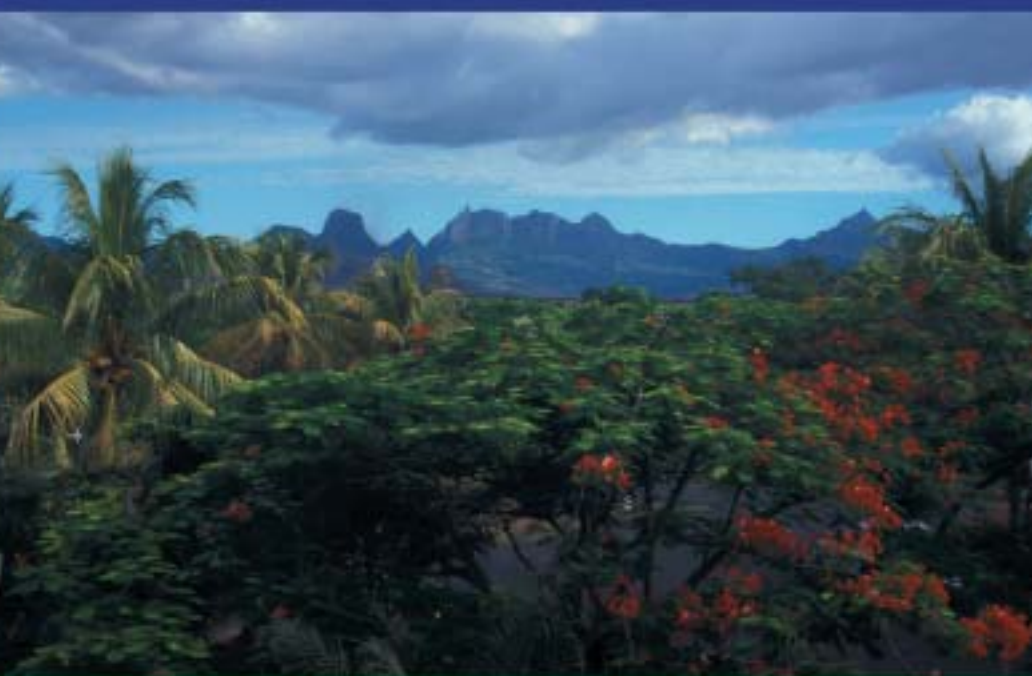


MAURITIUS

One Nation, One Destiny

A Comprehensive Development
Framework Profile





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Country Background and Recent Developments¹

Mauritius has experienced a significant transformation and substantial economic and human development since its independence from the United Kingdom in 1968. At that time the country had a nominal per capita income of about US\$200, while today it has become a middle-income country with a per capita income of about US\$ 3,900 in 2002. Primary school attendance among the 6-11 age group is virtually universal and adult literacy rate, estimated at 84.3 percent in 2000, is one of the highest in Africa.² The country is endowed with a well-developed network of public hospitals and medical facilities. It has strong institutions, a reliable and independent judiciary and an enviable record of political stability.

Quality of life in Mauritius has significantly improved since independence. Over the years, the benefits of growth have been evenly spread throughout society. The Gini coefficient declined from 0.5 in 1962 to 0.42 in 1975,

¹ This profile is part of a series prepared by the Operations Policy and Country Services Vice-Presidency to deepen understanding of the CDF principles in practice and share valuable lessons. The profiles are based on roundtables among national stakeholders, with external partners, including the World Bank, acting as observers. The roundtable that served as a basis for this profile was held on December 1, 2003. Among the participants were government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of the private sector, NGOs, trade unions, the media and academia, including four acting Ministers and the leader of the opposition and former Prime Minister. The roundtable was organized jointly by the National Economic and Social Council and the World Bank.

² *Human Development Report 2003*, available at <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2003>.

0.39 in 1996-97 to reach 0.37 in 2001-02. Eighty-four percent of households have piped water and 99 percent have electricity. Life expectancy at birth increased from 63 years in 1972 to 72 in 2000. Infant mortality dropped from 58 per 1000 live births in 1970 to 16 in 2000. Contrary to many African countries, Mauritius does not face an AIDS crisis and the infection rate was estimated at only 0.1 percent in 2001.³

Mauritius is a multiparty parliamentary democracy where power lies with the National Assembly, composed of 62 elected representatives who won a majority in their constituencies and up to eight other representatives, appointed by an independent Electoral Commission to ensure adequate representation of each ethnic group⁴. The National Assembly elects the President, who has largely ceremonial powers but appoints the Prime Minister, which in turn requires parliamentary approval. With the exception of the postponement of the elections in 1972, Mauritius' post-independence history has been characterized by adherence to the rule of law and free and open elections. No single party has ever secured a majority in the National Assembly to form a government on its own and consensus building and dialogue across party lines has been a

³ *Memorandum and Recommendations of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to the Executive Directors on a Country Assistance Strategy of the World Bank Group for the Republic of Mauritius – Report No: 23904 MAS* (April 2002), p. 4.

⁴ Hindu Indo-Mauritians constitute 52 percent of the population, Muslim Indo-Mauritians account for 17 percent, Creoles make up around 27 percent and the rest of the population is of French and Chinese origins; cf. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Mauritius Country Profile 2003*, p. 19.

distinguishing feature of Mauritian politics.⁵ In the September 2000 elections, the alliance of the Mauritanian Militant Movement (MMM), led by Mr. Paul Bérenger, and the Mauritian Socialist Movement (MSM), led by former Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth, won a majority over the coalition formed by the Mauritian Labor Party (MLP), led by Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam also a former Prime Minister, and the Mauritian Social Democrat Party (PMXD), led by Mr. Xavier-Luc Duval, which had been in power since 1995. Sir Anerood Jugnauth became Prime Minister until September 2003, when he assumed the position of President. Mr. Bérenger took the post of Prime Minister. The next general elections are scheduled for 2005.⁶

At the time of independence, Mauritius negotiated a quota for its main production and export product —sugar cane—to the European Union. The flux of money generated by this deal was efficiently used to develop and diversify the domestic economy. In the 1970s, export-processing zones (EPZs) were launched to encourage investment in labor-intensive manufacturing for export. In these special zones, duty-free access was provided to all imported inputs. More flexibility in hiring and laying off workers and in allowing overtime was granted to the firms processing exports⁷. Tax incentives were also offered to these firms. Clothing and textiles industries dominated the EPZs, which now account for 61 percent of total exports of the country in 2002. The

⁵ R. Gulhati and R. Nallari. ‘Successful Stabilization and Recovery in Mauritius’. *EDI Development Policy Case Series*, 5 (1990), p. 2.

⁶ See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Mauritius Country Profile 2003*, p. 15.

⁷ A. Subramanian and D. Roy. “Who Can Explain The Mauritian Miracle: Meade, Romer, Sachs or Rodrik?”, *IMF Working Paper* (August 2001), p. 18.

rest are mainly tourism and sugar. The United Kingdom, United States, France and Germany are the main export markets of the EPZs, while South Africa, France, India and China are the main input suppliers.

Manufacturing now accounts for 23 percent of GDP. Tourism, financial services and retail trade constitute about 27 percent of GDP, while all services correspond to 60 percent of GDP, and agriculture has dropped from 13 percent in 1990 to about 6 percent in 2002. Between 1976 and 1999, real GDP grew on average by 5.4 per cent per year. However, in 2002 adverse weather conditions affecting sugar production, a weak global economy, and strong competition from emerging countries in the textile sector slowed GDP growth to 2 percent. Some recovery in sugar production and public investment in construction and services led to a growth of 4.4 percent in 2003, but the export processing zone has continued to struggle due to losses in its competitive advantage.⁸

While Mauritius has successfully promoted overall economic diversification, the agricultural sector continues to be dominated by sugar and the industrial sector by textiles and clothing. The government has recognized that the preferential arrangements for these products will be phased out and that the country needs to find new sources of growth. Unemployment rose to 10.2 percent of the labor force in June 2003 and represents the greatest immediate challenge for the government. The closure of factories in the EPZ has caused the loss of about 5,300 jobs in financial year 2001/2002 and about 4,000 in the first half of financial year

⁸ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Mauritius Country Report December 2003*, p. 10 and 16.

2002/2003. The sugar processing and agricultural sectors have also lost jobs. The government's approach to dealing with the problem has been to invest heavily in education and training and to promote information and communications technology. Efforts have been made to diversify the EPZs and to develop Mauritius into a regional financial services center.

The government has recognized the need to move towards a new framework to guide development and economic growth. Through a new approach to long-term planning, it has tried to identify the future role of Mauritius, not only within the African continent but also as a major hub between Africa, India and the most developed countries.

Long-term Holistic Vision

Since independence, the long-term objective of successive governments of Mauritius has been to ensure a reduction in poverty through employment creation and provide better quality of life for its population while maintaining social cohesion. Governments formulated development plans as early as 1970, although some of them were merely "glorified budgets with some policy measures for the medium term".⁹ Long-term planning has taken the form of informal consensus building on a set of shared values and objectives among different societal and political actors, and then translating them into government policies and programs. At the beginning of the 1990s policymakers felt

⁹ Manou Bheenick, former Minister of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development.

increasingly uncomfortable with this planning model, which was perceived as merely reacting to economic shocks without setting the pace for long-term development. They started to look for a way to further promote cohesion within Mauritius' multi-ethnic society, encourage the population to take a more active role in the development process, and further advance partnerships among the government, private sector and civil society.

The decision to develop “Vision 2020: The National Long Term Perspective Study (NLTPS)” was conceived in the context of preparing to cope better with challenges likely to arise from globalization and the liberalization of international trade in the wake of the GATT/Uruguay Round of Negotiations and to sustain well into the twenty-first century the relatively high rates of growth posted by Mauritius through much of the 1980s. The urgency to review the earlier approach to development, which was characterized by short-term economic management, and the recognition that emerging problems, because of their particular nature, could best be tackled within the framework of a comprehensive strategy, were additional reasons for Mauritius to embark on the development of a vision through an NLTPS.

“The pillars of the CDF have stood us in good stead in the past, and we intend to embrace them as we embark upon our ambitious new growth path. We realize that to transform our economy into a developed one, we need to continue with our long-term objective and strategy”.

Hon. Sushil K.C. Khushiram, Minister of Economic Development, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs

Coherent long-term vision. “Vision 2020: The National Long-Term Perspective Study”, formulated between 1994 and 1997, constitutes a broad holistic framework guiding long-term development and does not pretend to be a blueprint for action. It presents a general analysis of progress made and the main challenges facing Mauritius at the turn of the millennium; identifies the country’s fundamental strengths and weaknesses; suggests areas where success is most likely; establishes the main objectives to be reached by 2020. Vision 2020 takes a comprehensive and holistic view of development and addresses economic growth, environment, agriculture, industry, tourism, international financial services, ocean exploration, science and technology, employment and the labor force, social cohesion and political stability. It has a strong focus on education—as an appropriate path to transform Mauritius into a high-skilled and efficient economy—and aims at deepening the traditions of personal freedom and democracy and the creation of a compassionate and family-oriented society and a modern outward-looking nation.

But, NLTPS has only been part of the development process at a given stage of development and cannot be equated to the whole process. Presently, a new vision is being framed in a new configuration of a whole set of complex factors, both local and international, and a mix of some new and old parameters. For example, the assumptions, the constraints and the issues facing the key tourism sector will have a different perspective for the next 20 years than that originally elaborated in the NLTPS.

Medium-term strategy derived from the vision. In April 2000, the government presented the “National Strategy for Sustainable Development 1999 –2005” (NSSD). The NSSD identified an action program to achieve the goals of Vision

2020 by sharpening the competitive edge of the country in existing and new sectors, a strong human development effort and measures to improve public sector support services. The NSSD lays out practical steps that should be undertaken for a successful economy, for improving living conditions and for expanding the economic space beyond national frontiers.

After the elections of September 2000, the new government presented a new strategy known as the *Economic Agenda for the New Millennium* (NEA). The formulation of the NEA, which is coherent with the goals identified in Vision 2020, was justified by the need to address severe imbalances in public finances, unprecedented levels of public debt, an unsustainable budget deficit and increases in unemployment. The government proposed policies to improve economic management aimed at restoring macroeconomic balances and containing inflation, while creating an environment conducive to export competitiveness, the generation of productive jobs, higher savings and investment and improved growth.

The NEA is holistic, comprehensive, well balanced and coherent with the goals identified in Vision 2020. Its key objectives are:

- Increasing competitiveness and productivity to maintain high growth rates, further reduce poverty and improve social well-being;
- Deepening social development and cohesion through high-quality education and more equitable access to it, better and more efficient social assistance and improved and financially sustainable healthcare;
- Protecting Mauritius' fragile environment and ensuring that higher growth is environmentally sustainable.

The NEA has been complemented by sectoral strategies prepared by line ministries. There is also a National Action Plan against Poverty and Exclusion and a National Human Resource Development Plan. The Ministry of Agriculture has released a Sugar Sector Strategic Plan (SSSP) for 2001-2005.

Links to public expenditures. Allocations included in the 2003-2004 budget broadly reflect the themes of the NEA. They finance policies and actions in the following areas:

- Creation of a more friendly business environment to stimulate private investment and growth;
- Restructuring of key sectors to cope with the constantly evolving world trade and economic environment;
- Provision of opportunities for self-enhancement and improvement in the quality of life;
- Reform of social services to better serve the needs of the poor and the vulnerable population;
- Fiscal discipline.

Country Ownership

Vision 2020 is based on consultations with national institutions and organizations and was formulated with the participation of a large group of stakeholders within and outside government. It was conceived from the beginning as an interactive process going beyond traditional decision-making groups and incorporating a wide variety of stakeholders. For this purpose, eight Working Groups were established to elaborate a long-term strategy for different sectors. Resource persons from an independent National Economic and Development Council (NEDC)—reporting directly to the Prime Minister—were also involved. The NEDC was a consultative body composed of representatives

from the private sector, civil society, trade unions and the government. Overall coordination of Vision 2020 was provided by a Core Group under the chairmanship of the Director of the then Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. Chairpersons and Secretaries of the Working Groups were members of the Core Group.

Locus of initiative and institutional structures of participation. The Working Groups addressed the main tenets around which the vision would be constructed (society and culture, science and technology, environment, economic issues, employment, industry, tourism, agriculture) and consulted with a wide range of national stakeholders. They reached out to younger generations through a one-day convention involving different schools of the country. Line ministries were involved in the process through informal meetings of the Cabinet, where the chairpersons of the ten working groups confronted the proposals assembled throughout the consultative process with the current policies and future plans of the different ministers.

The reports of the Working Groups were discussed in meetings with government officials and the cabinet, and national consultations were held with youth and civil society. The different proposals and contributions were consolidated and organized in a coherent document by a small task force. The document entitled “Vision 2020. The National Long-term Perspective Study” was examined and approved by the Cabinet and then submitted to the National Assembly. The preparation of the document was conceived and virtually completed under the government led by Sir Anerood Jugnauth, but approved and published in 1997 by the government of Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the former leader of the opposition.

Role of internal partners. During the preparation of Vision 2020, leading representatives from civil society and the private sector were widely represented in the working groups. Policymakers, however, recognized that consultations were limited to the top echelons of civil society and private sector organizations and rarely involved grass-roots organizations.

“The biggest selling point in this exercise was that [Vision 2020] was conceived under the government led by Sir Anerood Jugnauth, completed virtually under the same government, but it was actually published and approved by the government led by Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. That shows that it is not a government vision, but it is a national vision”.

Manou Bheenick, former Minister of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development

Role of the National

Assembly. The National Assembly was only marginally involved as an institution in the preparation of Vision 2020 although individual parliamentarians were consulted and took part in meetings and working groups. The final document was tabled at the National Assembly for information, not approval.

Role of external partners. External partners played a limited role in supporting the formulation of Vision 2020. UNDP’s African Futures provide some funding to start the process, while the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Technology Management provided technical assistance. Some of the Working Groups had recourse to external consultants, but the preparation of the Vision emerged as a fully Mauritian exercise.

“What was lacking in the work we did was the insufficient participation of the unions and insufficient participation of civil society and NGOs at large. Then, as I said, insufficient dissemination of the vision and insufficient consultation. There was consultation, but not regional, not all across the island”.

C. Ricaud, Director of the NEDC and Chairman of the Vision 2020 Working Group on Science and Technology

Emergence of a consultation culture. In 2002 a National Economic and Social Council (NESC) was established, replacing the former National Economic Development Council. The mission of the NESC is to “foster consensus building through dialogue among social partners including civil society and help address economic and social issues facing the nation”.¹⁰ This independent consultative body is composed of 5 representatives from workers’ organizations, 5 from business organizations, 8 from civil society and 5 from the government. The Council has already made recommendations on a government report on wage determination in Mauritius as well as on the review of the draft Code of Practice on Employees’ Participation, the draft Fiscal Responsibility and Management Bill, the draft Code on Corporate Governance and the White Paper on Health Sector Development and Reform. The Council has also initiated studies on the integration of the elderly in the family, problems in housing and in transport, wages

¹⁰ National Economic and Social Council, First Report April 2002 – June 2003.

compensation mechanisms and employability and employment.

No person actively engaged in party politics is eligible for appointment in the Council. However, the Council has been mandated to hold regular meetings and consultations with relevant ministries and leaders of the opposition. A wider participation of civil society is encouraged at the level of working groups that are created for the studies and other matters. A large cross-section of the population is invited to the Annual Summit of the NESC.

A new consultation culture is also emerging in the day-to-day government affairs of Mauritius. The Sugar Sector Strategic Plan (SSSP) was prepared in 2001 by the Ministry of Agriculture after extensive consultations with other ministries, business associations, trade unions, millers and planters. The participatory process enhanced consensus on a radical reform for the sugar sector, tackling sensitive issues such as pricing arrangements, rationalization of production, and labor relations¹¹. The consultation process for the National Action Plan against Poverty and Exclusion was also extensive and involved civil society, private sector, trade unions, community-based organizations and district governments. All of them have been invited to submit proposals and play a role in implementation.

Country-led Partnership

Private sector. The private sector contributes over 80 percent of GDP and employs about 75 percent of the work

¹¹ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Mauritius Country Profile 2003*, p. 30.

force of the country and is by far the most important partner in the implementation of the development strategy.

Mauritius has a long tradition of dialogue between the public and private sectors. The working relation between the sectors has always been good. For the most part, the dialogue takes place in a structured manner. The main business organizations such as the Joint Economic Council and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry act as interlocutors with the government.

The Joint Economic Council was founded in 1970 as a coordinating body of the several business organizations of Mauritius. Its members are:

- Chamber of Agriculture
- Employers' Federation
- Sugar Producers' Association
- Export Processing Zone Association
- Bankers' Association
- Insurers' Association
- Association des Hôteliers et Restaurateurs de l'île Maurice
- Association of Mauritian Manufacturers

The Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) was established in 1850 and is the oldest institution representing the private sector in Mauritius. MCCI has evolved from a purely representative and consultative body to a dynamic actor working for socio-economic development. As the main voice of the Mauritian business community, it has always maintained close links with the

government and made a significant contribution to the development process.¹²

Private sector representatives and the government are presently engaged in an open and constructive dialogue to provide better services to the public at a lower cost through the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPP). A joint Task Force has been set up to design and implement a favorable legal and policy environment for the rapid advancement of the approach in Mauritius. The Task Force is supported by a Secretariat located within the Ministry of Economic Development, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs. Public-private partnerships have been particularly important in the educational and tourism sectors and the government is currently exploring new joint ventures in the transport sector.

The private sector has raised concerns about the red tape and excessive bureaucratic requirements that hinder private sector development. This issue is being addressed by the government in drafting new legislation which would accelerate the reforms of the system of permits and licenses for investment; the revamping of the framework for land use; and the reform of the civil service and public enterprises. The government is also expanding investment in infrastructure to meet new development requirements.

Civil Society. Non-governmental organizations and trade unions are working with the Government in several developmental areas. NGOs have been consulted and are participating in the implementation of the National Action Plan against Poverty and Exclusion and the National Action

¹² Mauritius Chamber of Commerce Website, www.mcci.org

Plan against HIV/AIDS. These organizations have been fundamental in delivering the messages at the grassroots level and in organizing community action groups to implement required actions. Trade unions have been involved in the design of the National Human Resource Development Plan and in discussions about pension reforms. The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizens and Reform Institutions has also involved NGOs in the provision of social services for the disabled.

Insufficient financing and lack of management skills weaken the role of civil society organizations. NGOs are often poorly organized and have limited resources to consult with their members, engage in a constructive dialogue with the government and take a more active and positive role in implementation of

programs and projects. The sector is fragmented and umbrella organizations are not well structured. For example, there are 350 trade unions and 12 labor federations. Mistrust and lack of adequate information have been cited as impediments to a more effective partnership between civil society and the government. However, the government has recognized civil society organizations' effectiveness in delivering services and has indicated that more support should be provided to these organizations to empower and

“Over the years the NGOs have been a privileged partner of the Government in the provision of social services in the fields of disability and social welfare. The Ministry has been encouraging NGOs to play a more active part in the provision of social welfare. In pursuance of this policy, increased support is being given to enable NGOs to participate fully in our socio economic development”.

Website of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizens and Reform Institutions.

enable them to play a more active role in the development process. There is agreement on the need to develop a more effective partnership, which would ensure better interactions between government and civil society.

External partners. External partners do not play a significant role in Mauritius. Overseas development assistance (ODA) is small, with the total amount estimated at only US\$24 million in 2002 or 0.5 percent of GNI. Bilateral partners account for 47 percent of ODA, with France being by far the most important contributor. The European Commission is the biggest multilateral partner.¹³

Mauritius is creditworthy and has relatively easy access to international capital markets. However, the government has tried to ensure the approval of some loans from multilateral development banks to take advantage of their technical assistance and expertise, even though the financial terms are only slightly better than those obtained from international banking sources.

“The relation with funding agency is very important. In the past they were financing projects, with very complex procurement procedures, but they are now turning more to budget support. This is a good thing because in budget support we can take a holistic view and undertake policy review, policy reform, and other measures that will help us to move forward and reach the next the stage of the development process” .

Guy Wong So, Director General, Ministry of Economic Development, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs

¹³ OECD Data and Statistics, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd>.

The government has given great importance to the technical assistance included in the US\$40 million Public Expenditure Reform loan that was approved by the World Bank in 2002. The loan is seen as a useful instrument to increase efficiency of public resources.¹⁴

The government has taken the lead in the selection of projects funded by external partners and ensured that external financing is channeled through the regular budget. Policymakers inside and outside government regard the wealth of knowledge and expertise that accompanies these projects as a key to strengthen internal capacity and management skills. This is not only applicable to the civil service, which is seen as in need of urgent reforms and rationalization, but also to grass-roots and umbrella non-governmental organizations.

Focus on Development Results

Mauritius is a democratic and open society. According to the Corruption Perception Index released by Transparency International in 2003, it is one of the least corrupted countries in Africa and performs well among developing countries.¹⁵ However, some recent events have raised concern on the credibility of the country as a corrupt-free society. A wide range of policymakers, within and outside government, have advocated the need to increase transparency and accountability in all government agencies. Some have proposed that existing control and monitoring structures and institutions, such as the Public Accounts

¹⁴ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Mauritius Country Profile 2003*, p. 26.

¹⁵ CPI 2003, available at <http://www.transparency.org>.

Committee of the National Assembly, be given additional powers and a wider access to information.

Development information systems. Policymakers agreed that one of the weaknesses of Vision 2020 was its lack of indicators to measure progress in the achievement of the defined goals and objectives. Mauritius has never identified an official poverty line to measure social progress overtime. Moreover, there is concern about the reluctance of some government institutions to present their data and indicators in terms of their actual performance in service delivery. The Public Accounts Committee has urged public utilities to publish data on the service provided, but this has not been implemented.

Stakeholders' access to development information. Vision 2020 was not widely disseminated after its publication. This may be explained by the change in government that took place after preparation, but may also reflect some general weakness in the flow of information to the general public. The preparation of Vision 2020 generated a lot of excitement in 1994 – 95, but the excitement diminished with the delay in its publication until 1997. Because new authorities needed to address pressing short-term issues and consolidate their power, they postponed their attention to long-term strategies. Later, an abridged non-technical version of the National Long-Term Perspective Study was prepared and made accessible to interested groups.

The Central Statistical Office regularly publishes a great deal of data and statistics on economic and social indicators. However, this wealth of data is often too complex to be understood by the public. In order to provide the general public and civil society with more user-friendly information, the government has established a Statistics

Advisory Council with the mandate, among others, to advise the Minister responsible on improvements on the presentation and understanding of economic and social indicators.

The media are particularly active and free in Mauritius and policymakers regard them as a key actor in reaching out to national stakeholders to inform them of progress and achievements in the implementation of government plans and strategies. The media have called for the approval of a Freedom of Information Act that creates a statutory right of access to official records. The Act is considered key to enhancing access to government information.

Managing for Development Results. The government recognizes that the present budget system focuses on inputs and fails to measure outputs and adjust original allocations to meet development results. Accordingly, it is piloting a new medium-term expenditure framework in five sectors. The framework will focus on policy analysis, development of measurable outcomes, and establishment of a mechanism for evaluating performance and adjusting budget allocations to performance.

Some Key Challenges

Forging a new consensus. Mauritius is facing today the challenge of forging a renewed consensus on its future directions. It is widely acknowledged that preferential access to EU markets provided the financial resources and incentives for the social contract that has shaped Mauritian society since independence. With EU preferences due to be phased out in the next few years, however, it is expected that the “social contract” will need revisiting. Higher

unemployment and less generous social benefits could weaken the consensus on which the social contract is based.

Enhancing participation. The preparation of Vision 2020: The National Long-Term Perspective Study could have been a more effective exercise if it had built more on the existing consultative and participatory culture of the Mauritian society. However, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) has begun to institutionalize the dialogue among government, political opposition, private sector, trade unions and civil society. Sector plans have been prepared through the involvement of representatives of different government agencies and a broad range of stakeholders. Ministries and public institutions are now relying on non-governmental organizations for the implementation of their programs. Key challenges still confront the government, the private sector, trade unions, civil society, and external partners, to further advance development, and renew a social contract responsive to the realities of an increasingly competitive international environment. There is consensus among many stakeholders that the basic pillars of the Comprehensive Development Framework provide an appropriate and realistic approach to face these challenges.

Capacity strengthening. Mauritius has strong institutions and a capable civil service. But, training and capacity support are needed to empower civil society, non-governmental organizations and trade unions. Champions of reform need to emerge to guide the consensus-building process. The private sector could play a strong leadership role.

Dissemination of Vision 2020. The general population has been only marginally aware of past work on the nation's

vision. Mechanisms need to be implemented to get systematic feedback from the population on the national development strategy in the years ahead. The NESC can play a key role as an institution bringing together government, civil society and the private sector. The preparation of a holistic and participatory long-term strategy is key to identifying mutual benefits among stakeholders and links among sectors and actors. It is an important instrument to mobilize broad segments of society into action. The government, by taking stock of the experience with Vision 2020, can update it by building on its strengths and addressing its weaknesses. It should extensively disseminate the ideas and proposals underpinning Vision 2020 among the population, to increase commitment to it and further actions.

Strengthening the linkage between civil society and the private sector. While the cooperation between the private sector and the government has been and is good, the links between private sector and civil society should be strengthened. Both sectors, as well as the country as a whole, would benefit from their increased cooperation. The establishment of independent think tanks, supported jointly by the private sector and civil society, would enhance the capacity of internal partners to engage in a more constructive dialogue with the government on the long-term development of the country.

Strengthening Civil Society Organizations. Civil society organizations can cooperate more to overcome their internal weaknesses, with some form of additional help from the government. The recognition by the government of the importance of NGOs in implementation of social programs can be furthered by additional concrete actions.

Creating greater accountability. Government accountability should be enhanced by increasing the transparency of information on the activities of the public enterprises that today fall outside the boundaries of the Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) scrutiny.

Working with External Partners. The government should seek the cooperation of bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies to support capacity building and management skills, both inside and outside government. Development agencies should also align their support strategies with the long-term goals and objectives identified by the country.

