Gender Assessment

FP320: Prosperete Growth Fund

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GREEN CLIMATE FUND

Prosperete Growth Fund: Gender Assessment

Part I: Background and Introduction

Prosperete is setting up a USD 220mn growth equity fund to promote SMEs focused on climate mitigation and adaptation by leveraging technology to provide solutions at scale. Unlike developed countries, emerging markets are not able to mobilize the funding required to scale climate solutions with the required urgency.

Prosperete will create positive outcomes by investing in and scaling mitigation and adaptation solutions that use technologies that have achieved product market fit. The Fund will also invest in transitioning companies that have existing businesses and are looking to transition to greening their operations and reducing their carbon footprint, but face constraints in pivoting and scaling such solutions. The constraints include high risk perception towards relatively newer businesses, limited availability of capital, lack of understanding of global markets. These legacy businesses can utilise their expertise across different markets, complex supply chains, and customer understanding for efficient deployment of climate solutions.

Prosperete will promote gender equality and inclusion in the targeted countries and sectors by building the first women-led, growth stage climate focused fund that promotes transfer of technology across the global south and partnerships with funds across its target countries. Prosperete will work with its pipeline companies to increase female workforce participation across their organizations, including in senior leadership. Prosperete will also enable increased access to venture capital financing for women-owned/ women-led startups. These measures would include financially sustainable scale-up of investee companies, responsible capitalization and strong governance.

Prosperete's indicative focus areas are (i) low emission transport, (ii) energy access and power generation, (iii) cities, buildings and urban systems, (iv) climate information and early warning systems, (v) energy efficiency, (vi) water security, and (vii) agriculture and food security. Prosperete will invest across emerging markets with a focus on its target countries of India, Bangladesh and Mauritius.

Prosperete has carried out a Gender Assessment in respect of:

1. The macro level gender context for each target country
2. Gender linked vulnerabilities with respect to climate change in each country
3. The gender context in Prosperete's focus areas, in each target country, including the start-up ecosystem more generally

In order to arrive at a comprehensive gender assessment to understand the roles, rights, needs, and opportunities of women and men across target countries and focus areas, the team undertook desktop research, obtained feedback from stakeholder consultations and collated learnings from the experiences of its senior leadership.

Based on the assessment, Prosperete has created a Fund level Gender Action Plan (GAP). Prosperete's GAP sets out specific actions to be implemented at the Fund level and at portfolio company level by Prosperete (acting as the fund manager) during the fund's life.

Part II: Gender Assessment

A. Country Contexts

The OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a cross-country measure of discrimination against women in social institutions (formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices) across 180 countries. The SIGI covers four dimensions of discriminatory social institutions, spanning major socio-economic areas that affect women's lives: (i) Discrimination in the family, (ii) Restricted physical integrity, (iii) Restricted access to productive and financial resources, and (iv) Restricted civil liberties.

The SIGI's variables quantify discriminatory social institutions such as unequal inheritance rights, child marriage, violence against women, and unequal land and property rights.

As highlighted below, the countries that the Prosperete Growth Fund intends to invest in are ranked between 43 and 50 on the SIGI, where a "0" score indicates no discrimination and "100" denotes absolute discrimination. In these countries, in general, labour force participation rate is significantly lower for women than for men. Prevalent discriminatory social norms, which limit women to conventional roles, stand as one of the primary reasons for this disparity. Moreover, biased perceptions regarding women's capabilities and discriminatory educational practices hinder their access to quality employment opportunities and confine them to specific sectors of the economy. Biases concerning the abilities of boys and girls influence educational decisions, particularly regarding fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), thereby reinforcing gender-based segregation within the workforce. Additionally, discriminatory social norms and biases related to women's access to markets, finance, training, and networks impede their entrepreneurial endeavors in these countries.

Country	SIGI 2023	Discrimination in the Family	Restricted Physical Integrity	Restricted Access to Productive & Financial Resources	Restricted Civil Liberties
India	43	60.1	51.2	41.2	**13.8**
Mauritius	**n/a**	**47.0**	**n/a**	**6.0**	**35.0**

Prosperete will apply an intersectionality lens to identify different groups of women and men facing intersecting vulnerabilities at country level and particularly in the areas relevant to the Prosperete's investment program.

Prosperete's intersectional gender lens will focus on both direct and indirect gender impacts of any intervention/solution. Direct impacts are those that have a direct and immediate effect on the status and position of women and other vulnerable groups. Usually, a direct impact occurs when the intervention affects people's access to resources (e.g. grants, loans, jobs) and/or people's participation in areas of decision-making (e.g. rules for the composition of committees, etc.). Direct impacts include employment for women and other vulnerable groups and/or increased or more stable income, where such persons are the intended consumers of a technology or service. Indirect impacts are when the planned intervention affects the means of provision of certain resources or services (e.g. procedure to qualify companies, regulation of environmental quality management of certain activities and facilities, incentives for certain projects, etc.), behind which there are people (e.g. managers, workers, users, etc.) as the ultimate beneficiaries. In other words, even though the policy is not directly targeted at them, they can be affected by it. This could include interventions that would have a positive outcome on women's lives including, access to clean energy, safer transportation, access to safe drinking water, green buildings etc.[1]

[1] https://georgia.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Gender%20impact.pdf

The expected impact on women and vulnerable groups through the fund's activities will include the following:

1) Empowerment of vulnerable groups and gender through enhanced livelihoods and job opportunities and minorities in each of the sectors covered by Prosperete.

2) Greater opportunities for women led businesses and enhanced job opportunities in Prosperete's pipeline and portfolio companies

3) Increased awareness, knowledge sharing opportunities across genders and groups in the field of climate tech across emerging markets to bring more gender parity in the sectors covered by Prosperete

4) Greater gender integrated product design, distribution and recycling starting at the design stage to end of product life stage.

5) Encourage pipeline and portfolio companies to have diversified workforce and improve access to low carbon technologies for women through gender integrated product design and distribution.

6) Reduce historical gender disparity in skills development across sectors such as energy transition, electrification of mobility, resource optimization, green buildings and new materials technologies; battery technology; electrical and mechanical engineering, among others. All of these areas generally have low participation of women.

Prosperete will take into account country specific sociocultural gender barriers related to the sector and these will be taken into account in the design of the specific Gender Action Plans being developed for its investee companies. Prosperete will also consider potential sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) risks that may be relevant to a particular country or company and include relevant SEAH measures in the Gender Action Plan prepared for investee companies.

Prosperete will also strengthen the activities by including those that support transformative gender norms as well as sector specific gender equality milestones.

Prosperete has consulted with multiple stakeholders in preparing its Gender Assessment and Gender Action plan. Below are excerpts from a few of such consultations

Stakeholder & Country	Feedback	Action Items
WinPE – A leading network to promote gender diversity in the PE industry Country: India	Female participation in the PE industry is poor, at below 20%. Females face multiple challenges: i) not enough guidance; ii) not enough clarity about career path in the PE industry; iii) need to increase funnel at entry level.	Prosperete as a team is mentoring 4 industry female professionals. Prosperete is working with WinPE in creating more awareness with PE players to enhance gender diversity. PE funds are willing to take female professionals. Prosperete team will assist WinPE in getting more female students attracted towards the PE industry.
SEWA – A leading self-help group for females in rural areas. Country: India	Females in rural areas are looking for better education solutions. As regards enhancing income participation, females have a particular issue with irrigation of their farms — access to a cheap and mobile irrigation solution is critical. Females need access to better income-earning avenues where they could leverage existing networks and provide better	Prosperete helped identify a Swedish solution that is mobile and efficient, and helps with easy irrigation of fields. Prosperete's team is working with the SEWA team to create referral income for females who help others — a selling agent program is being developed. Prosperete is working with SEWA to create a financing solution wherein females can get loans for financing

	solutions for each other. Access to better financial solutions is critical.	their capex needs (e.g., for this solar pump solution).
Talentnomics – An organization to help promote gender diversity in the legal industry Country: India	Need to increase the number of women in leadership roles; eliminate the gender gap in leadership and pay.	Prosperete will help investee companies design programmes to ensure women are supported and trained to take on leadership roles.

Set out below is the Gender Assessment by country that has already been undertaken by Prosperete based on publicly available sources of information, hands-on experience of Prosperete's team, inputs from consultation (as above) with Prosperete partners that are focused on empowering women and entities in each country focused on issues specific to a particular country.

1. India

The socio-economic status of women in India has been a subject of considerable concern and scrutiny over the years. While progress has been made in several areas, disparities and challenges continue to persist, in major part due to the ways in which social identities, economic status, caste and other disparities interact to create unique experiences of discrimination and oppression. Status of women, compared against the global averages, is presented below:

- **Social Status**: India is ranked 127 out of 146 countries in the 2023 in the WEF's Gender Gap Report 2023, with
  India's rank being 142/146 on the Health & Survival sub-index. World Bank data from 2021 shows that the sex ratio at birth was 1.08 male births to female births. These indicators show a continuing social bias against girls and women in India.

  Gender inequality in India is a complex issue. Despite the constitutional guarantee of equal rights for both genders, disparities persist across various aspects of life and society. There is pervasive gender discrimination, often favoring men, both (i) within families and homes, which are often patriarchal with family members holding conventional notions of a woman's role and their ability to work outside the house and pursue careers while fulfilling their obligations at home, and (ii) at the workplace, influencing career advancement and mental well-being. Although Indian laws are strong and protect women, and aim to prioritize women's safety, deeply entrenched discriminatory practices like rape and dowry remain prevalent.

- **Education**: World Bank data shows adult female literacy ie., above the age of 15, to be 69% in India in 2022, while the figure is 83% for males above 15 years of age. The National Family Health Survey – 5 (2019-2021) (NFHS-5) showed that 41% women and 50% men had more than 10 years of schooling and only 33% women had used the internet while the figure was 57% for men. These indicators reveal the disparity in education and related opportunity between women and men in India; and the gender gap along these aspects is wider in rural areas and among marginalized communities.

- **Healthcare and Maternal Mortality**: As per the UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group (MMEIG) 2020 report, the maternal mortality rate in India has declined from 384 in 2000 to 103 in 2020 whereas Global MMR has declined from 339 in 2000 to 223 in 2020. While India's average annual rate of reduction of MMR during the 2000-2020 periods was 6.36% compared to the global average of 2.07%, further improving access to quality healthcare and awareness among women of reproductive age and equipping them to have a greater say in reproductive decisions, especially in rural areas, is critical for India to make further progress towards the SDG MMR goal of 70.

- **Economic Participation**: According to World Bank data, in India, the labor force participation rate among females is 32.7% and among males is 76.8% for 2023. While female labor force participation has increased since 1990, compared with labor force participation in the lower-middle income group, the gap between men and women is higher in India. Further, while the "vulnerable employment" rate for women in India ie., workers that are least likely to have formal work arrangements, social protection, and safety nets to guard against economic shocks, has improved since 1990, it is still as high as 78% for 2022. The rate of vulnerable employment is higher for men and women in India compared to the average rate in South Asia. Tackling this aspect is vital to improve the socio-economic status of women in India.

  According to data from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the gender pay gap in India was estimatedto be around 34.5% in 2020, significantly higher than the global average of 20.2%. The WEF's Gender Gap Report 2023 reveals that India's progress in economic participation and opportunity remains a challenge, with only 36.7% gender parity achieved in this domain. While individual characteristics such as education, skills or experience explain part of the gender pay gap, a large part of the gender pay gap can still be attributed purely to discrimination based on one's gender or sex. Gender-based discriminatory practices include: lower wages paid to women for work of equal value; undervaluation of women's work in highly feminized occupations and enterprises, and motherhood pay gap — lower wages for mothers compared to non-mothers.

  As regards account ownership, World Bank Data shows that, in 2021, an equal number of men and women (77.5%) had an account at a bank or another type of financial institution or report personally using a mobile money service in the past 12 months.[2] Another important metric of economic empowerment is asset ownership and provides protection in the case of marital dissolution or abandonment. In India, only 46.5% of women owned a dwelling either alone or jointly in 2021, while >76% men did. Given the compelling evidence that ownership of property by women has positive consequences for women's empowerment, nutritional and health outcomes, and children's schooling, under the Prime Minister's housing scheme (PMAY), the house is typically allotted jointly to husband and wife, unless the beneficiary is a single woman.

- **Political and Social Participation**: India has universal suffrage and women in India have the right to run for public office. However, only 14% of legislators in India's lower house of Parliament are women and in October 2023, a new law was passed reserving 33% seats in Parliament for women. The new law is expected to be implemented circa 2029 and is expected to increase female participation in the electoral process.

  In terms of decision-making, World Bank data from 2021 showed that 73.3% of currently married women participated in making major decisions in the household including decisions about their own healthcare, making major household purchases, and visits to family, relatives, friends. However, while social participation is high, crimes against women and adherence to gender stereotypes remain rampant.

  Impact of Climate Change on Gender: Women and children are 14 times more likely to lose their lives during natural disasters compared to men – in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, where 70% of the 230,000 lives lost were women. Further, climate-induced migration and displacement can create opportunities for human traffickers to exploit vulnerable women and girls, subjecting them to trafficking for forced labor or sexual exploitation.[3] Acknowledging this disparity, the **G20 Delhi Declaration** resolved to **accelerate climate action with gender equality at its core**. Women are also primarily responsible for securing food, water, and fuel for the households, and

[2] https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/india
[3] https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP_2020.pdf

therefore more vulnerable to climate impacts affecting these aspects. Data from the India Human Development Survey-2 (IHDS), a national-level household survey on multiple development parameters, shows that women spend twice the amount of time (46 minutes) fetching water per day as compared to men (22 minutes).[4]

In Indian agriculture out of the 97.5 million females in the rural sector, 37.3% work as cultivators and 62.7% as agricultural laborers. A laborer is exposed to higher financial risks compared to a cultivator, primarily due to seasonality in employment and therefore is threatened by an irregularity in income, which is exaggerated in case of adverse climate conditions such as droughts and floods. In addition, lower wage rates for female laborers compared to males, make them economically more deprived.[5] Studies have examined the magnitude of the impact of floods on gender-wise employment in the rural agricultural and non-agricultural sectors found that flood damage creates differential impacts on employment by gender, with female agricultural workers more adversely affected than male workers.[6] Women farmers in India often have limited access to resources such as land, credit, and technology, which can make it difficult for them to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Gender Aspects of Prosperete's Focus Areas

India's Start-up Ecosystem

According to a 2023 report by WISER (Women in India's Startup Ecosystem) Report, women-led startups have risen to 18% in India in the past five years.[7] This has come against the backdrop of strong government support to women entrepreneurs - The Women's Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a Government of India-backed initiative launched by the NITI Aayog in 2017 to promote a conducive ecosystem for women's entrepreneurship in India. WEP serves as an accelerator, helps with funding, marketing and provides mentorship.

The WISER report highlights that startups are currently faring better than traditional enterprises, with 32% of women in managerial positions as against 21% in corporates. This gap widens further at the CXO level where corporates have only 5% of women in leadership positions against 18% in startups. Additionally, startups with a woman founder have 2.5x women in senior roles compared to male-founded startups. However, while the overall figures are promising, significant work lies ahead - 10 years into their careers, 8 out of 10 men in startups occupy Director-level positions or higher, compared to only 5 in 10 women.

As regards funding, the WISER report 18% of the total start-up funding in 2022 went to women-lead start-ups. Access to capital and funding remains a challenge due to unconscious biases, lack of gender diversity among investors and the "old boys club" / self-selection problem. Investors that bring not just capital but also better access to knowledge, resources and networks can become key enablers for women-lead start-ups to thrive. Equally, on the capital allocators side, increasing the representation of women in investment decision-making will help counter inherent gender biases.

Specific gender aspects of Prosperete's focus areas for investment are set out below, including specific challenges and opportunities that will ensure gender inclusivity.

Energy Access & Power Generation; Energy Efficiency:

The lack of access to energy or to clean cooking fuels particularly impacts women, limiting their work

[4] https://ihds.umd.edu/system/files/2020-03/05HDinIndia.pdf
[5] https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-018-2233-z
[6] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2212420922001005?via%3Dihub; see also: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S221242092200694X
[7] https://ifmrlead.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Women-in-India-s-Startup-Ecosystem-Report-WISER_October_2023.pdf

options, exposing them to health risks, and forcing them to forage for wood or other combustible materials. In addition to health risks, a lack of clean cooking methods prevents many women and girls from accessing education, earning a wage or starting a business that would deliver financial autonomy. While India has made concerted efforts in this regard and, in the last decade, halved its population without access to clean cooking fuels, it is still home to many people without such access – according to a IEA Report – *A Vision for Clean Cooking Access for All*, in 2022 approximately 448 million people in India lack access in India (approx. 25% of population).[8]

As regards representation of women in the energy sector, according to the WEF's *Global Gender Gap Report*, globally, the energy sector is one where there remains a wide gender gap, with only 1 in five senior positions in the sector being held by women. Women's participation in the sector is limited due to several factors, including limited training in science, technology, engineering, and management, lack of suitable job opportunities and flexibility, safety and security concerns, and societal challenges. For instance, women represent a mere 11% of the workforce in India's renewable energy sector, significantly lower than the global average of 32 %.[9]

To support women in the energy sector, the Indian government has taken various steps including the Women's Empowerment Scheme, which aims to provide skill development and training programmes aimed at women in the renewable energy sector. There are also various other schemes and incentives aimed at increasing women's participation in the energy sector, such as a subsidy for solar home systems installed by women.[10]

Increasing women's participation in the energy sector presents a significant opportunity as well – according to the Council for Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), if women's participation in the energy sector is increased by 30%, it could create up to 3.2 million additional jobs by 2025. Increased representation of women in the sector will bring diverse perspectives, drive innovation and a more inclusive approach to decision-making with improved outcomes for both industry and society.

Water Security; Agriculture & Food Security:

In India, women play a crucial role in water collection, purification, and management - women and girls spend a collective 200 million hours collecting water, which has a disproportionate effect on their everyday lives and pushes communities towards poverty. In India in 2018, nearly 20% of households in urban areas lacked access to drinking water facilities within the household premises, and almost 28% of households did not use an improved source of drinking water.[10] Further, access to potable tap water is a fundamental necessity for every household for ensuring basic health and hygiene. However, despite the success of the government's "*har ghar jal*" (water in every home) scheme, in rural India, a significant portion of the population still lacks this essential amenity.[11] Therefore, water security is critical to improving women's lives and enabling their participation in gainful employment.

Furthermore, 50%+ districts in India will face critical water stress within two decades, and approximately 60% of cultivated area is dependent on rain for irrigation and therefore influenced by

[8] https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/212dda1e-63ec-4f42-a530-f2ef3da74fdf/AVisionforCleanCookingAccessforAll.pdf
[9] https://energyalliance.org/gender-empowerment-in-the-renewable-energy-sector/
[10] https://www.indiawaterportal.org/articles/gender-sensitive-water-management-cornerstone-equitable-outcomes
[11] https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-editorials/india-water-challenges-and-har-ghar-jal-scheme

the climate. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women make up 43% of the agricultural labor force in India. Women are more likely to be involved in subsistence farming and small-scale agriculture, which makes them particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as changing rainfall patterns and increased temperatures. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) reports that women are responsible for about 60-80% of food and nutrition-related activities, including seed selection, crop management, and food preparation. Climate-induced crop failures and reduced agricultural productivity can thus have a direct impact on women's food security and nutritional well-being.

Given the above, access to interventions and technologies that could help women weather climate shocks affecting farming and agriculture as well as enable better water management would have a significant impact on womens' lives and livelihoods.

Cities, Buildings & Urban Systems:

While climate change creates a shortage of affordable housing, lack of affordable green housing exacerbates climate change. Those who cannot afford to live in well-insulated and energy-efficient homes tend to rely more on carbon-intensive housing. In alone, residences emit 7% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions and consume more than 25% of the total electricity, making the sector the third-largest consumer of electricity. Mitigating the environmental impact of housing necessitates a shift towards more sustainable energy and water consumption practices, along with the utilization of eco-friendly construction materials. Implementing housing designs and construction methods tailored to climate-related risks can enhance resilience and contribute to mitigation endeavors. However, women are frequently excluded from participating in policymaking and decision-making processes concerning planning, design, and the construction of housing. However, increasing women's participation in infrastructure planning, management and design can also promote green and gender sensitive policies and projects. Women bring diverse perspectives and ideas, which, in turn, lead to more innovative and sustainable solutions.

Although women may trail men in terms of home ownership, they hold significant influence in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts through their adoption of sustainable practices within households. This includes investing in clean energy solutions like solar panels and environmentally-friendly cook stoves. Women often exhibit a propensity for sustainable consumption and demonstrate heightened sensitivity to ecological, environmental, and health-related issues.[12]

One reason why female home ownership is lagging is that most women work in the informal sector, therefore lacking the credit history and documentation required to access finance such as housing loans. Traditional social norms and inheritance practices also affect their ability to assert an ownership right.

Increasing women's participation in the green buildings sector and while addressing the need for affordable, green housing is vital both to improve women's lives and livelihoods and to improve emissions reductions outcomes. It also requires interventions to ensure gender-sensitive financing and technology-enhanced access to financing.

Low-emission Transport:

India's transport sector is responsible for 14 % of the country's energy-related CO2 emissions—and the accompanying impacts on air quality, public health, road safety, and sustainable urban development. In recent years, increased vehicle use has lead to an augmentation in congestion, accidents, and local air pollution. If this trend continues, all of these problems will get worse. At the

[12] https://blogs.adb.org/blog/three-pathways-inclusive-green-housing-women-asia-and-pacific

same time, access to affordable and reliable transportation is one of the biggest barriers to paid employment for women in India. Why and how women move through urban spaces is largely influenced by their disproportionate share of childcare and domestic responsibilities and real and perceived concerns around personal safety and security. There is a growing recognition of the need to align development and climate goals but also of the importance of gender-informed transportation policies to ensure growth is both sustainable and equitable. In particular, in India where sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) and gender based violence(GBV) against women is a significant concern – in a 2021 study, 88% of the women that used public transport reported feeling unsafe while travelling, especially while waiting at congested interchanges and using transport facilities that do not have any technological add-ons for safety (for instance, a non-app-based taxi instead of an app-based one) or that requires physical proximity to strangers (shared riding).[13]

Electric vehicles, especially e-rickshaws, e-carts, or e-bikes, offer an affordable and eco-friendly mode of transportation that can be easily adopted by individuals and that encourage micro-entrepreneurship which is widely embraced by women. They thus enable women to enter various service sectors like last-mile delivery, transportation, and local commuting, empowering them to generate income and uplift their communities. Data indicates that an encouraging 25% of women in Tier 2 cities in India have already embraced EVs contributing to family incomes. Further investing and supporting the EV ecosystem will further unlock the potential of women's micro-entrepreneurship contributing to inclusive and sustainable growth.

2. Mauritius

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 by the World Economic Forum (**WEF Report**), Mauritius ranks 98th out of 146 countries. The country's Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) score is 0.689. The Republic of Mauritius continues to make progress in advancing women's and girls' rights and the attainment of gender equality in the country. While significant progress has been made towards removing formal barriers to achieving gender equality, a lot remains to be done before gender equality is achieved.

The Republic of Mauritius has signed and ratified different treaties to protect women's rights and prevent discrimination against women. Mauritius has passed domestic legislation to give effect to most of the treaties it has signed. The Children's Act 2020 has been in force since 24 January 2022 and this will enable Mauritius to address earlier reservations to some of the Articles of the Maputo Protocol. The Act brings an end to child marriages and cohabitation in the country, where girls who are the main victims of these practices will be better protected.

The Constitution of Mauritius enshrines the right to equality under Article 3 and 16 and the amendment to Article 16(3) of the Constitution added sex as another characteristic which ensured that women have the same legal rights as men. Everybody is equal before the law and nobody can be discriminated against, directly or indirectly, on grounds including age, sex, creed, ethnicity or even religion. Women and men have the right to equal enjoyment of rights and freedom, including opportunities and responsibilities in the social, economic, cultural and political spheres (Task Force Report, 2001). Yet, in spite of the elimination of sex discrimination in the legal framework and increased educational and economic opportunities for women, Mauritius remains a patriarchal society, one where deep-seated patriarchal norms and values continue to hinder women's progress, emancipation and empowerment. Whereas Mauritius has made major progress towards creating de jure equality between women and men, there is still a lot to be done before de facto equality between men and women is attained in the country.

Mauritius' new National Gender Policy (2022-2030) provides a framework for collective action by

[13] https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ORF_Monograph_WomenOnTheMove.pdf

public- and private-sector stakeholders to achieve gender equality, empower women and girls, and ensure their full enjoyment of all human rights. In line with the SDG No. 5, the policy outlines the government's commitment to gender equality as a development and human rights concern. Among its objectives, the policy aims to promote inclusion of gender equality in legislation and policies, to ensure equal participation of women in decision making at all levels, and to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence. The government is also drafting a gender equality bill designed to accelerate the country's progress toward gender equality in the social, economic, and political arenas.

The World Bank's Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) legal frameworks score for Mauritius is 87.5 out of 100 which is higher than the global average (64.2) and significantly higher than the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average (57.4) and Middle East & North Africa regional average (38.6). It is interesting to note that Mauritius received a score of 100 for five indicators: Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Childcare, and Assets. It received a score of 75 on Safety, Marriage, Parenthood, Entrepreneurship, and Pension because the law in Mauritius does not address femicide, restricts a woman's right to remarry, does not provide maternal leave benefits paid solely by the government, and lacks provisions on gender-sensitive procurement for public procurement processes and on the accounting of periods of absence due to childcare in pension benefits. As a result, the Women, Business and the Law 2.0 legal frameworks score for Mauritius is 87.5, which is the unweighted average of the 10 indicator scores on a scale of 0–100.[14]

Demography and Social Status: As of 2024, Mauritius' total population is approximately 1.3 million people.[15] The population is fairly evenly split between genders, with the female population being approximately 0.64 million, and the male population approximately 0.62 million. In 2023, approximately 40% of Mauritius' population lived in urban centres, and 60% lived in rural areas.

In 2023, Mauritius did not receive an overall SIGI score due to missing data. The country obtained a score of 47 in the "Discrimination in the family" dimension, followed by "Restricted civil liberties" (35), and "Restricted access to productive and financial resources" (6).

Education: According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2023, Mauritius achieves a high score of 99%, indicating near parity in access to education between men and women and it ranked 71 out of 146 countries. The same report shows finds that more women than men were enrolled at all levels of education, with the gap being nearly 5% in secondary education and as high as 18% for tertiary education.

Enhanced access to higher education has not always translated into improved career opportunities for women. Although both men and women enrol for a Bachelor's Degree, fewer women are involved in higher degree research at PhD, MPhil and DBA levels. In 2019 there were 244 women enrolled in research degrees whereas the number of men was 259. As a result, women are underrepresented in research. Women tend to be under-represented in science-related fields such as Engineering (2.0% against 10.6% for men) and Information Technology (5.6% against 16.0% for men).[16]

Health: As the Global Gender Gap report 2023, Mauritius is ranked 1st with a score of .98. In 2023, maternal mortality was at 61 deaths per 100,000 live births.

The comprehensive welfare state provides free health care, universal pensions, state provision of free education at all levels as well, thereby enabling women and girls who may have been disadvantaged by patriarchal culture and/or precarious income situations to benefit.

Economic Participation: In Mauritius, the labor force participation rate among females is 43% and

[14] World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2024 report
[15] United Nations Population Fund
[16] https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/maurituis_gender_equality_profile.pdf

among males is 68.5% for 2023. Since 1990, female labor force participation has increased. Compared with labor force participation in the upper middle-income group, the gap between men and women is higher in Mauritius. However, women represented only 27% of those employed in senior and middle management in 2022.[17] This is despite unemployed women being generally more qualified than their male counterparts, with about 60% of them holding at least a School Certificate compared to 48% among males.[18] However, thereafter, women tend to follow gendered livelihood pathways with more women were enrolled in topics such as administration, accounting, as compared to information technology and engineering, which in turn skews their career and financial opportunities.

While gender pay gap data is not available for Mauritius in either the ILO or the WEF's database, a 2018-2019 time use survey carried out by Statistics Mauritius shows that on the average, men spend 4.7 hours at work (all income earning activities) per day, almost twice that of women (2.5 hours). On the other hand, women spend more time on household chores (housework and care of household members) than men (4.4 hours against 1.7 hours). At the level of the employed (those having paid jobs or working in their own businesses), men spend 6.8 hours per day at work and women 6.0 hours. Employed women spend 3.6 hours on household chores compared to only 1.7 hours by men. These statistics indicate that in Mauritian society, domestic chores are still overwhelmingly borne by women, although men do take on a certain degree of domestic duties. The unequal division of labour within the household implies that women spend less time at work in paid activities and more time at home in unpaid activities.[19]

In 2021, 89.4% of women and 91.7% of men in Mauritius had an account. The female rate in Mauritius is higher than both Sub-Saharan Africa and the upper middle income group. Asset ownership data for women, an important metric of economic empowerment which provides protection in the case of marital dissolution or abandonment, is not available for Mauritius.

Political and Social Participation:

20% of seats in national parliament were held by women in 2023 in Mauritius. The proportion of seats held by women in Mauritius has remained roughly the same as 2010. The current rate is lower than the average rate in upper middle income economies. Mauritius, to date, has had only 2 female heads of state according to the WEF Report. As these statistics show, women remain underrepresented in politics and at this level, Mauritius still has a significant gender deficit. Politics in Mauritius remains highly male dominated and very few women have been able to make inroads into the political system. Some progress has been made at local government level, especially through the Local Government Act, which provides that every group presenting more than 2 candidates at a Municipal election should ensure that not more than two-thirds of the candidates should be of the same sex. However, further changes are needed to further embed the need to have candidates from both sexes - although the number of women elected at Municipal Council elections has increased following the promulgation of the Local Government Act in 2011, the number of women mayors has remained low. In 2018, there was only one woman mayor whereas in 2020, there was no woman mayor in the five municipalities. Electoral reform is therefore a major opportunity for Mauritian women to claim their space in parliament and politics, but garnering consensus on this has been a challenge.[20]

Impact of Climate Change on Gender: Mauritius is highly vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change. The 2021 World Risk Report has ranked Mauritius as the 51st country with the highest disaster risk, out of 181 countries. Flooding is the second largest risk after cyclones, causing 20% of direct economic losses associated with disasters (World Bank, 2020) - Mauritius has been

[17] https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/mauritius
[18] https://www.undp.org/mauritius-seychelles/blog/unfinished-business-journey-womens-equality-mauritius
[19] https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/maurituis_gender_equality_profile.pdf
[20] https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/maurituis_gender_equality_profile.pdf

experiencing floods, including flash floods with increasing frequency. These have affected many families, causing damage to homes and household and for some families, even food supplies were affected. The time use survey showed that women spend longer hours on household chores and the floods would have contributed to the triple burden on women especially for clean-up purposes. There is also the issue of renewing food supplies and women having to handle these domestic duties. Women are often responsible in the mitigation of the effects and adaption of climate change by supporting their families and societies. While impacts of climate change have a negative impact on both women's and men's health and livelihoods, the impact on women is more detrimental if gender inequalities are not addressed.

To this end, the Climate Change Act 2020 has made provision for gender to be taken into consideration, in line with the 2005 Paris Agreement of Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (MESWMCC) is incorporating the gender dimension of climate change in awareness raising activities, targeting as well as involving women as agents of change in on-going mitigation and adaptation programmes. In addition, further focused studies are still needed to be done to assess the impact on women of climate change together with targeted programmes that mitigate these impacts.

Gender Aspects of Prosperete's Focus Areas

Start-up Ecosystem

Mauritius boasts a small but vibrant startup ecosystem, supported by a close community of freelancers and entrepreneurs. The country has a well-developed physical infrastructure that provides a strong foundation for new businesses. Both the public and private sectors are committed to nurturing this ecosystem, providing funding, competitions, and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs. Mauritius is also recognized as a tax haven for offshore investments, featuring Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements and Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (IPPAs). Additionally, the country has established an Occupation Permit available to investors, freelancers, and startup founders alike.[21]

Recent policy developments, such as the Business Facilitation Act, have streamlined the process of starting a business in Mauritius. The country has rolled out various financial support programs for entrepreneurs, including the Business Development Scheme, which provides loans to startups, and the Booster Microcredit program for projects in sectors like ICT. Furthermore, the Economic Development Board (EDB) has launched a Regulatory Sandbox Licence (RSL) that enables companies to test innovative fintech initiatives in a controlled environment prior to full launch. Mauritius is committed to fostering its innovation economy by revising the national curriculum and offering research funding to PhD students. Given its small population, the nation faces challenges in attracting and retaining talent within its startup ecosystem. The 10-Year Master Plan for the SME Sector reflects the public sector's awareness of these challenges and outlines strategies to address them. Support for startups and entrepreneurship is essential for driving the country's innovation economy, with resources such as business incubators, targeted policies, and investment opportunities fueling growth and success. Mauritius's emphasis on nurturing talent and innovation is evident in its policies, making it an appealing destination for startups seeking a supportive business landscape.

Energy Access & Power Generation; Energy Efficiency:

Globally, women are underrepresented in the energy sector, making up only 22% of the workforce.

[21] https://www.startupblink.com/startup-ecosystem/mauritius

In Mauritius, the figure is even lower, at 5% of the workforce. This situation spans the energy sector including production through renewable sources such as solar, wind, hydro, tidal, geothermal and biomass energy. Another pervasive gender issue playing against women in the energy sector is the global calamity of female poverty and the subsequent feminization of energy poverty.[22] Mauritius is no exception, with 11% of women living below the poverty line compared to 9.6% of men.[23]

In a bid to empower women in RE and economically, the UNDP supported a Green Climate Fund (GCF) project entitled "Accelerating the transformational shift to a low-carbon economy in the Republic of Mauritius". This programme helps the Government of Mauritius achieve its renewable energy (RE) targets including by providing grant support of USD 28 million, alongside over USD 162 million in co-financing from stakeholders and government partners. This grant will be used to (i) review and update national RE policies; (ii) purchase and install advanced technologies to improve the national grid's capacity for integrating RE sources; and (iii) implement 25MW of rooftop photovoltaic (PV) systems, particularly benefiting low-income households and financially struggling women-headed households. Basic training on solar PV installation for female entrepreneurs who can then potentially integrate RE in their business activities has also been provided by the programme. While awareness and training sessions are critical for women entrepreneurs to understand the benefits of transitioning to renewable energy sources, financing is crucial for renewable energy in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Mauritius, which are heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels resulting in high costs and climate risks. However, despite growing interest in diversity and gender equality among funders, insufficient funding is allocated to close the gender financing gap and address the SIDS climate challenge.

Water Security; Agriculture & Food Security:

The agricultural sector's contribution to the GDP of the Republic of Mauritius, which includes the main islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues, has decreased over the years. While it averaged 30% in the 1960s, it now stands at just 4.1% (Statistics Mauritius, 2024). Nevertheless, agriculture remains crucial for food security, job creation, and generating export revenue, particularly through sugar and tea.
Mauritius has a total of 186,500 hectares, with agriculture occupying about 44% of the arable land. However, land dedicated to agricultural production has significantly declined. In 2002, around 80,000 hectares were used for sugarcane, crops, and orchards, but by 2024, only about 42,000 hectares are under sugarcane cultivation, with an additional 8,000 hectares for other crops and orchards (MCIA, 2024; MAIFS, 2024). Rodrigues, which has a total area of 10,800 hectares, has faced a drastic reduction in its agricultural land, losing approximately 3,000 hectares over the years. Currently, only 175 hectares are actively cultivated. However, Rodrigues has a greater livestock capacity than Mauritius.[24]

Mauritius faces significant challenges in achieving food security. The country imports a highly significant quantity of its food requirements, making it vulnerable to global market fluctuations and disruptions. The agricultural sector, though crucial, has seen a decline in its contribution to the GDP, exacerbated by factors such as climate change, loss of agricultural land, labour shortages, and water scarcity. Recognizing the local crop production capacity helps identify opportunities for increasing output and decreasing reliance on imports. However, suitable agricultural land has decreased in both Rodrigues and Mauritius. High production costs, driven by a lack of economies of scale, combined with a significant labor shortage, have resulted in abandoned agricultural activities. Additionally,

[22] https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/renewable/breaking-stereotypes-women-in-energy-are-transforming-indias-clean-energy-and-green-tech-space/100499649
[23] https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/mu/GV-02---Green-Energy--web.pdf#:~:text=Energy%20is%20not%20gender%20neutral.%201%20Globally,of%202000%20employees%20(0.4%%20of%20total%20employment).
[24] https://agriculture.govmu.org/Pages/About%20Us/Overview.aspx

climate change and water availability for irrigation, despite heavy rainfall, significantly affect cultivation.

Food security also encompasses health and the availability of safe and nutritious food. Mauritius has a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases affecting half of the population. They bring to the forefront the necessity to create awareness and the consumption of nutritious food. Since consumers are at the core, and most decisions in households on what is eaten are made by women, women have to be involved and exposed to a diverse range of quality food and educated to make the right choices and have an understanding of the endeavour to increase local food production and reduce imports.

Further, promoting the adoption of climate-resilient crops and technologies, such as hydroponics and agri-voltaic systems, to mitigate the impacts of climate change and enhance food production. Further, investing in modern farming techniques, including sheltered farming and controlled environment agriculture, to improve yields, reduce pesticide use, and ICT integration could attract young entrepreneurs. Finally, a study by the Mauritius Academy of Science and Technology recommends[25] that facilitating investments from foreign entrepreneurs in agricultural production is an option to be considered in the endeavour for enhanced food security. Eligible young entrepreneurs, especially women, can be supported in the preparation of enterprise development plans and produce bankable business plans. Initiatives in the dairy sector, goats and sheep, and specialized forage production can be envisaged.

Cities, Buildings & Urban Systems:

As a SIDS, Mauritius has a limited natural resources and one of the main objectives of the government is to promote Mauritius as a 'Sustainable Island State'. 'Vision 2030 - Transforming Our Future for the Better' is the long-term vision of the Government of Mauritius, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030.

The island of Mauritius is 1864 km2 in size and has an overall population density of 634 inhabitants per km2 per area of land as of 2021.[26] The population density has been increasing, almost doubling since 1970 and is even higher than the world's most populous middle income countries such as India and Nigeria. Some of the urban areas such as Beau Bassin/Rose Hill in Mauritius are even more densely populated than the megacities such as Shanghai and Lagos where population density is 3,800 p/km2 and 3,200 p/km2 respectively.[27] The reason for the high population density is the limited amount of land resources available. However, according to World Bank data, urbanisation has remained about constant at 41% over the past few years and has actually declined in the past decade. Juxtaposed with the growing population size and density, this means urbanisation is occurring outside the legally defined urban boundaries, which need identification in order to ensure sustainable development.[28] The Government of Mauritius is taking steps to identify and plan these areas. For instance, it has launched a smart city development scheme with a view of developing self-sufficient sustainable cities. These smart cities are being built on undeveloped land in rural areas. The Economic Development Board of Mauritius has granted 15+ permits for smart cities which are essentially mixed-use, green urban spaces across the country, that manage resources and contribute to social welfare and nature conservation and are aimed at boosting innovation and helping businesses set up in

[25] https://www.interacademies.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/BOOKLET_Empowering%20Food%20Security%20in%20Mauritius%20online%20reduce.pdf
[26] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=MU
[27] REVISITING THE URBAN DEFINITION FOR THE ISLAND OF MAURITIUS, in the Sustainable City, XIV available at https://www.witpress.com/Secure/elibrary/papers/SC20/SC20002FU1.pdf
[28] REVISITING THE URBAN DEFINITION FOR THE ISLAND OF MAURITIUS, in the Sustainable City, XIV available at https://www.witpress.com/Secure/elibrary/papers/SC20/SC20002FU1.pdf

Mauritius.[29]

In the construction sector, the government of Mauritius, in collaboration with private sector stakeholders and international partners, has been actively promoting green building practices. These initiatives are aimed at reducing the environmental footprint of the construction sector, which is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and resource consumption. Key policies and programs have been introduced to encourage the adoption of sustainable building standards. The Building Control Act has been revised to incorporate green building codes, mandating energy-efficient designs, the use of renewable energy sources, and sustainable materials. Additionally, financial incentives such as tax rebates and subsidies are provided to developers who meet these green criteria.

A critical aspect of Mauritius's green building initiatives is the integration of renewable energy sources. Solar energy, in particular, plays a pivotal role and wind energy is also being harnessed. The combined use of solar and wind energy is positioning Mauritius as a leader in renewable energy adoption within the region.

The national strategy also includes retrofitting existing buildings to improve their energy efficiency and sustainability. By upgrading older structures, Mauritius can accelerate its progress toward reducing carbon emissions and conserving resources.

According to the United Nations, women make up approximately 80% of the people who are displaced from their homes by climate change-related factors, such as extreme weather events, natural disasters, and environmental degradation.[30] Women and children are overwhelmingly more likely to die of or be severely affected by indoor air pollution given the additional time they spend indoors due to social-economic and cultural factors.[31] Data from a 2018-2019 time use survey in Mauritius shows that on average, women spend more time on household chores than men (4.4 hours against 1.7 hours). Therefore, it is clear that green buildings can play a significant role in facilitating gender equality by addressing various aspects of the built environment that impact women's lives and the Government of Mauritius is leading the way with its multi-pronged approach to greening the construction sector.[32]

[29] https://residency.mu/acquire/smart-city-scheme/
[30] https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/07/climate-change-exacerbates-violence-against-women-and-girls#:~:text=It%20is%20estimated%20that%2080,women%2C%20according%20to%20UN%20Environment.
[31] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health#:~:text=Women%20and%20children%20disproportionately%20bear,from%20polluting%20stoves%20and%20fuels.
[32] https://www.remax24.com/news/green-building-initiatives-in-mauritius-leading-the-way-in-sustainable-development/