

## Women and the New World economy: an island's experience

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### Abstract

The development of free trade practices in the world market, together with the recent fluctuations on the international money market, is having an increasing impact on the small island economies, such as Mauritius. This paper, written from the practitioner's point of view, discusses how the restructuring process is affecting female employees. Examples of corrective action being taken in favour of women, such as training programmes in entrepreneurship and leadership, are presented. The difficulties encountered in achieving the training objectives are reviewed and issues needing further attention to optimise the successful involvement of women in the upgrading of the Mauritian workforce are identified.

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### 1.0 Introduction

This paper was originally written for presentation at the 6th International Conference on ISO 9000 and TQM that was held at Paisley Business School in April 2001. It is written from the standpoint of a practitioner with the aim of sharing experience in facing an issue that is central to the success of any development plan, be it at the national level or that of the individual company, its impact on women.

While the role and status of women in modern society has been the subject of much debate in the political arena throughout the twentieth century, the potential impact on women's lives of policies and strategies in the economic sphere still receives inadequate attention before their implementation. In the words of Brandt (1980):

Any definition of development is incomplete if it fails to comprehend the contribution of women to development and the consequences of development for the lives of women. (...) Plans and projects are designed by men to be implemented by men on the assumption that if men, as the heads of households, benefit from these projects, the women and children in those households will benefit too. Women's problems still tend to be regarded as separate, rather than as facets of the culture and structure of all societies. Women's progress needs to be treated as a conscious element of every programme directed towards development.

Now, 20 years later, the question still is to what degree does strategic thinking and planning at all levels of economic activity give explicit attention to the women involved.

### 2.0 The global context

The North-South debate of the 1980s is still very much alive. The concepts of the North-South divide, the predicament of the South, from aid to interdependence, mutual interests in growth that the Brandt Report (1980) discussed are still at the heart of the globalisation debate. Brandt described the potential vulnerability of the NICs, Singapore, Korea, etc., in these terms:

The future progress of these countries depends considerably on the trade and financial policies of the North.

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The debacle in Seattle confirmed this prediction. In fact, the accelerated development of free trade practices in the world market, together with the recent fluctuations on the international money market, is having an increasing impact on the small island economies, such as Mauritius, and their continued economic success is at risk. Some of the more gloomy observers say that they could even join the list of heavily indebted Third World countries if appropriate decisions are not taken at the global level. Although these economies are essentially export-oriented, they are too small to influence international trends and are, therefore, obliged to follow and not lead. While lobbying in international forums such as the World Trade Organisation and the European Union has already obtained a moratorium in the dismantling of the various international trade agreements, such as the Multifibre Agreement and the Lomé Accord, these countries must review their strategies for success in world trade.

Moreover, the action plans drawn up by the various World Conferences organised by the United Nations throughout the 1990s have drawn the attention of the international community to the need for a human-centred and multi-dimensional approach to global development. One of the major principles adopted concerns women in the New World order, namely:

The improvement of the status of women, including their empowerment, is central to all efforts to achieve sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions (United Nations, 1997).

Sen (1999) describes how the agenda for women's movements throughout the world has shifted from concentrating solely on achieving women's well-being to emphasising and enhancing the active role of women's agency. He writes:

No longer the passive recipients of welfare-enhancing help, women are increasingly seen, by men as well as women, as active agents of change: the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of both women and men.

This is exactly the challenge that Mauritius is now facing with respect to the female population, how to enhance their active role in the restructuring process described above.

### 3.0 Women in employment

#### 3.1 Literature review

The literature and research on women in society has grown exponentially since the grass-roots women's movements of the 1960s and the now classic writings of Germaine Greer, Kate Millet and others in the 1970s. For instance, Kemp and Squires (1997) clearly show how rich and diverse the research and debate on women's issues has become since the early 1980s when feminist research was finally accepted within academia. Calás and Smircich (1996) also talk of how:

... feminist movements have contributed strongly to contemporary cultural analyses and, in universities all over the world, women's studies programs have helped foster energetic, cross-disciplinary scholarship and a plurality of feminist "theories" aimed at rethinking the grounds of knowledge.

But then they list all the problems that women continue to face in the world of work despite the progress made in the academic understanding of women's status and role: sex segregation of occupations and organisations, the feminisation of poverty, the "tipping" phenomenon, the growth of female unemployment in transnational organisations.

Visvanathan *et al.* (1997) describe women's studies as being:

... imbued with an activist spirit rarely found in academy ... a movement directed at changing women's status.

They consider that:

... the field of women and development processes is propelled by public policies and popular movements as much as it is moulded by scholarly works.

Kwolek-Folland (1998) observes a similar dichotomy in writings on women in business, which she describes as being "among the hottest topics of the 1990s". On the one hand, she notes the frequency of articles on issues concerning women in the business world in both newspapers and magazines aimed at business audiences and popular women's magazines, together with the increasing number of directories of female-owned businesses, networks and organisations listed on the Internet. On the other hand, she comments on the increasing interest shown by the academic world in questions surrounding the role and status of women in the business world.

With respect to the situation in Mauritius, given the remote geographical location of the

island in the southern end of the Indian Ocean, much of the more serious academic literature is difficult to come by. The literature that can be considered to be contributing to shaping thinking locally on the subject includes international and local current affairs magazines, major international women's magazines and mainstream textbooks on management, human resource development/human resource management, economics and social sciences.

Two main currents of thought can be distinguished in the literature available on the island. Articles in the popular press swing from unbounded optimism shown in the special reports on women's achievements in current affairs magazines such as *Newsweek* (*Newsweek*, 1998, 2001), to a more sober appreciation of the situation of difficulties in setting up one's own business (*Woman's Journal*, 1999). Articles in the specialised press, such as the *Harvard Business Review*, go from the pessimism of the demise of Rosie the Riveter (Nichols, 1993) and the glass ceiling and glass walls debate (Lee, 1994) to a more optimistic approach of suggesting how to overcome these same barriers (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000) and the Deloitte's Women's Initiative (McCracken, 2000). Similarly, books on women in business go from the contagious enthusiasm expressed in the success stories of Anita Brattina (Brattina, 1996) and Anita Roddick (Roddick, 1991) and the encouraging portrayal of women's ways of leadership (Helgesen, 1995) to the more subdued quantitative assessments of women in management (Vinnicombe and Colwill, 1995). The managerial issue at stake, not just in Mauritius, is best summed up by Handy when he writes:

Organisations need talented women in their core jobs, therefore, not only for reasons of social fairness, important though that is, but because many of those women will have the kinds of attitudes and attributes that the new flat flexible organisations need. If they screen out the women they will handicap their futures (Handy, 1994).

However, the emphasis placed on women's progress up the organisational ladder may result in insufficient attention being given to the plight of women in the more menial and routine occupations. All the studies attest to the fact that the majority of women remain in low-level, low-power, low-paid jobs with economic necessity being the main motivator (Ledwith and Colgan, 1996).

With respect to Mauritius, Titmuss and Abel-Smith (1960) write:

... The records of vital statistics, like censuses, go back a long way in Mauritius. At least for the period from 1871 onwards, these data appear to be of a sufficiently satisfactory quality to provide a general picture of the components of population change.

This long tradition in the compilation of reliable statistics has been an important factor in the planning of appropriate policies at the macro level, including those concerning women. The main statistical sources concerning women in employment are the Mauritius Central Statistical Office (CSO), the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare (MWRCDFW) and the Mauritius Employers' Federation (MEF). A cross-section of their most recent publications is given in the list of references and will be referred to as required in the following discussion.

### 3.2 Mauritian women in employment

The resident population was estimated at nearly 1.2 million (1,179,100) at the end of 2000, with women making up nearly 51 per cent (595,200 women, 583,900 men). The labour force in 2000 was estimated at 514,400, with women counting for 33 per cent (173,100 women, 341,300 men), that is, 43 per cent of the women of working age (a total of 401,252 women aged between 15 and 64 years). In the period 1983-2000, the number of working women rose from 93,000 to 173,100, that is, an increase of 86 per cent (CSO, 2001). A total of 59.4 per cent of women are employed in the manufacturing sector, of whom 91 per cent are in the Export Processing Zone (EPZ), 19.9 per cent are in government, community, social and personal services, 7 per cent are in agriculture and fishing, 6.9 per cent are in wholesale, retail trade, restaurants and hotels, 4 per cent in financing, insurance, real estate and business services, 2.4 per cent in transport and communications and 0.4 per cent in other activities (CSO 2001).

### 3.3 Mauritian women in management

Women are largely confined to low-level, low-paid jobs, such as machine operators in the EPZ factories or clerk/typist in offices. Less than 10 per cent hold senior management posts or work in the professions

(doctors, lawyers, etc.). The various professional directories confirm the lack of women at the decision-making posts. For example in the list of managing directors and general managers published in the *International Mauritius Directory 2001* (PPL Editions, 2001) only 94 women are named out of a total of 1,018, that is, only 9.2 per cent. The members' list of the Association of Human Resource Professionals shows only 48 women out of a total of 184, in a sector that is often thought to be a woman's province. The Mauritian Institute of Management counts only ten women among its 136 members. As both of these professional associations are open to men and women on an equal basis of position and qualifications held, these figures seem to suggest other factors leading to the absence of women in high-level positions are at work. Articles in the local press for International Women's Day often focus on success stories of women who have climbed the organisational ladder or created their own business in an attempt to show how far the status of Mauritian women has improved. The very fact that such articles are still considered to be newsworthy is an indication of how much still needs to be done.

### 3.4 Women in education

Before the introduction of free secondary education in 1976, women in Mauritius tended to have a lower level of education than their male counterparts. This imbalance was gradually reduced with near parity in enrolment figures being reached by 1990. In 2000, there were 68,711 boys and 66,526 girls enrolled in primary schools, and 46,359 boys and 49,049 girls in secondary schools. As far as academic results are concerned, the girls have consistently registered better results in both the School Certificate (SC) and Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations. For the year 2000, the pass rate in the SC examinations was 78.6 per cent for the girls and 74.5 per cent for the boys and in the HSC examinations it was 76 per cent and 67 per cent respectively.

However, there is a marked disparity between boys and girls in post-secondary education in 2000. There were 4,422 boys and 3,380 girls enrolled at university, while 7,939 boys and only 2,059 girls were following professional training.

### 3.5 Women's aspirations and their role in society

Even as a colony, Mauritius had high aspirations. Titmuss and Abel-Smith (1960) described the country in these terms:

Mauritius is in a state of rapid change from a low-income cash economy with a strong and extensive kinship system to a society which aspires to a higher national income per head and to a more westernised way of life.

In 2002, economic success has ensured a substantial rise in the overall standard of living, with the extended family still being the basis for the social fabric and the respect and practice of the three main religions, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam, an essential tenet of Mauritian life.

The Ministry of Women Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare (MWRCDFW) was first set up in 1975 under the appellation of Ministry for Women's Rights. Systematic monitoring and analysis of the status of women in independent Mauritius gathered momentum with the preparation for participation at the 1985 United Nations World Conference on Women in Nairobi. The 1995 Conference in Beijing saw another qualitative jump in the importance given to enhancing the overall status of Mauritian women. By this time, their contribution to the economic success of Mauritius could be clearly seen (MFWCD & United Nations Development Programme, 1994).

In the 1970s when the unemployment rate was around 20 per cent, women went out to work in great numbers in the newly opened textile factories. Sheer necessity forced them to go counter to the social norm that a woman's place is in the home. *The White Paper on Women in Development* (MFWCD, 1995) published in March 1995 underlined the role of the Mauritian woman as the pivot of the family as wife and mother. The older generations of women will still give, as their main reasons for going out to work, to make ends meet or add to the family budget, or for their children's education.

However, more and more of the younger Mauritian women are taking advantage of the wider opportunities in tertiary education and professional training both in Mauritius and abroad. A pool of highly qualified professional women is very slowly building up but has yet to reach a critical mass, as the figures quoted in Section 3.4 show.



In fact, cultural constraints are perhaps now the major obstacle to the further enhancement of women's role in Mauritian society. The *United Nations Common Country Assessment* for Mauritius, 2000, describes the situation thus:

Constraints which are cultural in nature are more difficult to overcome as they are very deeply rooted in religion and age-old traditions. Although there have been considerable changes in attitudes towards women who decide to go into the labour market or engage in public life, there is still a lot of ambiguity with regard to changes in women's role in the household. Women can only contribute effectively in the labour force if role responsibilities in the household are altered to enable her to juggle with her triple burden, at home, at work and in the community. There are still some major obstacles at this level. The issue of the promotion of cultural diversity in a society like Mauritius complicates matters, as women are often depicted as the main depository and transmitter of cultural traditions, in which the submissive and unobtrusive characteristics of women are regarded to be important values to retain. This creates insurmountable problems for women who choose to go off the beaten track of tradition.

Addressing these constraints while preserving the delicate balance in the country's social fabric in the context of rapid global change is no easy task and one that the MWRCDFW is currently trying to deal with through various measures.

#### 4.0 Restructuring the Mauritian economy

Deshmukh-Ranadive (2000) describes the impact of economic restructuring in these terms:

At the macro level, restructuring focuses on an economy's ability to adjust to changing competitive conditions. At the micro level, it requires an alteration of the composition of output, and of the distribution of employment and income.

Mauritius is particularly active on the international scene, in Geneva on behalf of the small island states in the European Community/African Caribbean and Pacific countries (i.e. the two sides of the Lome Convention concerning entry of goods into the EC) and in Washington for the Africa Growth and Opportunities Act. However, success in these lobbies does not relieve Mauritius of the need to restructure its

economy at the macro level and readjust its export activities. New sectors for economic activity have been identified, for instance, offshore activities and IT with the ultimate aim of becoming the IT hub for the South-east Indian Ocean. All the major conglomerates and firms on the island are reviewing their corporate strategy and implementing restructuring programmes, that include the usual panoply of measures, down-sizing/right-sizing, closing of unprofitable units, mergers, divestment, and so forth.

The increased competition worldwide in basic, low-tech, mass market manufactured goods, particularly textiles, has brought into question the continued viability of the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) that was so instrumental in the 1970s in the diversification of the Mauritian economy away from its colonial mono-crop agricultural base, sugar. The sugar industry itself must undergo major changes to reduce production costs, a substantial increase in harvest yield per acre, increased mechanisation of cane cutting and harvesting and centralisation of the refining process. Tourism, the third pillar of the economy, and at present the major foreign currency earner, must continue its transition away from the 3-star tropical beach holiday to the 4-star and 5-star business incentives and luxury getaway destination.

Despite the tragic events of September 2001, the economic indicators are still encouraging and the business community is reasonably optimistic for the future (MEF, 2000, 2001a), with the continued rise in tourist arrivals, full order books for those textile factories offering good quality middle-range fashion items and the special sugars still in demand. However, the signs of the negative impact of the restructuring process on the workforce are beginning to show through, with a sudden increase in unemployment, after nearly a decade of full employment, and the need to adapt to new work structures and methods while taking on increased workloads.

Given the fact that women count for 70 per cent of the labour force in the textile industry, restructuring programmes are affecting women in employment more adversely than their male counterparts. The MWRCDFW estimates that 27 per cent of women textile employees have been thus affected. The overall unemployment rate for 2000 stood at 9.6 per cent, about 48,100 people, compared to 2.1 per cent in 1996, about 10,000 people.

The estimates for the first quarter of 2002 show 50,000 unemployed. Overall, 13.1 per cent of women of an age to work are unemployed, as opposed to 6.3 per cent of men. The breakdown of these figures by education level clearly shows that there are now two generations of workers, the pre- and post-1976 generations, with very distinct levels of potential to adapt to computerisation and other high-tech methods. A total of 62 per cent of unemployed women have not passed the School Certificate and 27 per cent of these women did not even pass the Certificate of Primary Education. The generation of women who formed the bulk of the workforce in the textile industry at its beginnings in the 1970s had and still has only basic skills for routine manual machining and make-up. Their rudimentary literacy and numeracy skills are now hopelessly inadequate in the present high-tech environment. Today, they are being overtaken by the younger post-1976 generation who enter the employment market with a higher level of basic skills and more potential to progress.

Since the beginning of 2000, as part of the restructuring process, several factories have had to close down and one of the leading and oldest textile factories implement a major down-sizing programme for the first time in its existence. The anguish shown by those women in the 45-plus age group who were made redundant after more than 20 years in the factories was sufficient witness to the social cost involved. These women were concerned about mortgage repayments, feeding the family and paying for decent health-care, all of which depended on both the husband and wife working.

In fact, the situation in Mauritius with respect to women's role in the economy reflects that of women in many countries all over the world, particularly the emerging economies, the NICs and SIDSs. In these countries, economic necessity can still rhyme with basic survival in the absence of sophisticated social welfare systems covering unemployment and child welfare benefits. This is where the North-South divide and globalisation affect women's daily lives, as shown in the research work being carried out in India (Deshmukh-Ranadive, 2000).

Three major reports published in 2001 underline the necessity for appropriate action with respect to women and other vulnerable

sectors of the Mauritian population: *Key Areas of Vulnerabilities in Mauritius* (UNDP, 2001a), *Patterns and Trends in the Feminisation of Poverty in Mauritius* (UNDP, 2001b) and *A Survey on the Attitudes of the Unemployed towards Accepting Employment in the Export Processing Zone of Mauritius* (CASR, 2001). While the first two reports confirm the tendency for women in the underprivileged sectors of Mauritian society to be more adversely affected by changes at the macro level of the economy, the CASR report brought to light other disquieting elements. The report showed that job seekers in general were not accepting work in the EPZ mainly because of the lack of job security. Other factors that discouraged accepting job offers in the factories were that the work was perceived to be too hard, with too much overtime and no career prospects.

## 5.0 The way forward

In such a context, continued employability and the potential to adapt to the demands of the global market are issues that require a gendered perspective (Kothari and Nababsing, 1996). Various factors such as social context, education and age that affect any person's motivation to work and to improve their skills and knowledge need sympathetic assessment when handling female workers in a post-colonial, multi-cultural society such as Mauritius (CEDREFI, 1993).

The MEF survey on manpower requirements (MEF, 2001b) shows an increase in demand for qualified female workers, in particular female professionals (4.9 per cent), female managers (3.0 per cent) and female service and shop sales workers (4.2 per cent). The *Social Dialogue on Training in Mauritius* (MLIREHRD, 1999) speaks of the need to "sensitise enterprises on the critical importance of human resource development for maintaining their competitiveness in a global economy, as well as their social role as agents of change". This is not a new comment. Successive reports on the EPZ, beginning with Yin and Ha Yeung (1988) and German Development Institute (GDI) (GDI, 1992), all point to the need for targeted training aimed at upgrading the skills of the existing and future workforce. There are three major obstacles to achieving this

goal: inability of employers to release employees during working hours, fear of poaching and the low level of education of many employees.

As said earlier in this paper, the MWRCDFW is addressing the situation with a series of measures at the macro level, following the example set by the developed industrialised countries, which are making available for women more opportunities to improve, through adult education and training programmes, targeted financing and advisory schemes.

In March 2000, a National Gender Action Plan was adopted (MFWCD, 2000c), but its implementation has only just started. In December 2001, a High Level Committee on Engendering the Budget was set up for a period of three years, with the explicit brief of ensuring the proper allocation of national resources to reduce gender disparities and inequalities. The Committee is still in the preliminary stage of assessing the present situation.

Another major initiative undertaken by the MWRCDFW is to encourage women's entrepreneurship and micro-businesses to provide women with a means of earning their living without necessarily having to forego their pivotal role in the family. The informal sector in Mauritius is a prime source of income for many married women who are not in formal employment. Entrepreneurship is also seen to be one of the ways by which the level of structural unemployment among women can be reduced. The MWRCDFW, with the help of the Development Bank of Mauritius, has set up a micro-credit scheme based on the Grameem model to help women from the poorer areas to attain financial autonomy and so be able to benefit and make their families benefit from their labours. However, their lack of education is proving to be an obstacle to the success of the scheme, as many of the beneficiaries are experiencing difficulties in running their business activity in a sufficiently rational way to ensure the regular repayments of the loans.

Basic skills courses on how to set up and develop a micro-business or a small medium enterprise (SME) are run by the Mauritius Employers' Federation (MEF) and the Small and Medium Industries Development Organisation (SMIDO). A typical programme for these courses is the one scheduled by the SMIDO for June 2002,

entitled Entrepreneur Development Programme, which aims to "help potential entrepreneurs in rightly managing their own enterprise". The course, which is scheduled over five consecutive days, gives participants basic awareness in a wide variety of topics, such as business ideas generation, qualities of an entrepreneur, market research and marketing, communications skills, people management, production planning and quality management, costing and pricing, accounting and book-keeping, legal aspects, etc. The fees for the course are nominal, as the SMIDO is a parastatal organisation that receives government funding. The MEF runs a similar course that is partly financed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and for which only a nominal fee is charged. When it wishes to run courses specifically targeted towards women entrepreneurs, the MWRCDFW requests the help of the MEF and the SMIDO, in which case their existing entrepreneurship courses are adapted for the occasion. Both the MEF and the SMIDO have been involved in recent training programmes set up by the government to help relieve the distress of those made redundant in giving them the opportunity to learn how to run their own micro-business and learn new skills or improve existing ones.

However, the impact of these programmes in relieving unemployment has yet to be seen. Some concern has already been expressed by the lack of interest shown by those who have recently been made redundant. For example, out of some 350 persons made redundant by one major factory, only 30 enrolled on the course on how to set up a micro-enterprise, which was run by the MEF in July 2000 at the request of both the employer and the government as part of the redundancy package and so free of charge to the participants. As the Centre for Applied Social Research report confirmed, most of the redundant are looking for job security and the attendant regular income with which to look after their family's needs. Such risk-averse attitudes are not the stuff with which successful entrepreneurs are made.

At the micro level of the individual firm, the more proactive employers are investing in not only state-of-the-art machinery but also employee development programmes aimed at equipping trainees to cope with the demands

of the global market. However, these programmes are targeted towards the function and so are gender-blind. CCL Management Consultants has run several such programmes for its clients over the past two years, but none of them specifically for women employees. One very typical programme for supervisors was set up for a successful medium-sized clothing manufacturer that happened to employ a majority of women at the supervisory level.

This factory is in fact owned and run by a dynamic woman entrepreneur. It is situated in a village in the heart of the rural area in Mauritius and nearly all of its employees live in the village. It employs 125 people, that is, 115 women and ten men. Only one of the men is a supervisor, the others are helpers. It makes trend-setting fancy fashion garments for men, women and children in both sportswear and casual wear for export and its own local retail shops. This choice of market means quick response to client orders, high quality work with excellent finish and low reject rates.

In August 2000, our consultancy was asked to set up a programme in leadership skills for the factory's 20 supervisors, 19 women and one man. The managing director wanted the team to adopt a stronger, more proactive leadership style that would enable the factory to better meet its goals. She wanted to encourage the supervisors to take a wider view of their work and to be constantly on the watch for ways to improve productivity throughout the manufacturing process.

The programme covered the usual topics of leadership, motivation, team-building and positive discipline and control. During the session on motivation, the supervisors were asked to identify what motivated them to come to work. They were given a list of ten possible factors and were asked to put the factors in order of priority for themselves and their work teams. Providing for the family was the main reason, followed by earning one's living. Making friends and not staying at home attracted moderate interest. Factors that were directly linked to work performance, such as improving one's knowledge and skills, collaborating with the boss or earning recognition were of little interest. Of even less interest were improving one's social status and contributing to the nation's prosperity.

Overcoming such a mismatch between the vision of the managing director and the more modest concerns of the supervisors is beyond the scope of training programmes such as the one that we were asked to design and run. The reason for this partly lies in the profiles of the individual supervisors. Two of the supervisors had passed the Higher School Certificate, 11 the School Certificate, one had completed Form IV, two others Form III and the last three only the primary school *cursus*. In practice, this meant that two of the group could not read or write properly and three others were very slow. It is very difficult to encourage dynamic proactive leadership in production processes that rely more and more on high-tech equipment when the confidence gained from mastering basic literacy and numeracy is lacking.

The social context in which they live and work is also not conducive to achieving the qualitative leap needed to face the demands of the global market. The MEF Business Trends Survey for the year 2000 gives as the top two factors inhibiting productivity in Mauritian enterprises absenteeism and lack of an industrial culture. Absenteeism and lack of punctuality were cited in the discussions with these supervisors as being recurrent problems, the reasons for which were all linked to family obligations. In other words, for these women, as for most Mauritian women, the family came first.

The managing director was a little surprised when she learned about her employees' priorities during the feedback on the training programme. She had thought that her personal commitment to the factory was a sufficiently strong example for the employees to go beyond their commitment to their families. However, in late 2001 with the persisting slowdown on the world textile market and in the face of some very strong competition from producers in other countries, she was able to use this information to motivate both the supervisors and their work teams to meet both quality and quantity targets within normal working hours and so eliminate overtime. In so doing, the factory has remained competitive and avoided redundancy measures.

## 6.0 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has shown that entrepreneurship programmes for redundant



workers and training in leadership and quality practices at the level of the individual company are not enough to meet the demands of the New World Economy, particularly with respect to women. Such initiatives can help put people on the right track and so create a critical momentum that starts the change process in both the individual and the organisation. But, this momentum soon loses steam if the macro environment does not change as well.

The challenge for Mauritius is, therefore, twofold. First, individual organisations must maintain and increase their efforts to upgrade their workforce by setting up long-term training programmes and mentoring systems that enable the individual worker to acquire the necessary industrial culture. Second, the state has to continue its efforts at the macro level to provide the social and economic climate that will enable redundant workers to re-enter the workforce with appropriate skills and individual firms to compete successfully on the world market, while ensuring that lesser qualified employees, in particular women, are not left behind. To do this, small states such as Mauritius need time. Negotiating an interim solution to the dismantling of the international trade agreements remains top priority.

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