Background

• The western coast of Mauritius: major economic, environmental and social upheavals at a sustained pace during the recent decades

• Need to ensure that decisions being taken do not compromise the lives of the future generation

• Economic development need to be aligned with social protection at local level + burning issue of climate change
This study analyses the extent to which the massive influx of people, wealth, capital, and infrastructural development along the western coast of Mauritius is impacting on social protection at local level.

It also examines whether climate change is being taken into account in the development agenda.
Development

*Development is a process that creates growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components*(Sid Israel, 2018)

The purpose of development is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population, and the creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities, without damaging the resources of the environment.

Development is visible and useful, not necessarily immediately, and includes an aspect of quality change and the creation of conditions for a continuation of that change.
Social Protection

Social protection refers to policies and actions which enhance the capacity of poor and vulnerable people to escape from poverty and enable them to better manage risks and shocks.

(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD)

• Social protection measures include social insurance, social transfers and minimum labour standards. Social protection directly reduces poverty, stimulates the involvement of poor women and men in the economy and contributes to social cohesion and stability.

• Social protection helps poor and vulnerable households to safeguard their assets and adopt effective coping strategies to meet challenges arising from man-made and natural disasters, economic crises and climate change.
Climate change and development are closely intertwined. Poor people in developing countries will feel the impacts first and worst (and already are) because of vulnerable geography and lesser ability to cope with damage from severe weather and rising sea levels. In short, climate change will be awful for everyone but catastrophic for the poor.

(Center for Global development, 2019)
Mauritius and the Western Coast
The western coast of Mauritius
Western Coast
Aim and Objectives

**Aim:**
Analyse the impact of development on Social Protection, and whether climate change is in the development agenda, from an insider’s perspective

**Objectives:**
- Is development impacting on social protection at local level?
- What are the positive and negative ways through which they overlap?
- Is climate change being taken into account in the development process?
- Is the present pace of development sustainable in the long run?
Methodology

Questionnaire-based semi-structured interview schedule was worked out through the application of a mixed-methods approach.

5 members of each of the 14 local communities found along the coastline and who have been living in this locality for at least 10 years
Key findings

Is development impacting on social protection at local level?
Positive impact of hotels and IRS projects at local level in terms of job creation and the development of infrastructures

However, the perception of an inequitable distribution of the wealth created is very high

High social costs associated with these projects

The proceeds of the economic development are not trickling down to reach those who are living at the margins of poverty.
Key findings

What are the positive and negative ways through which development and social protection overlap?

Positive:
• Job-Creation
• CSR projects of business organisations
• NGOs in various fields
• Entrepreneurial activities from individuals and local businesses
• Money injected in the community by visitors and new residents generally adds to the local economy through the multiplier effect
Key findings

Negative

• Massive rise in price of Land: the locals are finding it increasingly difficult to acquire a property for residential purposes
• Jobs are generally in the field of domestic care (maids, gardeners, drivers) and in hotels and are not adequately remunerated/ underpaid
• Growing Problem of Working Poor caused by the rising Cost of living
• Proximity of Luxury residential projects and Poverty-stricken areas leading to growing resentment and frustration
• Local residents queried were of the opinion that the poverty situation was getting worse in their locality over time
Is climate change being taken into account in the development process?

With regards to incorporation of climate change issues in the development agenda, there is an overall feeling that economic factors are presently being given primary consideration, at the expense of environmental sustainability.

Large Projects need to have an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate, but this is perceived as being only a ‘green-washing’ process that is not materialised.

A number of projects are in fact being implemented along the coast-line and even in protected areas (areas of natural drainage / wetlands and mangrove...
Key findings

The voices of those who are drawing attention on impact of this fast pace of development on climate change is not sufficiently being heard

Noise pollution, Rise in Traffic, feeling of overcrowding

NGOs in the field of environmental preservation are being depicted as being ‘against development’ by the promoters of these projects

Local community increasingly divided between the need to protect the environment and the need for job creation.
Is the present pace of development sustainable in the long run?

• There is a general consensus amongst the respondents that the present development along the western coast is not sustainable in the long run.

• For the locals, it is also clear that the negative impacts of this inadequately planned development is likely to have long-term, and even irreversible repercussions on the local environment.

• It is already being felt along the coastline, with a drastic fall in the fish population and massive erosion along the coast line.

• It will also put at stake the marine eco-system along the western coast, with the rising number of boats and other marine activities.
Conclusions

Wealth being generated by development at local level is not perceived as being shared in a fair way and as not permeating down to those in need.

Shared feeling that there minority of shareholders and business operators benefiting from the lion-share of the profits generated.

Growing poverty problem at the local community level, and this is not perceived as being adequately dealt with by the government and the business sector through its CSR initiatives

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mauritius is vulnerable to considerable economic loss, humanitarian stresses and environmental degradation as a result of climate change impacts. The direct climate change impacts likely to adversely affect Mauritius include an increase in the frequency of intense rainfall episodes, sea level rise of 18 – 59 centimetres by 2100 and an increase in intensity of tropical cyclones.
Recommendations

Even if the proceeds of development along the western coast is contributing substantially to the local community and to the national economy, there is a need to take a deeper insight into the negative aspects of same, in terms of social protection.

It is also essential to ensure that development along the western coastline is carried out in a sustainable way so as to ensure that the very survival of this community is not put at stake.

*Sustainable development is the pathway to the future we want for all. It offers a framework to generate economic growth, achieve social justice, exercise environmental stewardship and strengthen governance.*

*Ban Ki-moon*
THANK YOU!

Nicolas Ragodoo
FSSH
University of Mauritius
n.ragodoo@uom.ac.mu