

Proposals made by members during Public Meetings held at Local Authorities –

11 October - 10 November 2011

❖ Energy/Transport

- Use of ethanol as a biofuel:
 - This will decrease our dependence on fossil fuels
 - Development projects in general should not affect sugar cane cultivation so as to promote production of ethanol to be used as a motor vehicle fuel.
 - Further tests on the ethanol-fuel mix should be carried out before making it available on the market.
 - Research on the effect of Ethanol usage on car battery life expectancies should be undertaken in the long run.
- Proposal was made for the setting up of a Wind farm at Roche Noire on marginal land.
- Energy efficiency:
 - Government to come up with a policy for efficient use of air conditioning in buses since the bus operators still use air conditioning during cold season and this constitutes a waste of energy.
 - Participants highlight that street lighting remain switched on during the day which constitute a considerable waste of energy. It was opined that more control should be exercised on this issue.
- Solar Water Heater scheme: Concern was raised on the delay in the implementation of the Solar Water Heater Scheme. Members informed that many applicants have not yet received their equipment. Government was requested to speed up the matter.
- Participants proposed that hotel developments should cater for part of their energy requirement using renewable sources of energy.
- Traffic congestion:
 - Duty-free facilities for public officers: Traffic jam is a serious issue in Mauritius and participants were of the view that civil servants should be provided with bus instead of duty-free facilities. This will help to reduce the need for use of private vehicles to enter Port-Louis.
 - Car-pooling scheme and/or the adoption of a shuttle service (similar to car parking facilities provided at Les Salines) were mentioned as measures to decrease traffic jam. Singapore was taken as example whereby cars entering the city need to have 5 passengers or else they are heavily fined.
 - Members of the public were of the opinion that there should be a change in mindset in order for car-pooling to be a success.

- Special attention was drawn to the fact that police officers usually misinterpret car pooling as being “taxi-maron”. Thus, it was suggested that the law on car pooling encloses all aspects possible to make it a good, green and ethical practice.
- The problem of traffic congestion is drastically reduced during school holidays. Therefore, the introduction of flexi-time is believed to be an efficient means to tackle the problem.
- Public transport should be more efficient and timely in order to encourage the public to shift from their private cars to mass transport.
- One of the recommendations of the Working Group on Energy was that companies having 200 employees or more should have one common transport vehicle.
- The introduction of Light Railway Transport (LRT) could help to reduce traffic congestion as well as reduce road accidents. The LRT system could be implemented for a shorter trip on a pilot basis, if it would be too costly to implement the Curepipe - Port Louis trip.
- Traffic congestion could also be reduced by decentralization and regionalizing workplaces i.e. recruiting people living near their workplace.
- The new road constructions, which are supposed to reduce traffic congestion, is not a solution and is not in line with the MID initiative.
- More financial incentives should be provided to companies to purchase more comfortable buses.
- Several visionary ideas such as the use of solar cars, solar planes and solar boats were raised.
- Solar street lighting: Members deplored the lack of street lightings on several parts of the island. It was proposed that the Government should urgently look into the matter and speed up the installation of street lightings in regions where missing. The use of solar street lightings on the Highway and other parts of the island was also discussed.
- Members enquired on the landfill gas to energy project at Mare-Chicose. It was recommended that the share of Renewable Energy be increased in the energy mix.
- Eco-design:
 - Housing and building designs need to be reviewed and updated in such a way to maximise use of solar and wind energies during the day. The Bagatelle Mall was taken as example to illustrate the fact that the building has an open glass ceiling where there is maximum penetration of light during the day, thus saving on the energy bill.

- Construction of high-storey buildings with no eco-design concepts (use of air conditioning, tinted windows etc) are increasing in spite of the MID concept. Local authorities should provide guidelines to the public on how to design their houses/buildings in line with the MID initiative.
- The installation of a centralised Solar PV system at the level of each municipality was proposed, where the latter would supply electricity directly to its inhabitants instead of having to buy it from the Central Electricity Board (CEB). The surplus could be sold to the national grid.
- Members requested Government to provide incentives for the production of electricity with emerging technologies for renewable energy. To this, it was mentioned that MID Fund is providing subsidy to the Central Electricity Board (CEB) to buy electricity from small producers and meet the differential between CEB's average cost and the feed-in tariff.
- In order to decrease our fossil fuel consumption, the use of bicycles should be promoted.
- The problem of poor maintenance of public vehicles and black fumes from vehicles was raised.

❖ Environment

- Participants showed concerns about the problem arising from backfilling of wetlands and derocking of sugarcane fields which block drains, thus resulting in flooding.
- Food Security:
 - In the context of food security, it was proposed that people be encouraged to become self-sufficient in fruits and vegetables production through backyard gardening.
 - While Food Security is considered as an important component of MID, theft is a serious deterrent for home gardening and tree planting.
- Waste collection and disposal:
 - Collection of bulky wastes should be undertaken at least once yearly. It was highlighted that one of the recommendations of MID was to promote collection of bulky wastes twice yearly.
 - Members raised concern regarding the disposal of glass bottle which is presently dumped at the landfill.
 - Members disapproved the lack of waste bins in several places and also suggested that old bins be renewed. Waste segregation was also recommended.
 - The lack in the number of scavengers around the island was noted, which subsequently has a direct impact on the management of solid waste.
 - Duty free taxes on Municipal council trucks were asked to be reviewed.
- Felling of trees:
 - Participants raised concern regarding the felling of trees during road construction which is contrary to the principle of MID. It was proposed that any road construction project be accompanied by a tree planting programme.
 - Tree planting should also be encouraged along river banks.
 - Strict enforcement of laws and regulations on tree felling and deforestation is required.
 - A “cut one, plant two trees” policy was suggested to mitigate the impact of tree felling.
- Noise/smoke from vehicles:
 - The issue of noise from vehicles and air pollution was mentioned as being common island-wide.
 - Members proposed a Centralised Transport System to have a better control of these problems.

- Noise meters and smoke meters are being acquired by Government so as to better enforce the law and address such environmental nuisances.
- Composting:
 - Members viewed composting as an effective means of reducing the amount of waste to be landfilled at Mare Chicose.
 - Interest was shown on the implementation of a practical compost scheme at household level. The distribution of compost drums and a guideline on proper use was requested.
 - Members were informed that a compost plant at La Chaumiere is already operational and treating about 90,000 tonnes of unsorted municipal waste.
 - Representatives of women associations and force vives informed that they are already practicing composting at household level.
- A comprehensive carbon footprint study needs to be carried out for all development projects, especially road constructions which involve destruction of biodiversity.
- Creation of green spaces:
 - Laws should provide for the creation of green spaces around public and private buildings, including residential houses.
 - Members suggested that large companies and firms situated in the city should set the good example by having some appealing green spaces in front of their buildings.
- Change in mindset and lifestyle among people has been proposed as a solution to environmental nuisances. Littering during national festivals was raised as a serious issue, which requires a change in mindset. It is the duty and responsibility of each and everyone to respect and protect the environment.
- The lack of hygiene in different regions was pointed out, for example at Mer Rouge, Roche Bois, etc. Drainage systems found in different areas were also deplored for their lack of maintenance, for example at Abercrombie. Members requested the respective authorities to take immediate actions.
- Marine and air pollution caused by unloading coal from ships was raised.
- Members mentioned Rainwater Harvesting (RWH) as a means of preventing water loss and proposals were made to include RWH in the Policy and Planning Guidance. The island of Rodrigues was taken as an example where RWH is a well established system.
- Members proposed to have 2 water systems in household, one system consisting of chlorinated water for cooking, drinking and hygienic purposes and the other system consisting of unchlorinated water to be used for gardening, washing of cars and flushing of toilets. These systems could enable savings on the water bill.

- Seychelles was cited as an example where the environment is well preserved, and where permits are required for all developments.

❖ Others

- MID project is very complex. In order to make it a more participative project, there is need to come up with concrete actions which can be implemented at the local level.
- Need for more sensitization on the MID project to reach the public/inhabitants of the area.
- Youngsters and NGOs to be encouraged to participate more actively in the MID project.
- Government should ensure a continuous service to the public during business hours similar to banks.
- Uncontrolled developments at Baie-du-Tombeau: Social impacts on the villagers need to be assessed.
- More transparency is required on the management of the MID Fund.
- Policies need to be developed on Integrated Planning in villages.
- The irreversible impacts and damages of climate change were mentioned in order to raise awareness among all members.
- Free transport was regarded as having some side-impacts, such as buses refusing to pick up free transport users (old people, students, etc.). Members regarded this as being disrespectful and urged concerned authorities to take immediate actions.
- Members enquired about the health impacts of using chemical fertilizers and pesticides in fruits and vegetables. The number of cancer patients is on the rise. Members suggested that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life should undertake health studies relating to the matter.
- The benefits of using Stevia instead of sugar were discussed. Members requested for Agricultural Research and Extension Unit to make such plants available to the whole population.
- Amendment and strengthening of laws where required was recommended. Members raised concern of the decrease in the number of officers from 44 to 7 of the Police de L'Environnement attached to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.
- Members were of view that a complete change in mindset of the population and political will is needed to make the MID project a success.
- Corruption and vested interest was mentioned to be a serious deterrent to the success of the MID project.

- Members pointed out the lack of coordination among a few related institutions such as CWA, WMA, and Water Resources Unit, etc.
- The issue of poverty alleviation in Mauritius was raised. Measures on how to fight poverty need to be taken at all levels. Several suggestions were made, among which NGOs working in the social field need to be more involved in this process.
- Local authorities should be empowered and provided with adequate resources in order to be more efficient.
- Members deplored the general status of our national hospitals, whereby the quality of service, lack of hygiene, restricted space, etc, need to be reviewed.
- Members were of view that a complete change in mindset of the population and strong political will is needed to make the MID project a success. Integrated projects that will promote sustainable development are needed.
- The social, environmental and health impacts of cigarette and alcohol consumption in public places were discussed. Laws need to be fully implemented to remedy this matter and protect citizens.
- General Green practices like composting, shifting from incandescent to CF lamps, switching off lights when not in use, water management, etc were stated.
- The Government should implement a “Green School” – a place where the concept of sustainable development and its tools could be implemented and put in place in everyday life, for example Rain Water Harvesting, Solar Water Heater and Photovoltaic (PV) Cells, Wind turbine, green cultivation, etc.
- It was raised that Corporate Social Responsibility fund was not being used properly.
- Moral issues like sense of belonging, and body and mind consciousness, social issues like voluntary service, and health issues like balanced diet were also mentioned.
- Education is key to the success of MID, and education begins at home.
- There should be more aggressive sensitization on promotion of public health and balanced diets.