

# The Centres of Excellence (COE) for Gender in Local Government:



## What we have learned in Mauritius OCTOBER 2020



Participants of the 16 Days Campaign organising a march at the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin Rose Hill.

Photo: Anushka Virahsawmy

The Centres of Excellence (COE) for Gender in Local Government is a visionary programme run by Gender Links, a Southern African NGO, in partnership with local government associations across Southern Africa. The programme aims to ensure women's equal and effective participation in decision-making, and to translate this into gender responsive governance through gender action plans whose progress is measured by the Gender and Local Government Score Card.

In Mauritius The COE programme has been running since 2016 working with 12 councils, five urban and seven rural. This analysis compares progress across **four** councils (Grand Port, Savanne, Curepipe, Moka) for which GL has comparative data for the period from 2016 to 2020. All four COE councils are implementing the *Sunrise Empower Women, End Violence Campaign* as well as Sexual and Reproductive Rights (SRHR) campaigns. The programme covers a population 347,620, which represents 28% of the total population. It has reached 1965 direct beneficiaries between 2016 and 2020.

## Key indicators in the four councils

| INDICATORS  |      |                    |                     |          |
|---|------|--------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Outputs   |      |                    |                     |          |
| No. of COE's Baseline 2016                                |      | 4                  |                     |          |
| No. of COEs follow up in 2020                             |      | 4                  |                     |          |
| No. of Gender Action plans                                |      | 4                  |                     |          |
| No. of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Action Plans           |      | 4                  |                     |          |
| No. of councils supporting the entrepreneurship programme |      | 4                  |                     |          |
| No. of SRHR Action Plans                                  |      | 4                  |                     |          |
| Beneficiaries   | Male | Female             | Other               | Total    |
| No. of beneficiaries - 2016                               | 198  | 680                | 0                   | 878      |
| No. of beneficiaries - 2017                               | 23   | 268                | 0                   | 291      |
| No. of beneficiaries - 2018                               | 14   | 436                | 0                   | 450      |
| No. of beneficiaries - 2019                               | 62   | 268                | 16                  | 346      |
| Total   | 297  | 1652               | 16                  | 1965     |
| Outcomes  |      | Baseline (2016/17) | Follow up (2019/20) | Variance |
| Women's political representation                          |      |                    |                     |          |
| % women councillors overall                               |      | 27%                | 27%                 | 0%       |
| % women councillors in COEs                               |      | 47%                | 40%                 | -7%      |
| Political and public participation                        |      |                    |                     |          |
| % women mayors/deputy mayors                              |      | 0%                 | 0%                  | 0%       |
| % women chairing committees                               |      | 21%                | 28%                 | 7%       |
| % junior councils   |      | N/A                | N/A                 | N/A      |
| Gender Progress Scores - attitudes (%)                    |      | 68%                | 71%                 | 3%       |
| Gender management system and budgeting                    |      |                    |                     |          |
| Gender and Local Government Score (%)                     |      | 57%                | 54%                 | -3%      |
| Community Citizen Score (%)                               |      | 53%                | No data             | 53%      |
| Gender responsive budgeting                               |      |                    |                     |          |
| Total contribution by councils to gender work             |      | USD 6300           |                     |          |
| Workplace policies and practise                           |      |                    |                     |          |
| % women employed in COE councils                          |      | 36%                | 21%                 | -15%     |
| % women managers in COE councils                          |      | 35%                | 26%                 | -9%      |
| % councils that provide maternity leave                   |      | 100%               | 100%                | 0%       |
| % councils that provide paternity leave                   |      | 100%               | 100%                | 0%       |
| %councils with sexual harassment policies                 |      | 0%                 | 0%                  | 0%       |
| Infrastructure and social development                     |      |                    |                     |          |
| % councils with streetlights                              |      | 100%               | 100%                | 0%       |
| % women on water/sanitation committees                    |      | 0%                 | 0%                  | 0%       |
| % of water and sanitation committees chaired by women     |      | 0%                 | 0%                  | 0%       |
| Economic power to end violence                            |      | 2015 cohort        | 2019 cohort         |          |
| Total number of women at the start of the course          |      | 72                 | 38                  |          |
| No. of women who completed the course                     |      | 56                 | 32                  |          |
| % women that completed the course                         |      | 78%                | 84%                 |          |
| % women completed a business plan                         |      | 66%                | 66%                 |          |
| % women implemented a business plan                       |      | 30%                | 41%                 |          |
| Monthly income in USD                                     |      | 4654               | 3363                |          |
| Relationship control score (%)                            |      | 49%                | 45%                 |          |
| % women experiencing less or much less violence           |      | 56%                | 85%                 |          |
| % women using a computer                                  |      | 6%                 | 16%                 |          |
| % women that have an email address                        |      | 6%                 | 4%                  |          |
| % women surfing the Internet                              |      | 12%                | 19%                 |          |
| % women that have a Facebook account                      |      | 48%                | 16%                 |          |
| % women that have a Twitter account                       |      | 0%                 | 0%                  |          |
| % women that have a website                               |      | 0%                 | 0%                  |          |

## Key results

- **Women's political representation** in COEs is 40% compared to 27% women councillors in Mauritius overall, which shows good progress towards equity. However, there are no women mayors or deputy mayors in COEs. In 2011, GL campaigned for the gender neutral quota that led to a four-fold increase in women's representation in local government in Mauritius. A strong lobby is needed for women to advance into leadership in local government.
- **The Gender Progress Score, which measures gender attitudes** has increased from 68% to 71% as a result of the sensitisation campaigns done in councils and the strong media advocacy.
- **The Gender and Local Government Score, which measures 25 indicators for gender-responsive governance** has decreased by three percentage points possibly indicating the community members have increased expectations of councils to deliver gender responsive governance.
- **Councils are allocating small budgets to gender programmes:** COE councils have allocated a total of USD 6,300 to gender programmes, an average of USD 1,575 per council. As most council functions in Mauritius are covered by central government, this is a significant contribution by the councils to the COE work.
- **The proportion of women employed in COE councils** has dropped from 36% in 2016 to 21% in 2019. Employment in local councils is done by the Local Government ministry and not by the council. The Workers Rights Act makes no mention of quotas or equality in employment practices. There has also been a drop of nine percentage points for women managers from 35% to 26%.
- **All of councils provide maternity and paternity leave** in accordance with the Workers Rights Act.
- **Infrastructure and social development** - Street lighting is one of the main duties of the councils in Mauritius and 100% of the councils have street lights. In Mauritius local councils do not allocate land and housing.
- **Economic power to end violence** - GL trained 72 women survivors of GBV in the first phase of the Sunrise Campaign, an innovate programme to provide entrepreneurship training to survivors of gender violence linked to council Local Economic Development (LED) programmes. Seventy Eight percent of participants completed the course. In the second phase GL supported the COEs to implement the



programme. The course completion rate was higher with 84% completing the second phase. In both phases 66% women implemented a business plan. IT indicators were low in both phases, but with more women using a computer for the first time. Eight five percent

of women trained experience less or much less violence in 2019 compared to 56% in 2015. Overall, the results for handing over ownership of the programme to the councils are encouraging.

## Savanne District Council wins Best performing COE



Coonjan - Jugroop, Former Chief Executive Officer of the Savanne District Council.  
Photo: Anushka Virahsawmy

The District Council of Savanne works to the slogan: "living with dignity, gender equality, elimination of violence, empowering of women, abuse awareness."

The council joined the COE programme in 2013 as part of the the Grand Port council. In 2014 the Savanne council became independent and participated in their first SADC Protocol@Work #Voice and Choice Summit in 2014. Savanne District Council won in the rural council category at the 2016 and 2019 Summits.

Savanne council has five main priority areas: Climate change, Development, Business facilitation, Entrepreneurship and Gender-Based Violence. These are the main focus of the council and they have a steering committee that guides them to achieve all the goals. The Council of Savanne is the only Council in Mauritius to have set up a Gender Committee.

The council has launched a citizen support portal where citizens can seek help from the council on various issues. The council has the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) project which is to empower women, build their confidence through activities and programs organised free of charge. The council also held a workshop to raise awareness on women's rights. They believe the women who acquire this knowledge will share what they know with other women and men in their localities in order to spread the word on women's rights. The council takes climate change seriously and has a sensitization programme to teach the community how to save water. All of this has happened because of the gender mainstreaming trainings done in the council including developing action plans.



Kim Mungly working with the Central Water Authority of Riviere des Anguilles to ensure that water issues are being address in Savanne Council.  
Photo: Anushka Virahsawmy

***"GL helped me in becoming a stronger woman and now I am able to share my experience and knowledge with other women in every walk of life."***

Kim Mungly is the president of Riviere des Anguilles village in Savanne District council since December 2020. She has served as a mentor for the entrepreneurship programme run by GL and founded an NGO - Medcare Academy - to help, support and train women.

***"You are not only the messenger. You are the message."***

Priscilla Bignoux, was the only female Councillor in the District Council of Savanne prior to the 2020 village election. She describes her journey as a 'femme battante' - 'a woman who has been through a lot in her life and yet is standing firm today'.

She fights against domestic violence and drug abuse and believes that it is important to work towards changing the mind-set of people regarding gender stereotypes.



Photo: Sheistah Bundhoo



Soolekha Raddhoa at the Summit Gala Award Night 2019. Photo: Sheistah Bundhoo

***“GL has raised my awareness on how gender inequalities continue to oppress women. It has enhanced my commitment to advancing the cause of women in Mauritius.”***

Soolekha Raddhoa served as the Mayor of Quatre-Bornes from 2017 until 2019. Her qualities of leadership and integrity, along with her experience has made her a strong advocate for the advancement of women in Mauritius. She inspires women through radio talk shows where she is invited to speak up about the rights of women.

## Lessons learned and how they will be applied

- **The 50/50 campaign should be rolled out in all councils**, these should be accompanied by training and campaigns to encourage women to register as candidates. Advocacy should extend to the decision-making structures in local councils
- **Councils require ongoing support and backstopping** and revisiting the action plans and training on gender is very important.
- **Buy-in and support from Ministry of Local government** to take COE programme on as its own programme is needed, so that it will entrenched in councils as a required programme.
- **Gender responsive budgeting should be strengthened** COEs still need more capacity building in gender responsive budgeting. It is evident that councils are still experiencing difficulties in resource allocation towards gender specific projects and activities.
- **Success is contingent on leadership and commitment to institutionalise the programme**, which includes appointing gender focal persons who will take ownership of the programme and getting the full support of council leadership.
- **All community stakeholders should be part of the programme**, this includes youth, religious and traditional leaders and political parties.
- **There is need for a sustainability strategy** including a funding strategy to carry out on-going training and mentorship and to ensure the programme is delivered and monitored.

## Indicators by Council

| Council    | Overall score | Community score card | Gender progress score (attitudes) | % W cllrs | % W Mayors | % W Deputy mayors | % W chair comms | Gender responsive budgets | % W employees | % W in management |
|------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Grand Port | 60%           | 53%                  | 92                                | 43        | 0          | 0                 | 0               | USD 1300                  | 24            | 0                 |
| Savanne    | 60%           | 0                    | 72                                | 21        | 0          | 0                 | 35              | USD 2200                  | 21            | 20                |
| Curepipe   | 60%           | 0                    | 64                                | 30        | 0          | 0                 | 50              | USD 1300                  | 16            | 0                 |
| Moka       | 38%           | 0                    | 73                                | 6         | 0          | 0                 | 0               | USD 1500                  | 24            | 0                 |

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