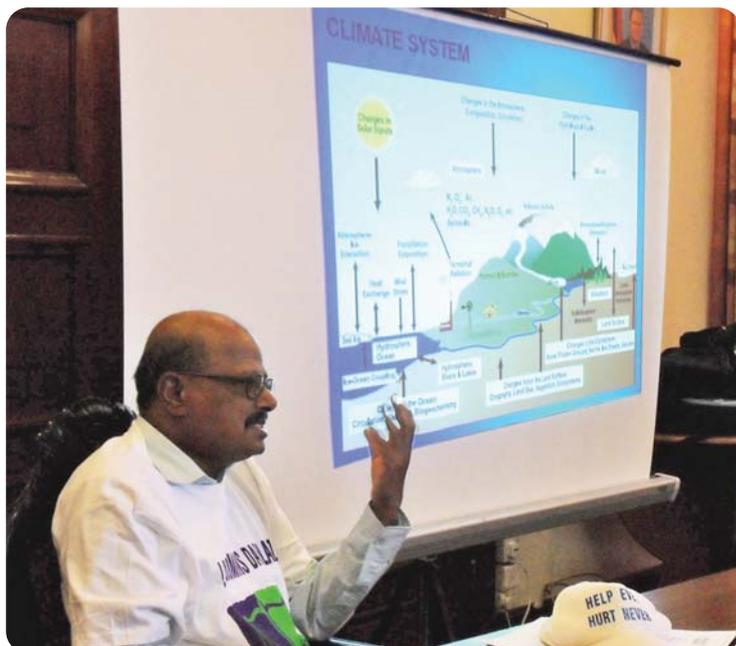
These measures have been put in place for the whole population and are applicable and beneficial for both men and women.

The annual rainfall has decreased considerably. This has led to droughts. No indicators or census are available for the impact of climate change on men, women and children.

However, several initiatives have been taken to sensitise the population on the effects of climate change and measures that must be taken for specific climatic events and natural disasters.

### Sustainable technology

- All households are equipped with gas cookers or electric cookers. These have replaced the traditional way of cooking food using petroleum cookers or wood. The new means of cooking is more energy efficient, leads to less pollution and is better for health.
- The gas (LPG) is easily available in containers, which are sold in several places in the island. This gas is subsidised by the government and is sold at a relatively cheap price.
- The use of photovoltaic panel to produce electricity is being promoted but has high cost implications.
- The use of biogas derived from kitchen wastes is also under study.



Former Director of the Metrological station Sop Appadu stresses a point at a cyber-dialogue meeting on gender and climate change. Photo: Davinah Sholay

<sup>1</sup> Senior Chief Executive - Energy and Public Utilities; Permanent Secretary - Housing and Lands.

<sup>2</sup> Chief Agricultural Officer - Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security; Minister - Energy and Public Utilities; Minister - Housing and Lands.

### Public education and awareness raising on gender and climate change

Public awareness is carried out through established programme in various ministries and institutions, the private sectors and NGOs. They use a variety of channels including talks, exhibitions, TV spots, radio spots, posters, brochures, flyers and short-films.

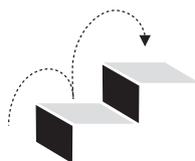
The public is encouraged to participate in activities such as cleaning, removal of bulky wastes, tree planting, and compost making and adopting sustainable lifestyles.

The programmes are sponsored by the public sector, private sectors under their corporate social responsibility Funds, and international organisations, such as Indian Ocean Commission and United Nations Environment Programme.

In addition the media covers on climate change-related topics and local and international development.

### Gender and climate change financing

Financial incentives have been put in place by the government to promote the use climate-friendly equipment and technology. This exists as schemes whereby grants are given to the public (at household level) and soft loans are also provided. Women and men benefit equally.



### Next steps

- Increase women in sustainable development decision making through partnerships with women already occupying strategic positions.
- Mauritius civil society organisations should join the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance campaign for an Addendum to the SADC Gender Protocol on Gender, Climate Change and Sustainable Development.
- All stakeholders should keep sex-disaggregated data on climate change interventions and resource allocation in order to inform gender impact assessments.
- Map climate change effects on women through an initial qualitative study.



Demanding their right2know: women say climate change issues should be made public at Cop 17 in Durban, South Africa. Photo: Trevor Davies