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Female labour market in French overseas: at the crossroad of social, territorial and gendered disparities

Analysing employment policies for the overseas through a gender lens

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Abstract

Addressing the high rate of unemployment in the overseas territories has been a preoccupation for policymakers since the 1970s. Indeed, a number of programs designed to tackle the difficulties faced by these regions, namely low development of the private sector, narrow labour market, lack of training, etc., have been put in place throughout the years through mobility or State aid such as subsidized contracts to enhance employment. However, the socio-economic situation of the population has not always been accounted for, in particular the one of women which are often found far from employment or in underemployment. Besides, issues such as downgrading and professional segregation also identified as challenges at the national level, are exacerbated within these territories. In this research we aim at analyzing the employment policies to promote women's integration on the labour market in the overseas. We find that national policies directed to the overseas are starting to implement a gender lens and go towards the furthest from employment such as single-mothers. However, on the field, the priority is given to youth unemployment at large and the fight against violence against women, mobilizing most resources. Finally, a lack of coordination between all actors is slowing down the adoption of efficient programmes designed for women and addressing issues such as discouraged unemployment or caring for dependent relatives. We provide recommendations based on the policies analysed for a better consideration of both territorial and gender perspectives when addressing overseas female labour market.

Key words

Overseas territories; female labour market; employment policies

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Why should I read this research?

The question of female labour market and increase in women's employment has been covered greatly by the literature and public institutions with the massive entry of women in the labour force in the 1970's. This entrance has reshaped the French economy and has led to a number of policies aimed at encouraging the integration of women within the labour market as well as correcting the numerous inequalities which have arisen in terms of access to quality employment but also professional evolution.

For a long time, the French overseas territories were not integrated into national statistics and national surveys on employment as well as a large part of the academic literature which perimeter was solely focused on mainland France. The particular situation of these territories, with persisting unemployment and high poverty levels coupled with different demographic dynamics: high number of single-parent families, early pregnancies, importance of migration within the young generation, etc. makes them a crucial point of study since this fragile socio-economic situation regularly fuels social discontent, underlining the importance to design public policies which tackle specifically the issues identified in a territory.

Since 2014 and the integration of the overseas (except Mayotte) within the national Continuous Employment Survey led by Insee, national data on the state of the labour market are more representative of the situation all over France. A striking point has interested us: already identified since the 1990s, if women's activity rate has increased, it remains way below national levels. Thus, we decided to look at the employment policies in place in the overseas and see if they were adapted to address the local challenges and obstacles keeping women far from employment.

After drawing the state of play to underline the specificities of female labour market as identified in the literature and by statistics, we provide an overview of employment policies directed to the overseas and directed to women, adopting a systematic analysis of the consideration of both territorial and gendered approach. By doing so, we assess the efforts which have been led to target the furthest from employment namely single-mothers and identify the main challenges and opportunities to enhance women integration in the labour market by providing recommendations throughout our analysis.

This research thus contributes to enhancing the work led on the French overseas territories with the objective to drive more efficient public policies which can contribute to the development of these parts of the country with the idea of implementing a "gender mainstreaming" approach to employment policies (Letablier and Perrier, 2008).

Acronyms (and translation)

Caf	Caisse d'allocations familiales	Family allowance fund
CIDFF	Centre d'information sur les droits des femmes et des familles	Women's and Family Rights Information Center
CESE	Conseil économique, social et environnemental	Council on economic, social and environmental topics
Dares	Direction de l'Animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques	Directorate for the Animation of Research, Studies and Statistics (under the direction of the Ministry for Labor)
DRDFE	Direction régionale aux droits des femmes et à l'égalité	Regional Directorate for Women's Rights and Equality
INED	Institut national d'études démographiques	National Institute for Demographic Studies
Insee	Institut ational de la statistique et des études économiques	National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies
IRA	Instituts régionaux d'administration	Regional Institute for the Administration and training of civil servants
LADOM	Agence de l'outre-mer pour la mobilité	Overseas Agency for Mobility
MFV	Enquête Migration, famille et vieillissement (consuite par l'INED)	Migration, Family and Aging survey
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	
PLF	Projet de loi de finances	Finance bill project
PMFP	Passeport Mobilité Formation Professionnelle	<i>Passport for the Mobility for Vocational Training</i>
RSA	Revenu de solidarité active	Solidarity labor income
SMA	Service militaire adapté	Adapted Military Service

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Introduction

The European Union's "Europe 2020" strategy had set the objective of increasing the employment rate of women and men aged 20 to 64 to 75% (European Commission, 2019). In 2013, through the French National Reform Program, the government had included a sub-objective of 70% for women's participation in the labor market by 2020 (Lemière, 2013). According to the data for employment for the 20-64 years old from Eurostat¹, women employment rate in 2019 was of 68,6%, excluding data from the French overseas territories. Indeed, this rate is far from being attained in the overseas due to the high unemployment persisting for decades in these parts of France and specific issues pertaining to the territories which we will explore in this research. Even more, in some of these territories, women's activity rate is decreasing rather than converging with national levels.

In this research we will focus on the five overseas departments and regions, often referred as DROM, namely Guadeloupe, Guyane, La Réunion, Martinique and Mayotte. We will refer to them as overseas or the overseas territories. To refer to Guadeloupe and Martinique taken together we will use the term Antilles. Finally, we have decided to use mainland France rather than the "metropolitan". The French working population in mainland France represents around 30 million people, compared to 838,769 people for Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane and Reunion combined.

Following the Second World War; the four former colonies (excepting Mayotte) became departments by the law of March 19, 1946. They were thus integrated into the French republic and laws and decrees applied in mainland France became applicable to them. Furthermore, prefects replaced colonial governors. In 2011, Mahoran voted by referendum for the departmentalization of their island, while it used to be a departmental collectivity. If the overseas are submitted to the same rules as in mainland France and in the rest of Europe, as part of the ultraperipheral Europe, specific measures can be taken to consider their particularities as isolated islands for four of them and a territory covered by the Amazon forest, located in South America for Guyane, which demands derogation for fiscal and commercial policies or agriculture.

Despite their integration within the national territories, strong socio-economic inequalities persist between the overseas and the rest of the country underlining a strong delay in development at various degrees depending on the territories (Sénat, 2013). The GDP per capita is lower than the one observed in Mainland France from 31 to 37% lower for Martinique and Guadeloupe up to 79% for Mayotte. RSA (*Revenu de solidarité active*, Solidarity labor income) beneficiaries represented in 2015 11.6% of the estimated population of the five overseas departments against 4% of that of mainland France. Finally, inequalities remain in terms of investment expenditure for basic infrastructure (transport and sanitation infrastructure,

¹ [Indicateurs Europe 2020 relatifs à l'emploi Le taux d'emploi des 20-64 ans dans l'UE atteint un pic de 73,1% en 2019 17 États membres ont atteint leur objectif de 2020](#)

electrical infrastructure, housing, digital, etc.). These characteristics lead some experts and the government to qualify these territories as “developing”.

Most importantly, as highlighted by a study from Insee² in 2020, the “inhabitants of the overseas departments generally have a lower standard of living than in mainland France and inequalities are more marked, especially in Guyane and even more so in Mayotte” (p.1) affecting particularly, the unemployed, the youth and single parents (Audoux, Mallemanche and Prévot, 2020). In Guadeloupe one-third of the population lives below the poverty rate, 38% of the population in La Réunion and half of the Guyanese population. Social discontent due to this fragile economic situation and high unemployment has led to severe movements against the high costs of living, which crossed the overseas territories in 2006, 2008, 2009 and, in 2017, in Guyane as well as most recently a very strong adhesion to the movement of Gilets Jaunes.

This situation of high unemployment and poverty affects women furthermore, and in particular single mothers, which represent a high share of families in the overseas. Access to employment even represents the first inequality between women and men in La Reunion as only one out of two women of working age has a job compared to two out of three men (Chaussy, Clain and Daudin, 2015).

A note from the OECD (2008) states that employment remains the best path out of poverty in developing territories and that “it is necessary to increase the paid activity of women and young people, in particular by addressing the constraints and obstacles they face, and by strengthening measures to improve access to vocational training adapted to the demand” (p.19).

National statistics have started to include the overseas within the national frame of the Continuous Employment Survey (CES) since 2014. Prior to this date, each territory was conducting its own employment survey and thus national data did not integrate the rates observed there. The harmonization allows more comparison on a year-to-year basis of the evolution of the labour market and *in fine* women labor market everywhere in France thanks to the work carried by the Insee in the overseas by providing a good quantitative basis. However, the literature has not yet looked at the efficiency of public policies deployed in these territories to enhance employment through a gender lens.

Taking these considerations, and the national objective of 70% of employment, we decide to assess the state of the female labour market in the overseas as well as the main public policies which have been put in place to encourage women’s employment directly through training and professional integration. We will not tackle here social policies or policies to manage private and professional lives. One reason which motivated us to look at women’s employment is the link drawn between women employment and economic growth (Adema and Thevenon, 2016), which would be beneficial for developing territories with high poverty rates.

Fouquet and Rack (1999), noted that employment policies deployed since the 1980s are based on work as exercised by men: “industrial worker, skilled, stable and full-time” (p.47), this norm

² National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies

not always being applicable to women and reproducing gender inequalities on the labor market. As noted by Lemièrè (2013), “obstacles to the employment of women persist and are renewed, they are multiple and concern both the quantity of jobs offered to women and the quality of the jobs they occupy: part-time jobs, sectors of activity offering contracts of less good quality and less remunerative, downgrading generating access to employment at the cost of poorer employment conditions...” (p.8), thus looking at macro-economic situation and the public policies associated is crucial. Besides, on the overseas, considering the structural issues faced by territories isolated from mainland France and often forgotten or excluded from the scope of public policies adds on the complexity surrounding the integration of women in the labour market. The importance of public policies is key, as only “specific interventionist policies” (Ibid, p.9) can lead to equality on the job market.

Thus, we will ask in this research, are employment policies for the overseas adopting a specific lens to increase women’s employment and are they adapted to the many particularities of these territories? How is the double approach, territorial and gendered, taken into account in those policies and which levers do they act on address the situation of female labour market in the overseas?

In a first part we will try to bring some context on employment and women’s situation in the overseas as well as drawing a state of play of the female labour market in each territory by looking at the main indicators: activity rate, employment rate, unemployment rate, underemployment.

In a second part we will look at the different public policies in place, describe them and try to assess their efficiency at tackling specifically the gender dimension of women’s employment and the constraints both social and territorial found in the overseas. We will also bring some recommendations to enhance their impact in improving the integration of women in the labour market.

Methodology, sources and data

A starting point of this research is questioning the data available to assess the situation of women on the labour market in the overseas. Indeed, looking at female labour market undoubtedly brings us to look at public statistics as they are the main knowledge producer on the topic. Even more, in French overseas territories, the topic is almost exclusively covered by the main statistics producers: namely Insee, and INED, the National Institute for Demographic Studies.

We look at French statistics and particularly at the Continuous Employment Survey (*Enquête Emploi en continu*), referred as CES in the rest of this research, as it is the only source providing a measure of the concepts of activity, unemployment, employment and inactivity as defined by the International Labor Office (ILO). It also includes a large amount of information on the characteristics of the people (sex, age, diploma, experience, etc.), the conditions of employment (profession, type of contract, working time, seniority in the job, employment, etc.), non-employment situations (job search, studies, retirement, etc.). Other sources include census, but we did not retain it as it does not make it possible to monitor short-term developments as its collection is spread over 5 years. The CES collection takes place continuously throughout the year. The overseas departments - with the exception of Mayotte - Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, Reunion, fully integrated the CES system in 2014, and were excluded of national studies and employment figures beforehand, even though local Insee offices carried their own survey. This exclusion had been considered as the continuation of a colonial way of looking at and managing these territories (Vergès, 2005) and source of criticism as to the unicity of the nation. Today, Mayotte, due to its exceptional circumstances, including important immigration and its recent entry as an overseas department is excluded and has its own employment survey which is not continuous but only carried on one trimester. We will tackle all departments in this research.

When we started looking at the CES, the first obstacle that arose was sample size. Indeed, already at a national level the CES is carried out on a sample of dwellings, which implies, despite its large size, a certain statistical hazard. It is estimated that the employment rate quarterly is estimated with a 95% confidence interval of ± 0.4 points in France metropolitan area, and $\pm 1,5$ points in the overseas. Considering the smaller scale at the one where it is carried out in the overseas territories, the data samples are even smaller and thus do not always allow for disaggregation by sex and age, etc. Data from 2019 will be studied in order to exclude effects from the COVID-19 crisis which deeply affected these departments as they suffered from stronger and longer containment measures.

To provide context and analyse the public policies for employment deployed in the overseas, we had recourse to a qualitative research, mobilising various sources of information, such as quantitative, legal, social data or lived experiences. We will aim to draw a clear picture of female labour market in the five departments and explanatory factors that are advanced to explain the situation.

To elaborate on these explanatory factors, we rely particularly on INED, as it is one of the principal actors which brings researchers on questions related to the overseas, often in collaboration with Insee. Particularly, their *Migration, Famille et Vieillessement* (Migration, Family and Aging, referred to as MFV later) survey, was the first one to look in depth at trends within these territories, with the aim to tackle the lack of public statistics data. The first edition of the MFV survey was carried out in 2009-2010, in the four historical overseas departments (Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, Reunion). Its use has made it possible to apprehend and understand the different demographic issues specific to each of these territories in order to carry out appropriate public policies. It was later carried out in 2015-2016 in Mayotte. Most papers which can be found on explanatory social trends in the overseas today use conclusions from MFV. A second edition was carried in 2020-2021, ten years later, which first conclusions have not been published yet. They will be crucial to understand the path taken by the overseas as this study tackles themes relevant to explain the dynamics seen on labour markets such as: importance and characteristics of migrations, evolution of family structures or importance of social precariousness. Contacted, researcher from INED indicated that even though this study does not tackle employment directly it remains an important source on this topic.

One of the missing points noticed while working on this topic is data on number of women in positions of high-civil servants in the overseas. It is particularly important since most women are working in the public sector and the glass ceiling. In the civil service, agents come under categories A, B and C according to their hierarchical level and remuneration. The A+ category is added to distinguish “senior civil servants”, but this is not official. We thus decided to construct our own database by looking at women in top-management position in the public sector. We looked at the prefect’s team and closest collaborators (prefects and subprefects). We look at these professions particularly as they are appointed by decree on proposal of ministers. We are not looking at elected positions such as mayors, or president for departments and regions since these are not solely dependent on career-paths. When possible, we also look at birth place to assess the ability of women in overseas to attain such positions in their territories.

In order to complement this overview, we carried eight semi-directive interviews. We contacted professional from different range of sectors to gain more insights on three points:

First of all, we interviewed agents from national statistics producers:

- Head of studies at INSEE Réunion-Mayotte
- Head of the regional division of studies at INSEE Antilles-Guyane
- Associate researcher at INED on the MFV

The aim of these interviews was to get a better view of the way national statistics work in the overseas, challenges and constraints faced by researchers in these territories and explore the main areas for explanations.

Secondly, we carried interviews with profiles qualified as “excellence” in the overseas, to understand the place of women in management position or in particular positions such as doctors and entrepreneurs:

- A high civil servant from the overseas, working in her region of origin. We chose this profile to get a better sense of the career path undertaken by a woman at an executive position in the civil service.
- A young female entrepreneur in La Réunion. We chose this profile to illustrate and bring more context to the policies deployed to promote entrepreneurship as a way out of unemployment in the overseas, particularly in La Réunion with a low rate of female entrepreneurs.
- A female medical practitioner (doctor) in La Réunion
- A legal advisor from Mayotte

The aim of these interviews was to understand choices made by women in the overseas in choosing a career-path, how mobility shaped their trajectories and their motivations to stay in their birth departments as well as opportunities and challenges they faced.

Finally, we asked questions directly to actors in charge of improving women's integration on the labour market:

- Head of the CIDFF (Women's and Family Rights Information Center) in Mayotte
- Responsible for Training and professional integration at LADOM, the Overseas Agency for Mobility

Civil servants working at the regional director for women's rights at the Guyane DRDFE, the Regional Directorate for Women's Rights and Equality, under the authority of the Regional Prefect, sent us material by email.

These interviews helped us in our analysis of employment policies.

The semi-structured interviews followed a guideline based partially on the findings from the literature review and state of play, including for instance the most frequently mentioned challenges. All of them were conducted in French and translated in English for the purpose of this thesis.

Finally, we conducted an analysis of employment policies in place in the overseas territories. Indeed, if we look at specificities of the situation of women on the labour market in these territories, it is important to assess if policies in place to help them are responding to the needs and challenges identified.

Employment policies refer to targeted policies, i.e. policies that act selectively in favor of certain populations and in order to make the functioning of the labor market more efficient and correct its imbalances. They correspond to 9 categories: public employment service, vocational training, job rotation and job sharing, employment incentives, sheltered employment and rehabilitation, direct job creation, aid for business creation, maintenance and support of income in the event of absence of employment and early retirement. Due to the constraints of this research we do not address the last two points here. Our aim is not to be exhaustive as many policies are put in place by local authorities, and depend on local initiatives and the will of elected officials over more or less long periods. Thus, we have chosen the policies which appeared the most significant and impactful both in their time-frame and efforts put to deploy them, in the literature and in the policy landscape. To this end, we had recourse to all sources

available from national and local authorities and reports tackling issues relevant to female labour market. Our goal is to assess if the local situation of women is taken into account, how are those policies implemented to reach their target audience and the room for improvement available via the formulation of recommendations.

Interdisciplinary state of knowledge

A. Literature review: Understanding the parameters at stake when addressing female labour market in the overseas

The aim of this part is to provide background information on the situation in the overseas on topics relevant to our research. It is considered as interdisciplinary as it draws from research in economy, sociology and history.

This literature review excludes work from Insee as the work produced by the national statistics institution is covered in more details in a second part of this section.

1. Demographic control and migration as a colonial way of dealing with the overseas

The demography of the overseas has always been of interest to researchers and public policies as multiple sources talk about a will from the authorities to control the demographic development of the overseas. The literature covering these events qualify the public policies and programmes at stake as “colonial” and “racialist”. These policies were carried out in the 1960s in a context where experts from the General Planning Commission advocated for the limitation of births in La Réunion, Martinique and Guadeloupe. Paris (2020), describes a public policy carried out in La Réunion known as “birth control” and focused on reducing the fertility of a population considered “supernumerary by a multitude of political, scientific and institutional actors” (p.29). She shows how public policies created a racial category within the French population integrating different perspectives on gender, race and class as it tackled poor and marginalized women.

The control of the population in the overseas was also carried out through migration policies. Migration policies for employment deployed in the overseas since the 1960s, have shaped not only the demography of these territories but also the societies and the way they look at mobility and policies to move to mainland France to work. Migrations have played an essential role in the demography of the overseas departments, during past centuries with the immigration of settlement for the development of the colonies, or more recently, in the second half of the 20th century, with the emigration of young natives. Marie (2014) describes fifty years of uninterrupted emigration public policy with overseas manpower undertaking low-qualified jobs at the benefit of mainland France. As explained by Pattieu (2016), the BUMIDOM particularly impacted the four historical overseas departments. The BUMIDOM, was created in 1963 by the French government, as a state-owned company with the aim to supervise and organize migration from the overseas departments, where social discontent was growing. Pattieu qualifies this programme as such: “Its existence and its policy testify to the persistence of a specific treatment by the public authorities, beyond the colonial era, of the overseas departments and their populations.” (p.81). Indeed, this programme had been and is still considered as a neocolonial way of dealing with the overseas. The way these migrations were organized relate to “practices and prejudices which contribute to a diffuse racialization (...) The migrations organized by the BUMIDOM contribute to the deeply unequal relations between the metropolis

and the overseas departments” (p.81). We believe this point is crucial to consider in our research as such experience remain deeply anchored in people’s mind and could rise fear against following programmes involving mobility and migration. The sole aim of the BUMIDOM was not only to find employment to migrants but also to allow them to settle in mainland France via housing assistance, training, holidays schemes. It is estimated that 200 000 people took part into this programme between 1963 and 1982, date after which it ceased to exist. Pattieu describes the racism encountered by those migrants, difficulty in access to housing and training in very low-skilled, low-paid jobs relating the incapacity of the state to fully integrate its own citizens. This programme is interesting for us also because many women migrated as they represented a third of the migrants, around 32 000 women, without including the ones moving with their husbands and families. This is embedded in the “BUMIDOM's desire to resolve, through migration, what is considered above all a demographic problem” (p.87). These women were directed to jobs such as workers and household help, but also community workers (with a high proportion of nursing auxiliaries), segregating them professionally in few low-skilled job families. The BUMIDOM did apply a differentiated policy between men and women, as training centres for young women were built to teach them how to “adapt to food and the metropolitan way of life”, and use household appliances (p.98). The racist and sexist character of the way migrants were dealt with, left a mark on the overseas society decades later. However, migration did not stop, as we will see, nowadays, it’s a high-qualified manpower which migrates from the overseas to mainland France without coming back to the departments of origin.

Marie (1996) shows that migration policies at the beginning of the 1960s didn’t target women specifically, however in the 1980s there represented more than 51% of the migrants from Antilles, particularly young women between 20 and 29 years old. The magnitude of migration was such that “in March 1990, there were almost as many women from the Antilles working in mainland France (76 116) as working women in Guadeloupe (78 493) or Martinique (78324).” (p.523). However, this movement slowed down after the economic deceleration seen in mainland France in 1990s which could not ensure them to find an employment anymore. The important point brought by Marie is that due to the deterioration of the job market after 1990 both in mainland France and in the overseas, hitting women more severely, women from Antilles “sustained their stay in mainland France, whatever their aspirations to return home” (p.526) compared to men, a decision more often “suffered than chosen” (p.526) and conditioned to the public aid available to them.

Other employment policy specific to the overseas and involving mobility covered by the literature is the Adapted Military Service (SMA) in the Antilles. Mary (2016), in a historical perspective, describes this programme as a “An example of the remanence of the colonial past” (p.97), also put in place in the overseas while social discontent was materializing in the form of violent riots in the Antilles. It draws a pattern on how migration policies were designed in the 1960s to counter growing violence and political instability, which influenced the way the territories developed and the perspectives offered to its inhabitants. Before 1959, there wasn’t any military service in the overseas compared to mainland France where it had been declared universal since 1905. Mary relates that the initial plan behind this programme was to tackle “the

demographic question which appeared in the eyes of the government to be the root of the “Antilles evil”.” (p.100), by encouraging a “massive voluntary emigration of about thirty thousand people a year” to Guyane (p.100). However, the migration part did not come to play due to reluctances of some ministries and restrained resources. Eventually, the military service was indeed put in place within the territories, modified to become more of a “civic service”. It is telling to consider that the rationale behind such a programme was “to integrate into the social fabric in order to prevent any conflagration likely to turn into an insurrection by acting on the collective psychology of the natives” (p.104) in a context of war in Algeria and independence gained throughout French colonies.

2. Family structures in the overseas: Single parenthood and early pregnancy

Family structures are particularly well documented by the literature due to the different organizations within the households observed between mainland France and the overseas. Lefaucheur (2018) emphasizes that the situation in the Antilles is the one that differs the most from what can be seen in the rest of France, as single parent families represent more than half of family households with children (55% in Martinique, 52% in Guadeloupe), often at very early stages of life of mothers and children. This is explained by childbirth outside of marital cohabitation. Such family situations are driving women who can't rely on fathers, often not involved in the family life, to recourse to assistance by the State which maintains them in poverty and social exclusion. The MFV study led by INED, indicates that two out of three women who gave birth did not live with the father of the child after, leaving parenthood to women. Lefaucheur points that “Caribbean society in general praise their courage” (p.27), defining these women by a specific word “potomitan” (central pole of the voodoo temple or the house). Verges (2017) notes that in the 1960s social policies excluded these women to fight an excessive natality and according to her promote a patriarchal familial layout, by allocating assistance to the head of the family who was employed only. For Lefaucheur, this increased the “glorification and idealization of potomitan woman model” (p.33). However, starting 1970s social policies started directing their efforts to single mothers, thus benefiting the overseas. Coupled with the RSA, today it allows single mothers, unemployed and living in precarity to support their families. Lefaucheur concludes that, however, “new paternity and co-parenting models are emerging” (p.34). Monitoring the evolution of family structures as done through the MFV is essential as it deeply guides the situation of these women on the labour market.

Breton (2011), exploiting the MFV study, insists on the importance to understand family structures and evolutions. Indeed, for young women from La Réunion and Martinique, in particular the ones having dropped out early on from the schooling system and not pursuing higher studies, “early entry into “family” could prove to be an alternative to a “desired” but inaccessible professional integration” (p.25). These women having lower professional integration, starting a family might contribute to accessing to a new “social status” (p.32). This is particularly true in La Réunion, where women drop out earlier from higher education than in the Antilles. According to Breton their weight on the economic landscape in the island is important due to a potential selection effect linked with the emigration of women pursuing higher studies. If this situation of early entry into family (pairing and birth of first child) seem

to evolve over time and represent a lower proportion of women within the overseas, in La Réunion such decrease cannot be seen.

These considerations have led the High Council for Family, Childhood and Age (HCFEA) to release a report in March 2022, acknowledging their limited work on the overseas and synthesizing the demographic and social reality of the five overseas territories and analyzing the social policies in place to accompany families throughout the issues faced.

3. Employment in the overseas: a topic briefly discussed in the literature

When looking at the literature on employment in the overseas, we are faced with very few sources on the topic, excepting the work by Insee, especially for the last ten years.

In the 1990s, the four overseas departments (excluding Mayotte) experienced faster economic growth than mainland France, due to deep economic transformation bringing them closer to national levels except for Guyane (Hecquet and Parain, 2006). This transformation has been driven by the development of services namely telecommunications, tourism, housing services, etc. Between 1990 and 2002, employment has grown faster in the overseas departments (1.6% in Guadeloupe, 2.9% in Guyane, 2.1% in La Réunion) than in mainland France (1.2%). If reduced, unemployment rates still remain way higher than the ones observed in mainland France as they reached 28.8% in the overseas in 2004 compared to 9.9% in mainland France. The authors explain the situation by a lower qualification level as more than 45% of the population at that point did not have any diploma compared to 16% in mainland France. If employment levels are dynamic, overseas are “characterized by a very high weight of employment financed by public expenditure in the broad sense (education, health, administration)” (p.424). The authors note that “The tertiarization of jobs, the frequent breakdown of family structures, the need for financial independence and the desire for access to consumer goods incite women to enter the job market.” (p.422), seen for women at all stages of life. However, female activity rates remain very disparate within the overseas departments and for all ages, their unemployment rates remain very high around 30% compared to 25% for men and 11% for women in mainland France.

One the main resource on the topic is from L’Horty (2014), on the “persistence of overseas unemployment”. This article already raises the question of the effectiveness of public policies to combat unemployment in the overseas. It aims to offer a review of the work that has explored the causes of unemployment in overseas departments and regions, and really underlines the multiple explanations factors that must be mentioned to account for the persistence of overseas unemployment, which has important implication for employment policies in the overseas departments. If the article does mention the overexposure of women to underemployment and unemployment, particularly in Martinique and Guyane, it does not really differentiate by gender when bringing explanatory factories. However, it is an invaluable contribution for the overall picture as it allows to get a historical perspective from the 1960s to early 2010s. Unemployment has always been higher in the overseas, and “Statistical studies carried out from the end of the 1970s underlined the severe underutilization of the overseas workforce, of which the unemployment rate is only one indicator among others.” (p.3).

The composition effect plays a big part as the “overseas workforce is generally concentrated on low levels of qualification, which overexposes it to a high risk of unemployment” (p.5). Furthermore, as described in more details in the literature, migration and mobility enter in play when talking about employment in these territories. These territories particularly far from main national employment areas and faced with insufficient higher education offers, many young adults need to leave their regions and departments for mainland France and do not necessarily come back, in particular for the ones which receive the highest diplomas. Interestingly, the youth from the Antilles are more mobile than the youth from La Réunion, notably due to better organized networks of “Antillais” in mainland France (Temporal, Marie and Bernard, 2011). L’Horty also tackles an explanation often brought to describe the situation in the overseas which is the alignment of social policies, in particular the RSA since 2011. However, he recalls that no studies were able to effectively demonstrate the causality between these social policies and unemployment. However, the importance of those social policies in the overseas should not be overlooked, as people receiving social assistance find themselves particularly marginalized in their access to employment, even though they wish to find a job (Forgeot and Paraire, 2011).

These taken into account, L’Horty tries to shift the debate and bring in economic factors, which he believes are more suited to explain the reality of the situation, as they bring the debate on the mismatch in offer of unemployment. Indeed, Paraire and Nacitas (2011) already highlighted the structural employment deficit due to low economic activity. L’Horty indicates several reasons to explain this deficit differ, ranging from distance with mainland France to the Dutch disease proper to small island economies. Production in these territories is associated with high costs and is not really diversified, driving people to work in services and public services, main source of employment in the overseas. However, this is not sufficient and the author suggest that “the meeting conditions between labor supply and demand also have a share of the responsibility for overseas unemployment” (p.12). He underlines matching difficulties on the labor market making the unemployed unable to integrate the labour market despite the existence of vacant jobs in sectors in tension. This explanation has largely been used in more recent publications from INED and Insee on unemployment in the overseas as it applies particularly to the healthcare sector, and services for the elderly. When looking at the “Manpower need” survey (Besoin en main d’oeuvre)³, carried by Pôle Emploi (the public agency in charge of employment in France) every year to identify the needs by territories and trades, we see that many sectors indicate a very high rate of difficulty to hire. In 2021, this survey showed that the sectors where it is the most difficult to hire were construction in La Réunion, Guadeloupe, Mayotte and Guyane, healthcare in Guyane, but also at executive positions in Martinique and Guadeloupe. According to L’Horty, the mismatch in these departments is two-fold: skills mismatch, mismatch between the qualifications and skills requested by employers and those offered by job seekers and spatial mismatch, i.e physical distance between the location of job offers and that of people’s places of residence. Indeed, physical and geographical constraints combined with a lack of infrastructure and the poor organization of transport networks limit people in their mobility to reach employment areas. Bouabdallah, Cavaco and Lesueur (2002)

³ [Enquête Besoin en main d’œuvre, Pôle Emploi](#)

have shown that being far from employment areas or from public agencies helping unemployed to integrate the labour market was reducing chances to find a job and exit unemployment.

This article by L'Horty is an invaluable contribution to the literature as it also draws an overview on employment policies which have been deployed and their effects “reduced VAT rates, corporate tax reductions, flat-rate income tax deductions, tax exemption measures for income or profits from certain productive investments and in housing (...) and other specific public aid, in particular from the structural funds of the European Union” (p.9). Particularly, the main policy in place is the special scheme for exemptions from employers' social security contributions set up by the so-called "Perben" law in 1994, which has been modified times, in 2001, 2003, 2009 to become the “Loedom” exemption, with a most recent update in 2019. As described by Alibay and Hagneré (2011), the increase in employment in the overseas between 1997 and 2007 has been considerably driven by these exemptions schemes as they concerned four out of five jobs. Sectors which benefited from these exemptions did managed to hire the most, with an increase of 43% between 2000 and 2007 in sectors concerned compared to an increase in 12% in mainland France where those exemptions were not at place.

It is surprising to notice that few articles tackling directly employment in the overseas exist. Particularly after 2010, the article by L'Horty we described remains one of the only sources from the literature which brings an overview of the labour market, apart from the analysis carried in depth by Insee every year. Even official sources from Dares (Department of Research Coordination, Studies and Statistics at the Ministry of Labor) has published little work on the overseas. One explanation would be the integration of the overseas in national statistics starting 2014. However, considering the high unemployment rate and social discontent this situation has been fueling, it remains of concern that more research on the economic situation and employment is not carried out. The last analysis of employment policies carried out in the overseas date back to 2006, prior to the modification of exemptions schemes and the establishment of the RSA.

4. Female labour market at a national level

Work on female labour market since the end of the 1990s has been quite important, with research focused on all aspects of women's employment from underemployment to the gender pay gap, education and degree level. Updates on the evolution are carried out recurrently, in particular to compare effect of public policies directed to women. Recent research points out that in two decades, the place of young women in the labor market has improved: more qualified, more employed, they also benefit from the beginning of a salary catch-up, and have access to professions and sectors closer to those of men (Couppié and Epiphane, 2019). Strong differences and inequalities persist at the executive level. However, most of these researches exclude the overseas from their scope. Due to the constraints of this research, we will not elaborate further on the situation in mainland France but take it a point of comparison in the state of play.

B. State of play: female labour market in the overseas in 2019

1. Working on female labour market highlights the state of public statistics in the overseas

Discussions with Heads of Studies at Insee Reunion-Mayotte and Antilles-Guyane on the topic of female labour market led us to some considerations on carrying research and public statistic in the overseas which we believe is interesting to state out in this research.

Indeed, in this state of play we will rely on data made available by Insee on their public databases and their analysis *Flash Insee* to try and explain the specificities faced by women on the labour market, complemented by other sources if necessary. All the Insee publication consulted will be listed in the bibliography.

Paradoxically, and spurred by a number of public policies and proposals of laws to enhance public statistics in the overseas⁴, a considerable amount of money is now reaching these territories to enhance our knowledge and adapt public policies to the reality of these departments. Indeed, many surveys benefit from a funding extension, principally given by the *Direction générale des outre-mer*, from the Ministry for the Overseas. Such extensions are less frequent in other French regions and attest from a necessity and demand to document further and shed a specific light on the situation of these territories.

Yet, Head of Studies from these institutes deplore the lack of academic sources surrounding and focused on overseas territories, even though national statistics have now integrated overseas within their scope of research. Indeed, the field of academic research still excludes the overseas territories from its work, due to the geographical remoteness on the one hand, and to the many specificities in the composition of the population, history (overseas territories covered here became departments lately, and are territories deeply marked by their colonial past) and demographic differences. Encouraging more work which includes them or specifically on them is crucial to build a better understanding of the social, economic and political situation of these territories which differ in many ways with what can be found on a national level. However, Insee officers stressed the importance to not only compare overseas departments between each other but also with departments in mainland France to try and assess common specificities, on aging population or migration for example.

As explained by the Insee officers, objectifying data and providing explanatory factors requires much care as “cultural factors”⁵ are more difficult to deal with. Indeed, as we will discuss in the rest of this research, discriminations faced in these territories and in mainland France shape some aspects of the public life and public statistics do aim to fight against those discriminations by making data available. However, some topics remain sensitive, particularly distinguishing by birth location, which could stir up community tensions if not provided with enough

⁴ Sénat (2021), Proposition de loi n°4462 visant à renforcer les politiques de statistiques publiques afin de consolider l’action des collectivités des Outre-mer dans tous les domaines

⁵ Term as used during the interviews

explanations. This can require the need for additional data and lengthen time needed to deal with a topic.

Finally, and even though the will to harmonise all surveys nationally is considered crucial by local Insee officers, they alerted on the fact that the tools used might not be suited to the local territorial realities and societies. They indicated that much efforts are carried locally to try and balance, however little can be done given the constrained resources at their disposal. Besides, the employment survey is legislated at a European level, giving very little room for adaptation. The aim of such harmonization is to compare all overseas territories in Europe, for instance with the Canary Islands. One of the best examples of adaptation can be seen in Mayotte. In 2015, to meet the need for information on economic activity in Mayotte, the regional Insee office carried a specific survey in order to understand and quantify the weight of the informal sector. Given the economic and social characteristics of Mayotte, close to those of a developing country, the approach adopted by Insee was inspired by the methodology of the 1-2-3 surveys developed by researchers of the Research Institute for Development (IRD-DIAL). This type of mixed survey had never before been conducted on a territory belonging to a developed country before.

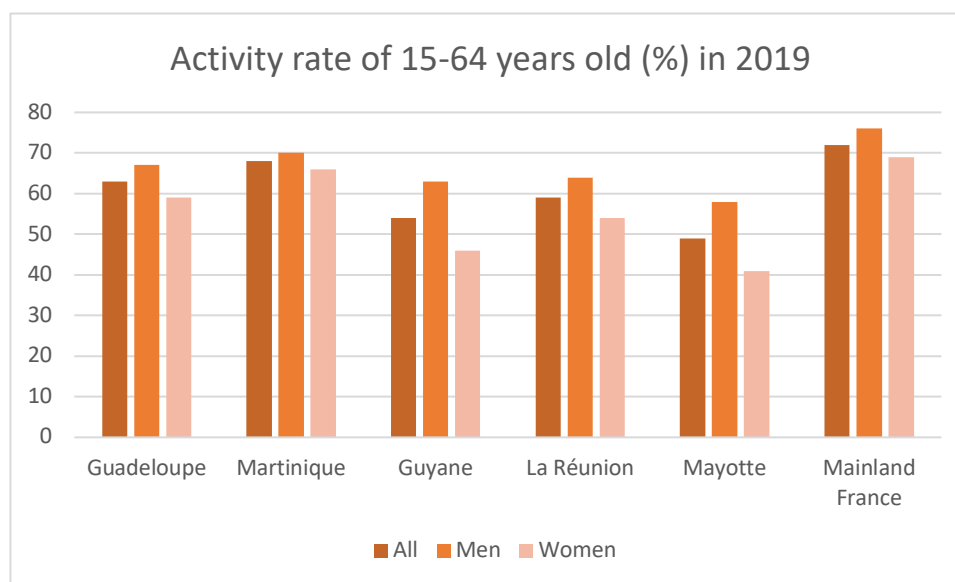
In Antilles-Guyane, another constraint identified is that only one antenna, located in Guadeloupe is charged with work on three departments including Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyane, with the help of teams on the field. However, one project team must carry work on three territories which often prevents from doing additional research on specific topics, unless asked by other actors such as prefectures or rectorates.

Overall, often, after feasibility studies, research is abandoned due to the low size of the sample. Adapting research tools to fit this reality could be explored.

2. The situation for women on the labour market in the overseas is fragmented

Our aim here is to describe the female labour market and disparities observed using data from the CES and by Insee on their specific publications on various topics such as “Women in the public sector” or “Poverty in the overseas”. As much as possible we will use latest data from 2019, prior to the crisis as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is still hard to evaluate due to its most recent evolution in overseas with lower vaccination rates and thus longer containment measures. However, to shed light on particular points and provide context, we might use latest data available from prior years or the period 2020-22, which will be indicated. We do not develop on each region for all indicators but rather illustrate with examples. We will first develop the main indicators, region by region to get a good overview of the state of the labour market for women before drawing conclusions. Definition of the indicators are given in Annex1.

Activity rate



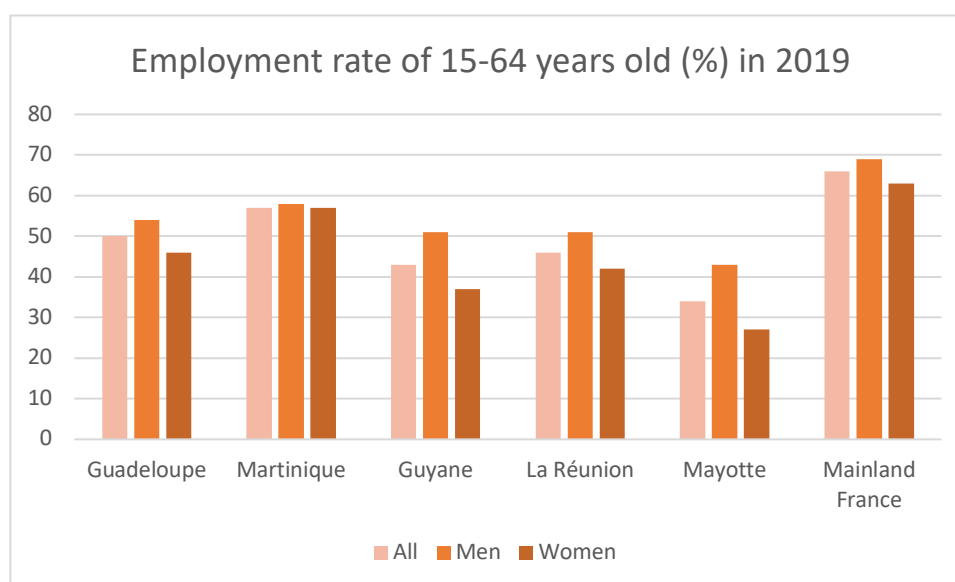
Source: Insee

The active population is seen to be on the decline, particularly affecting women, in Guadeloupe since 2017. In La Réunion, women, similarly as men, are exit the labour market too, their activity rate decreasing for the first time in 2019 since the 2010 to reach 54%. Between 2001 and 2010, they entered the labor market en masse. Their activity rate had increased by 8 points over the period to reach 56% in 2010, remaining however far behind that of women in mainland France (69% in 2019). The overall activity rate is decreasing for the fourth year in a row. Interestingly, the activity rate of men aged 50 to 64 is particularly decreasing, falling from 66% in 2015 to 60% in 2019. Young men aged 15 to 29 are also affected by this decline: their activity rate drops from 51% to 47%. The reasons most often given to explain the wish not to work are health problems (29% of house persons) and caring for children or a dependent person (21%). 11% of house persons say they are discouraged: they think there is no work available for them.

In Martinique, the share of women in the labor market is greater than that of women in Guadeloupe. At the start of their career (less than five years after the end of their initial studies), women in Martinique are more present on the labor market than men. Beyond five years, the trend is reversed with a higher activity rate for men (employed or unemployed), The gap widens beyond ten years after the end of studies with 80% for men and 73% for women. According to the CES, with professional seniority, health problems become the main reason why men and women do not want to work (respectively 48% and 33%).

The Guyanese labor market is characterized by an imbalance between female and male activity. Indeed, the activity rate of women (employed or unemployed) reached 46% against 63% for men, i.e. 13 points of difference. This gap in activity is greater than those observed in Guadeloupe (8 points), Martinique (4 points) and mainland France (7 points).

Employment rate



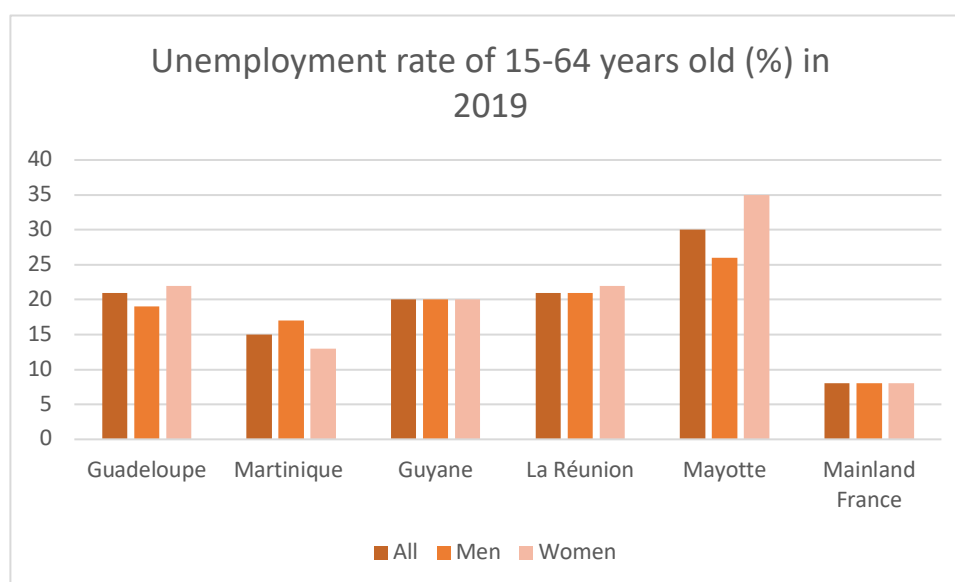
Source: Insee

In Guadeloupe, women between 15 and 64 years old are employed at 46%. This is below men's employment rate at 54% and way below women employment rate at a national level, at 63%. However, we see a shift in the younger generation as women employment rate up to 10 years after leaving school is higher than that of men: 60% compared with 54% of men. It is in later generations, that the gap starts to reverse, 53% of women are working for 65% of men. Similar trends are observed in Martinique but at more important rates: at the start of their working life, women are more often employed than men (53% compared to 36% less than five years after the end of their studies). This gap persists between five and ten years since the end of studies even if it is reduced by half (65% against 57%). On the other hand, beyond ten years of professional seniority, the employment rate of men (70%) exceeds that of women, which peaks at 65%.

In La Réunion, women remain far behind: in 2018, only 42% of women aged 15 to 64 had a job, compared to 51% of men. It increased by 5.4 points between 2007 and 2018, while it was stable for men. But since then, access to employment for Reunion women has not progressed; they remain much less professionally integrated than women living in mainland France.

In Mayotte, since 2009, employment has grown steadily for women, while it has stagnated for men since 2014. In 2019, 27% of women had a job, four points more than in 2009.

Unemployment rate



Source: Insee

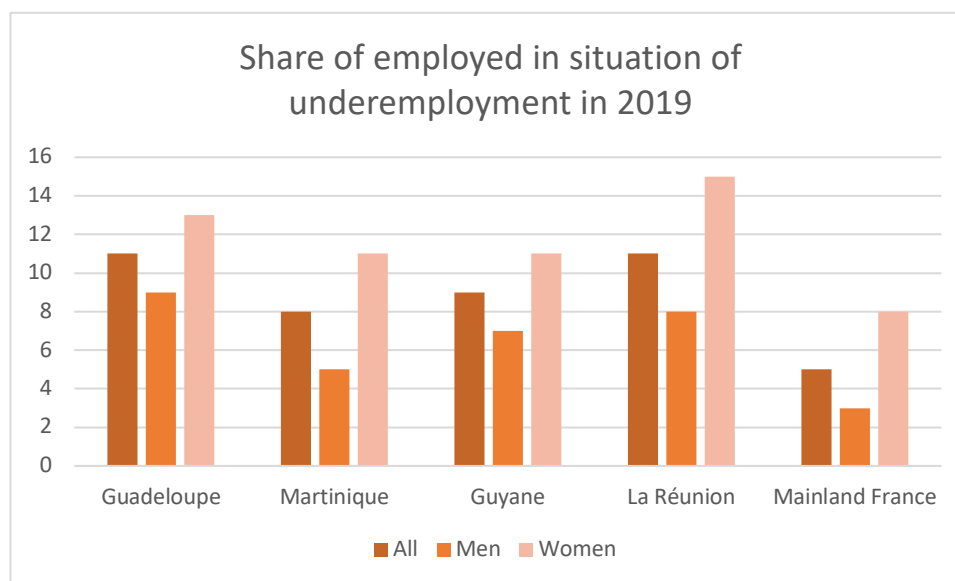
In Guadeloupe, unemployment is particularly high among the youth remaining on the territory, which is often low-skilled, at 41%. At the start of working life, women are less exposed to unemployment than men. In 2019, 35% of them were unemployed compared to 47% of men. This is explained by the fact that young women have a higher level of qualification than that of men of the same age. The unemployment rate then drops sharply with professional seniority (36% for men and 23% for women). After ten years of professional seniority, the gap in unemployment rates between women and men is reversed. The female unemployment rate is higher than that of men (20% and 14% respectively). Once again, similar trends are observed in Martinique with: 26% of them were unemployed compared to 45% of men. Beyond ten years of professional seniority, the female unemployment rate is two points higher than that of men (respectively 13% and 11%).

In Guyane, in 2019, the unemployment rate among men is equivalent to the unemployment rate among women at a very high level of 20%. Nevertheless, at the start of working life, women are more exposed to unemployment than men. The situation is reversed with professional seniority. To be noted, that they are often not counted as unemployed as they simply drop out of the labour market to take care of their children and/or dependent relatives.

In La Réunion, the overall unemployment decreased by 3 points between 2018 and 2019 to reach 21%, a bit more important for women rather than men. However, employment rate did not increase, as we rather observe more frequent exits from the labor market as explained for the activity rate. Discouragement is frequently mentioned to explain the absence of an active employment research; due to the importance of long-term unemployment, which concerns six out of ten unemployed people on the island.

In Mayotte, unemployment remains more significant for women. In 2019, their unemployment rate was 35%, compared to 26% for men. However, the gap between women and men has been halved since 2009.

Underemployment



Source: Insee

Note: no data comparable for Mayotte

In 2019, 12% of employed workers aged 15 to 64 were concerned by underemployment. It particularly affects women (14%) and less so men (9%). This situation of underemployment for women in Guadeloupe is more frequent than that of Martinique (11%) but much more important than in metropolitan France where it concerns only 8% of women.

In La Reunion, underemployment mainly concerns part-timers willing and available to work more. It concerns more young people (20%) and women (15%). When they are employed, Reunionese women work part-time twice as often as men: 27% against 13% in 2018. Nevertheless, between 2007 and 2018, the share of part-time jobs increased less quickly for women (+0.9 points) than for men (+2.5 points).

In 2016, in Mayotte, 20% of employed women worked part-time, a higher proportion than in mainland France (15%). Only 4% of men are in this case, as in mainland France. For more than eight out of ten women working part-time, it is a forced choice, as they couldn't find a full-time job.

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In all overseas, salaried employment remains the dominant employment status for women, reaching 87% of women in Guyane, in line with national levels at 88%. Similarly, the situation

of women in the workforce is quite fragile: they are led more often than men to accept short-term contracts and less paid part-time jobs.

As described earlier, these statistics are taken from Insee, which provides in its analysis, an explanation on high unemployment figures. These are similar to the ones related in our literature review: narrow labour market in the islands, skills mismatch spatial mismatch, and lack of qualification from workers with qualified youth migrating to mainland France.

Women are dropping from activity rates for several reasons. The main reason advanced is health issues at 28%, but 14% also relate that they need to drop off due to childcare or having to care for a dependent relative while only 3% of men drop off for this reason.

In particular single mothers are kept out of the labour market. At the national level, single parents present twice more risk to be unemployed and are working part-time more often than parents living in couple (Périer et al, 2020). In the overseas where we observe high number of single parents — half of the families in the Antilles, 46% in Guyane and 38% in La Réunion (Marie and Breton, 2015) — single mothers are the most exposed to poverty and precariousness as their qualification level is often lower, lowering their chances to get a job. In La Réunion six out of ten single mothers are living below the poverty rate.

In Guyane specifically, high fertility, combined with the early age of the first child, makes it difficult for women to enter the labor market at the start of their working lives. This delay cannot be made up for in the rest of their professional life.

Finally, The CES shows us that the low presence in the labor market of women without a diploma partly explains their low activity rate.

In the overseas labor market, similarly as in national labor market, men and women choose different careers and sectors. Women favor the tertiary sector and the status of employee: in Guadeloupe 51% of women work in public administration, education, human health and social action, 24% among men. Women mainly occupy employee functions (44%, 18% for men). They also and more frequently than men perform intermediate professions (respectively 32% and 22%).

In Martinique, 53% of women work in public administration, education, human health and social action, compared to only 30% of men. They are also more employed than men (41% and 13% respectively) and in intermediate professions (18% against 7%).

Salaries

In addition to reduced working hours, women receive lower wages than men. Thus, they earn on average 12.50 euros per hour, against 13.40 euros for men, a difference of 7%. Interestingly, this gap has been stable for several years, and is less than half that of France. This narrower gap on the islands and Guyane is partly linked to a higher share of public sector jobs, with less unequal remuneration. The lower remuneration of women is partly explained by the jobs they exercise, which are different and less remunerated than those of men. Among executives in particular, women receive an hourly wage 19% lower than that of men, a gap comparable to the one observed in mainland France. More generally, the hourly wage gap increases with age: very

low among young people, it is higher over the age of 50. Thus, the salary of women aged 50 or over is 12% lower than that of men of the same age.

A large study was carried in 2021 in the Antilles on the salary gap within the public sector: it is explained by the fact that women and men do not hold jobs at the same level or field. Women are under-represented among officials in managerial and senior management positions. These observations are in line with what is seen at the national level and has been identified by public policies as a challenge to address (Salibekyan, 2022a; Salibekyan, 2022b).

Professional segregation

Overall through the overseas, opportunities are more limited for women: half of their jobs are divided into 8 professional families, compared to 15 families for men. Although the professions are diversifying a little compared to 2007 (respectively 7 and 14 professional families for women and men), the gap is not narrowing. Female employment is concentrated in the sectors of public administration, education, care and social action and other service activities in line with what is seen on a national level but exacerbated by the limited trainings available to them on the territories.

This follows what can be seen in rural areas which differ from urban areas by a less mixed job offer (Observatoire des territoires, 2021).

Effects on women at executive levels are exacerbated and lead to downgrading

In Reunion as elsewhere, women are gaining more managerial status than in the past. Among executives born and working on the island, 44% are women compared to 33% in 1990.

This progression is consistent with the fact that female natives have long been the majority among the most educated as seen earlier with women from the Antilles. However, they have much less access than men to the most qualified jobs: only 38% of natives occupying positions of high responsibility are women.

In 2017, Martinique was the only French region to have a majority of women among its managers (52%), even if they are still few in number to access high decision-making positions (30%). It is explained by the high share of executives in the civil service in employment in Martinique including teachers and nurses (considered as executives) where women are overrepresented.

As we have described, a context of persistent unemployment prevails in the overseas and lead women to accept low-skilled or low-paid jobs rather than having no job. For Guadeloupe, the discrepancy between initial training and employment, affects 28% of women compared to 23% of men. However, this level is similar to the one observed in mainland France.

In Martinique, the downgrading particularly concerns the most educated: nearly 70% of female second cycle graduates under 35 versus 61% among men of the same age.

Do statistics capture everything?

When discussed with Head of Studies from Insee Antilles-Guyane and Reunion-Mayotte, they highlighted that similarly, to mainland France, women are found in more precarious jobs and have lower activity rates. They believe that the indicators in place to show these inequalities are well suited to describe the situation except for Mayotte, where the weight of the informal sector for women could change the figures. For Reunion Island, demand on a study on informal economy has been strong. Employment survey prior to 2014 did include indicators on the informal economy. Insee Reunion-Mayotte plans to conduct such a survey in the next years, however, they indicated that they do not expect to find an important difference than what is observed in Mainland France. They estimate that around 30% of the population would draw some revenues from the informal sector, for women mainly in the care sector. They believe that, according to what is observed on the field, the supposed weight of the informal sector higher in the overseas is overevaluated, and corresponds to prior beliefs while formalization has evolved to reach a rate similar to the national levels. However, for Antilles-Guyane, the local Insee office wishes to investigate informal economy and a working group has started reflecting on the best practices to measure it.

Insee officers believe mobility dynamics should be better described in these territories, which is done in coordination with INED, which latest MFV study has been awaited for. Indeed, the last results dating back to 2009-2010, it appears urgent to update and follow the evolution, particularly of young and qualified migrants which is affecting the local labour market. It would be particularly of interest to see if young women who are qualified are coming back on the local labour market.

Heads of Studies at Insee insists on the importance to carry on further research on the topic as they deplored the persistence of some stereotypes within the population. Particularly in Mayotte, to explain the low activity rate of women, the general discourse still points out to the importance of family and religion, however, when looking at the halo around unemployment, it is clear that women do wish to work, but do not have the resources and possibilities to do so, notably due to the non-existence of childcare facilities.

Finally, they indicated that the decrease in the activity rate of women, was seen as a surprise as they expected a convergence with the national level. This phenomenon goes hand in hand with the discouragement of more and more men on the local labour market, followed by women, which was not a reality previously. It relates of a more global phenomenon, as men are discouraged, women also stop progressing, raising a real question on the quality of the employment. This question of discouragement should be investigated further, coupled with the situation of single parent. Indeed, as described by Périvier, faced with an unfavorable labor market, single mothers would give up looking for a job (2020). Considering the prevalence of single parents in the overseas, this explanation would make sense in the context.

The head of studies in Antilles-Guyane also pointed the necessity to carry complementary studies, notably in Guyane to better understand the characteristics of new migrants coming from South America, who are also trying to insert themselves on the local labour markets, posing new challenges as the population becomes really heterogenous, even in the cultural practices.

It is crucial, as previous studies by Insee showed migrant women are facing more precarity than men in Guyane.

Finally, studying the situation in more details of single parent families and their behavior on the labour market should be furthered, linking employment to poverty levels and living standards. A study is planned in the Antilles but will be solely carried in Martinique for now.

Analysis: Assessing the employment policies deployed in the overseas and their impact on women's employment

After the situation we just described, we decided to focus on analyzing “active” employment integration and support policies, as providing a job and training to the unemployed remains the main challenge for policymakers due to high unemployment. We will not look at policies against discrimination in the workplace and balance between private and personal life, and at “passive” employment policies which consists in unemployment compensations such as the RSA. The aim of this part is not to be exhaustive as numerous measures over territories are implemented by local missions, associations and sometimes elected representatives, for short or long periods. Our goal here is rather to provide a panorama of the main policies which have been in place and coordinated at a national and regional level and assess their efficiency in taking into account both the social and territorial reality of the overseas and a gender perspective to resolve the issue of high women's unemployment.

As defined by the Dares, employment policies cover public interventions in the labor market, the aim of which is to improve its operation, increase and preserve employment, and reduce unemployment and discrimination in hiring.

Fouquet and Rack (1999) explain that public policies for employment only emerged in the 1980s when “the employment standard ceases to be an objective of economic policy (“full employment”) to become an aspect of social policies” (p.47). However, women are neglected from these new social policies as employment overall has been constructed “on a masculine model, that of the industrial worker, qualified, stable and full-time, from which social guarantees are drawn. However, women, even when they work, and even when they are salaried, are less often than men in these positions at the heart of the employment standard.” (p.47). They thus believe, the employment policies in place have reproduced and strengthened inequalities between men and women on the labour market. However, a case to include a gender lens in employment policies had been built through the European Employment Strategy in 1996, recognizing that “gender equality and gender mainstreaming are essential for progress” (Rubery et al, 2008, p.5) later removed in 2006.

In the overseas, public authorities in the last two decades have identified women's employment as a priority and necessity to overcome the lag in economic development faced by the territories. In 2000, the Senate raised the alarm while discussing an Overseas orientation bill (Sénat, 2000), in the section on strengthening women's rights and promoting equality between men and women in the overseas departments, signaling that there were “no specific provisions for women, although the situation of women in relation to men is even more unequal overseas than in mainland France. It does not include in its system any economic or social measure likely to correct the imbalances between men and women” (p.3), recommending to encourage the government to “take better account, in the policies it implements, of the specific situation of women overseas” (p.7) and to adopt an “overseas reflex” (p.9) in all situations to tackle specificities faced by all population in these territories.

The intersection of a territorial and a gendered approach to tackle specifically female labor market in the overseas has been stated and reaffirmed by all collectivities from the Ministries — including Ministries for Gender Equality, for the Overseas and Home Office — to municipalities. As described in the previous part, if women's employment did increase in these last two decades, structural issues seem to remain and convergence with national dynamics expected is being slow. We thus attend to explain why these policies do not manage to create a long-lasting effect to bring more women into employment.

A. At a national level, employment policies directed to the overseas are starting to include a gender lens

Two programs, relating to the major State policies for the overseas, make up the *Overseas mission*, and are defined, evaluated and financed through the Finance bill project (*Projet de loi de finance*, PLF) presented every year:

- The Overseas Employment program (n°138) mainly finances the social security contribution relief and exemption system for overseas companies and self-employed workers. It also provides support credits for integration and professional qualification.

Two major objectives are thus assigned to program 138:

1. The creation and safeguarding of sustainable jobs in the private sector;
 2. The fight against the exclusion from the labor market of those furthest from employment through appropriate vocational training actions.
- The program for Overseas living conditions (n°123), the main line of which is the housing policy.

We will focus here on the 138 program and the credits allocated for integration and professional qualification. The Document for Transversal Politics on gender equality annexed to the PLF, which identifies all measures financed by diverse ministries for gender equality, indicated that “As the 138 programme does not have a mechanism dedicated to equality between women and men, it is not possible to isolate credits relating specifically to this policy.” (p.134)⁶, meaning that no specific budget for gendered employment policies would be attributed as part as the PLF to employment in the overseas. However, we can see in the same document for 2021 that “It is however possible to estimate the contribution of this program to professional equality at 365,411 euros” (p.147)⁷.

Through this program, and the overall focus of the Ministry for the Overseas for the past decade, the main target audience of the employment policies designed is the youth without a necessary gender consideration via two main agencies, LADOM and the SMA, on which we will elaborate.

⁶ [Document de politique transversale pour l'exercice 2020](#) (2019), Politique de l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes

⁷ [Document de politique transversale pour l'exercice 2021](#) (2020), Politique de l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes

What we see in the following sections is that most of the actions including a gender perspective are recent and have been deployed mainly since 2014. When we asked all of our actors if they believed this was an impulsion of the current or previous government, they unanimously replied that it was the consequence of a trend which has been set out for a longer time nationally and sometimes locally, but is taking time to reach the overseas and logistically come into place. Indeed, the development of joint ministerial committees drove the integration of gender equality objectives for all aspects, including employment.

The main conclusion from the two programs LADOM and SMA is that, after many years of raising awareness on the particular precariousness in which single mothers were living in the overseas, specific provisions to include them in training programs were undertaken. However, if efforts are made to reach women, and particularly women who are the furthest from employment, professional segregation remains due to the job offers available and directed to women. Addressing this point is crucial as occupational segregation is the breeding ground for multiple inequalities (Burchell et al, 2014). Furthermore, “It reinforces gender stereotypes that restrict employment opportunities for each sex and hinders the optimal allocation of labor within the productive apparatus.” (Couppié and Epiphane, 2006, p.31). Thus, not managing to escape this segregation will only create more inequalities ultimately for women in the overseas.

1. LADOM: promoting training and employment through mobility for all without a gender lens

a. LADOM main programme: Passport for the Mobility for Vocational Training (PMFP)

The Overseas Agency for Mobility (LADOM) is a French public body responsible for supporting the migration of French overseas residents seeking a qualification or professional integration elsewhere (mostly in mainland France). This agency succeeded in 2006 to the former National Agency for the Integration and Promotion of Overseas Workers (ANT). The role of LADOM is central in the overseas as it is the body which facilitates professional qualification and training not available in the territories due to the narrowness of the markets, the unavailability of training in all professional sectors and the low capacity to welcome all applicants. Indeed, these territories, mainly islands, are located far from mainland France and thus the training offers are restrained as mobility to access them becomes more difficult compared with jobseekers in mainland France.

LADOM, since 2001 (when it was still the ANT) has been working in partnerships with Pôle Emploi, the public administrative establishment, responsible for employment in France. The aim of such a partnership is to offer a coordinated approach to training and employment. This cooperation also aims to promote the return of beneficiaries to their region of origin at the end of their training, by improving the information given to them on the labor market and job offers available. LADOM participates in the implementation of this policy through the granting of a Passport for the Mobility for Vocational Training (PMFP). This passport includes an installation allowance, a monthly allowance and the payment of educational costs.

However, the responsible for “Training and professional qualification” at LADOM assured us that the Agency did not apply a “gender lens”. When choosing their beneficiaries, at no point this criterion enters into account, she assured. “Our target audience is job seekers who fit our eligibility criteria and enter in our envelope linked to the transport code” but no discrimination, either being positive or negative is applied by the agency. “We never applied quotas or anything as such and we do not plan to do so (...) no one ever brought the topic of gender inequality in our programs as an issue, our only constraint is our budget”.

Data made public by LADOM shows that in 2020, 49,9% of beneficiaries of programs by LADOM were women, however disparities remain between territories in access to this program and real parity is not attained. It would be interesting to have access to the number of men/women applicants to this programme to have a better sense of the disparities observed.

PMFP PAR COLLECTIVITES	Femmes		Hommes		Total
	en nombre	poids	en nombre	poids	
Guadeloupe	145	51,79%	135	48,21%	280
Guyane	48	46,15%	56	53,85%	104
Martinique	138	44,09%	175	55,91%	313
La Réunion	166	47,03%	187	52,97%	353
Mayotte	174	62,14%	106	37,86%	280
Nouvelle-Calédonie	9	42,86%	12	57,14%	21
Wallis-et-Futuna	1	50,00%	1	50,00%	2
Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon	1	25,00%	3	75,00%	4
Polynésie	1	9,09%	10	90,91%	11
Total	683	49,93%	685	50,07%	1 368

Source : LADOM. Données Passeport Mobilité Formation Professionnelle 2020

Source : Taken from the Document de politique transversale, Politique de l’Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes 2022 (p.236)

However, even if LADOM does not apply this gender lens from the beginning, since it is piloted by the Ministry for Overseas, the national policy to promote gender equality allows to bring a gender perspective on the impact of these programmes. In the annexes of the PLF, a sub-indicator on "Professional integration rate of female beneficiaries" does give a real objective and target of 65% by 2023 which is ambitious, as we can see it is over the target (62%) for overall youth integration in labour market.

INDICATEUR

2.2 – Taux d'insertion professionnelle des jeunes ayant bénéficié d'une mesure de formation professionnelle en mobilité, 6 mois après la sortie de la mesure

(du point de vue du citoyen)

	Unité	2019 Réalisation	2020 Réalisation	2021 Prévision PAP 2021	2021 Prévision actualisée	2022 Prévision	2023 Cible
Taux d'insertion professionnelle des jeunes ayant bénéficié d'une mesure de formation professionnelle en mobilité, 6 mois après la sortie de la mesure.	%	60,4	54,9	62	58	60	62
Taux d'insertion professionnelle des bénéficiaires féminines d'une mesure de formation professionnelle en mobilité, 6 mois après la sortie de la mesure	%	Non connu	58,1	65	60	62	65

Précisions méthodologiques

Source des données

Source externe : LADOM

Source : Taken from the Document de politique transversale, Politique de l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes 2022 (p.74)

It should be noted that LADOM has been submitted to many critiques, from the Cour des Comptes in 2019 which raised an alarm on the lack of manpower to conduct all its missions efficiently and follow the beneficiaries throughout their training path as well as its weak cooperation with local offices of Pôle Emploi. The Senate⁸ in its analysis of the finance bill relative to the overseas, has asked the government for an evaluation of the activity of support and integration of overseas students by the overseas mobility agency, in particular the PMFP scheme in view of the context of the massive exodus of young people from overseas territories. As the Senate did not specifically ask for a gendered analysis of the dispositive, doing so would be beneficial to correctly assess the disparities in participation by territories and try to correct them but also to draw an analysis of the sectors in which women are being oriented for training. Indeed, the satisfying “Professional integration rate of female beneficiaries” is mainly driven by the high percentage of female public enrolled in the health sector which opens access to employment in higher proportions than the average for all professional fields. Indeed, in 2019, 17% of the trainings offered were in the care sector and 11% in the social work sector (LADOM, 2019). However, these sectors are also the ones which mainly recourse to precarious positions, with low salaries and less mobility perspective. Going over, after the crisis, LADOM's qualifying training actions will be mainly focused on strategic and promising sectors such as the ecological transition and digital professions and the priority sectors of the recovery plan, strongly impacted by the crisis. Making sure with pre-defined objectives that these new training offers include equally men and women is key to avoid more professional segregation.

Recommendations:

- 1. Include a gendered perspective in the evaluation of programs carried out by LADOM**

⁸ Sénat (2021), [Projet de loi de finances pour 2022 : Outre-mer](#)

- 2. Make sure the training actions focused on strategic and promising sectors include an objective of gender parity to avoid more professional segregation**
- 3. Ensure women do not remain in low-skilled, low-paid jobs by driving them to strategic and promising sectors**

b. A first experiment of “going towards” a target audience: single mothers

For the first time in 2021, LADOM decided to target a specific audience, through its DOMME program for single mothers in La Réunion and Mayotte. 5 women from La Réunion and 7 women from Mayotte are taking part in this qualifying training in hospitality of 11 months made for low-qualified workers, with their 14 children. The innovation brought here is the socio-educational family support, as part of mobility in Chambéry, where payment of the children's return ticket, on-site schooling of the children and housing options are provided accordingly. According to our contact in LADOM, this was an “*experimental project and should be reconducted*”. Such a programme which adopts a “going towards” perspective appears well suited to the integration of the populations the furthest from employment. An evaluation of this programme covering the integration rate of these single-mothers and assessing their satisfaction with the support and quality of life will be necessary to encourage more single mothers to migrate in order to access trainings. Considering the high rates of single mothers in the Antilles, expanding such an initiative to all territories is suitable. However, as we will see below, to conduct such a programme which targets a particular population, a better coordination with other local actors in professional training would help to direct the assistance to women engaged in a path to employment. We did not have access to the cost of this programme.

- 4. Promote initiatives such as the DOMME programme for single-mothers which targets populations the furthest from employment and expand it to all territories**

c. Cadres d’Avenir Mayotte, an ambitious programme without a gender lens, which will need to be evaluated

Launched in 2018, the *Cadres d’Avenir* (Executives for tomorrow) programme for Mayotte, following a similar programme designed for Nouvelle-Calédonie, aims to promote the training of local executives to support the development of Mayotte. Students and professionals with high potential are selected to pursue studies in France or La Réunion in a sector deemed to be a priority for Mayotte, for a maximum period of 5 years and with a commitment to return to practice in Mayotte to benefit the island of their learned skills. In 2019, 24 Mahoran took part in this programme. If today, 41% of native executives in Mayotte are women (700 women) (Thibault, 2022), putting a target to this program would be beneficial. Indeed, these executives are mostly concentrated in the education sector and way less in the private sector which is not yet developed. There hasn’t been yet an evaluation of this programme and no data is made available on the gender repartition of the students who integrated it. Here again, a special attention on gender segregation in some sectors should be put in place. For the 2022-2023 year,

many priority sectors ranging from health, public administration, digital or sustainable development have been identified.

Recommendations:

- 5. Publish on a year to year basis the gendered statistics of this programme with a clear target to attain**
- 6. Work on gender parity within the different sectors to ensure women attain executive positions in all sectors**

2. *SMA, an exception which has at its heart a better integration of all vulnerable publics in particular women*

We discussed the creation of SMA in the literature review. First carried out as a way to keep the youth far from social violence, this Military Adapted Service has evolved over the years to become a key programme for integration of the populations considered the furthest from employment, in the four historical overseas and soon in Mayotte in 2025. SMA is a military system for socio-professional integration for the benefit of young people aged 18 to 25. Its priority mission is to develop and strengthen the employability of approximately 6 000 young volunteers per year by enabling them to acquire professional skills and social skills while offering them full socio-educational support. As part of the doubling of the places offered, decided in 2010, the SMA has reinforced in 2015, the feminization of its recruitment by creating new professional training courses more attractive for women, in the trade services in particular, although all sectors are open to them. The target was to have 30% of female beneficiaries in 2017. If the objective was not attained in 2017, it is now stable around 30% since 2020. To go further, since 2021 the PLF also includes a new sub-indicator, on the "Insertion rate of female volunteers of the SMA" making it possible to better measure the impact of the SMA within the framework of the national policy for the promotion of gender equality. In 2020, this rate stood at 79,1% for an overall integration rate of 76%. The SMA guarantees the same treatment to women as men, both for the monthly salary, the living conditions in boarding school, the choice of training professions, and for the selection criteria at the entrance. However, when it comes to gender equality in career paths, the overall responsibility remains on the offers from business leaders and their desire to offer unmarked "masculine" or "feminine" jobs. Raising the awareness of chambers of commerce and industry, consular chambers, MEDEF, local missions partnering with the SMA should be conducted in this direction.

Indeed, the sectors considered as « feminine », i.e. where women are present in higher proportion, particularly for low-qualified women, such as the care sector or services to individuals, are often the ones also offering the most precarious conditions, as described in a report on "Women and precariousness" by the CESE in 2015. They are more often working in part-time, with poor evolution prospects, but also exposing them to higher risks of developing diseases resulting of arduous work such as musculoskeletal disorders. psychosocial risks (Briard, 2022). They are more exposed to "constraints in the organization of working time, to emotional demands or even to low decision-making latitude." (Ibid, p.1). A special attention

should be carried by employers trying to integrate women in sectors marked as masculine as a high risk of violence such as sexual harassment can arise and should be avoided (Legault, 2001).

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
% Volontaires stagiaires féminines incorporées	24,8%	25,2%	24,4%						
% Volontaires stagiaires féminines entrées en formation professionnelle	24,5%	25,3%	24,2%						
% des volontaires féminines parmi les bénéficiaires				26,1%	27%	28%	30%	30%	30%
Objectif cible du SMA	25,0%	28,0%	29,0%	26,0%	27%	28%	29%	30%	30%
% Volontaires féminines parmi les diplômés du CAPI	25,4%	25,1%	26,3%	26,1%	25,34%	24,9%	27,35%	24,9%	24,9%
Taux d'insertion des volontaires féminines				74,42%	75,15%	74,8%	75,42%	79,1%	79,1%

Source: SMA

CAPI : Certificat d'aptitude personnelle à l'insertion

Source : Taken from the Document de politique transversale, Politique de l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes 2022 (p.74)

Recommendation:

7. Continue efforts undertaken by local actors to avoid categorizing jobs as “feminine” and “masculine”, particularly those directed at the youth, to increase gender equality within professions

This programme is not deployed yet in Mayotte and the governments has increased the number of credits dedicated to create a new branch in the department. The programme is evolving and the agenda SMA2025+ aims to go even further to bring women far from employment into their services by targeting directly young single mothers. In 2022, the launch phase to welcome them will start in Guadeloupe and La Réunion.

Another axis of SMA 2025+ is to develop a training to train future intermediary executives. If a gender equality objective making sure that both women and men can access these trainings has not been specified yet, a special attention will need to be provided to avoid vertical segregation in the trainings provided.

The aim to specifically and efficiently tackling overseas by this programme was saluted by the CESE in its report on “The challenge of the professional integration of youth overseas” (CESE, 2015a).

Recommendation:

8. Specify as a sub-objective, a target for the training of women at executive positions

3. Subsidized contracts (contrats aidés): inefficient both for the overseas and for women

Overseas territories are among the territories in France which receive the most subsidized contracts. A subsidized contract is a work contract subsidized by the State through the payment of part of the salary, from 30 to 60% of the gross minimum wage, or through tax exemptions. There are several types of subsidized contracts. Since 2018, most of them have been grouped under the name “career employment skills” (PEC). A training component is planned for the

employee in parallel with his hiring. According to the Ministry for Labor, the overall objective is the “the sustainable inclusion in employment of those furthest from the labor market”⁹. Following the COVID-19 crisis, the “*1 jeune, 1 solution*” (1 youngster, 1 solution) has allowed the creation of 80 000 subsidized contracts targeted towards the youth, in the vein of the “*Emplois d’avenir*” (Jobs for the future), which already targeted the youth. The URSSAF (Unions for the collection of social security contributions and family allowances), indicates that since January 1, 2011, the contracts aimed at facilitating the professional integration of people in difficulty in the overseas are the following:

- the employment access contract specific to overseas departments (CUI-CAE Dom) reserved for the private sector in every overseas except for Mayotte;
- the employment support contract (CAE) reserved for the non-private sector (here public sector, semi-public entities and associations).

For the purpose of our demonstration, we will refer only to subsidized contract, as the denomination and modalities of these contracts have changed regularly in the past years.

Anki-Zuccarello (2006), has underlined that subsidized contracts in the overseas had increased importantly between 1995-1999, the rates of adults accessing these contracts being more important in all the overseas departments compared to Mainland France, especially in La Réunion and Guyane. The non-private sector is the one that relied the most on those subsidized contracts in the overseas, with 80% people hired in 2004 compared to around 50% in mainland France. She explains that the characteristics of the people resorting to these contracts are quite different than the ones in mainland France, as it concerns “less skilled and long-term unemployed”. She also notes that men are overrepresented in those contracts. The rate of access to these employment policy measures is much higher in the overseas, reaching 5.7% in 2004 than in mainland France (2.3%). It is markedly higher in La Reunion: in 2004, approximately 8 out of 100 people entered into a subsidized contract.

If these subsidized contracts have been reformed several times by various governments, the current government, under Emmanuel Macron, had demonstrated a strong will to massively decrease the recourse to subsidized contract overall in France since 2017, judged “too expensive and inefficient” in the fight against employment and in actively integrating unemployed in the long-term (L’express, 2017). The will of the government is to put more emphasis and resources into professional training and qualification rather than these subsidies. This announcement raised an alarm throughout all overseas. The deputy Max Mathiasin addressed a question at the French National Assembly in September 2017, on the necessity to effectively ensure that these subsidized contracts are not stopped because “*there are several hundred jobs that are threatened with not being renewed or extended in the municipalities (technical services, human resources, green spaces)*”. The elected representatives from La Réunion also stepped up at the Assembly on the 9th of August 2017, “*the announced drop of 75% of subsidized contracts in Reunion, led the mayors of the island, all tendencies combined, to demonstrate in front of the prefecture*”. Even further he pointed to the Prime Minister “*Supported employment in Reunion is not assistantship, but corresponds to real service positions*”. Previously in an address to the

⁹ [Ministère du travail, de l’emploi et de l’insertion : Parcours emploi compétences](#)

Minister of Labour, Elizabeth Borne, Serge Latchimy, deputy for Martinique declared “*You are attacking one of the bases of national solidarity: subsidized contracts (...) I want to warn you, faced with weak or even zero growth, austerity blindness will have socially and humanly destructive effects. (...) You are going to put young people on the street. Concern is rising in the country, we need to get out of the blur. Where are you on subsidized contracts?*” (Ostremer la 1ère, 2017). Conscious of this particular situation, the Ministry for Labour in its response declared that the overseas remained a priority and subsidized contracts would remain in 2017.

However, as highlighted by Yannick L’Horty in an interview given in 2020, “*Overseas, some companies only survive thanks to this measure (...) All sectors of activity potentially use subsidized contracts, but we have an overrepresentation in the non-private sector, in particular associations. Many of these associations could not hire without state aid.*” (Péru-Gelly, 2020) If, between January 2019 and July 2020, recruitments on subsidized contracts fell by 22% in the overseas and by 47% in mainland France, the rate of overall beneficiaries from the overseas still increased from 16% in 2019, to 21.7% in July 2020. This underlines the constraints from the overseas to develop a strong private sector due to the hardship in being competitive and the high cost of importing goods and services. Following the COVID-19 crisis and its damaging impact on the economy, Elizabeth Borne announced the creation of 122 000 contracts for 2021, from which the overseas should have benefited.

Benoteau (2015), states that “In France, as in other European countries, the latest evaluation work on this type of active policies show that the programs subsidies in the market sector have a positive effect on integration into employment, while job creation in non-private sectors, i.e. public, have at best, no effect on their beneficiaries” (p.86). Indeed, she shows that entering a subsidized contract in the private sector increases the rate of being in an unsupported employment by 50% two years and a half later, while this rate decreases from 15 to 40% if entering a subsidized contract in a non-private sector. Furthermore, Card, Kluve and Weber (2015) in a synthesis of a hundred evaluation articles highlight the very weak effects of switching to a subsidized contract in the non-private sector: slightly positive at best, they often have no impact on the chances of finding an unsupported job, even a negative impact, in particular in the case of public sector jobs. Revisiting the framework with a gender lens is crucial, as highlighted by the Head of CIDFF in Mayotte “*we just maintain women in precariousness, from the RSA to the subsidized contract. We do not really give them long-term perspectives on securing a job and a stable financial situation, it’s more how to get these people into something so that they’re not in the unemployment figures.*”

Having highlighted the particular importance of the subsidized contracts in the context of the overseas to provide and maintain employment, it is now crucial to look at the impact of such contracts on female labour market. In a report by Lemièrre for the Ministry for Women’s rights in 2013 on the “Access to employment by women”, the author highlights that “Occupational segregation and professional inequalities between women and men are emphasized by subsidized contracts” (p.62). Indeed, the author finds out that the non-private sector almost exclusively offers fixed-term contracts (99%) and part-time contracts with 61% of new hires being women. 67% of employees work less than 26 hours. In Martinique, in 2008, women

accounted for two-thirds of the subsidized contracts in the non-private sector, similar to La Réunion in 2015. In Mayotte in 2018, 72% of women occupied subsidized contracts, mainly recruited by municipalities, for example for maintenance and cleaning work in schools (Fleuret and Paillole, 2019). Only 5% of them managed to find a stable job after this experience.

Moreover, “More qualified but also more downgraded women are integrated within the subsidized contracts framework” (Lemière, 2013, p.75). many of them have the baccalaureate or other diplomas, while these contracts should be reserved to low-skilled, low-qualified public. This is an issue, as employers would tend to even further the low-qualified public from accessing these positions.

Finally, the last issue highlighted by Severine Lemière at the national level but also by the Insee in the overseas is the occupational segregation of women in those subsidized contracts within jobs highly marked as “feminine” such as care sector with the associated issue of part-time and low professional mobility.

Thus, taking the context of the overseas with overrepresentation of these contracts in the non-private sector, subsidized contracts appear inefficient both overall as they do not allow for real integration on the labour market, and even more on women creating situation of precariousness due to part-time and downgrading in the non-private sector.

Recommendation:

- 9. Considering this situation, the recommendations highlighted by Severine Lemière in her report seem well-suited to the overseas: “Increase the share of women and set a target for a proportional representation of the share of women in the target audience in the subsidized contracts for the private sector.” (p.65)**

Overall, national policies directed to the overseas are showing a will to integrate a gender perspective and move towards women who are the furthest from employment such as single mothers. The SMA is notably an ambitious programme and shows high rates of efficiency through integration on the labour market. However, the subsidized contracts seem to maintain women in precariousness as they are mainly used in the non-private sector.

B. Within the territories, a lack of coordination among actors acting for women’s employment and a priority on the fight against violence against women

In the first part of the analysis we have seen how programs to increase employment piloted for the overseas by national agencies or policies, such as subsidized contracts, are affecting the specific situation of women in the territories.

In this second part we will see how public authorities through their local representatives for the promotion of gender equality are tackling the topic of women’s employment.

1. *The CIDFF (Women's and Family Rights Information Centers), major actors at the national level are not active on employment in the overseas*

Founded in 1972 from a government initiative, the FNCIDFF (National Federation for CIDFF), a national association which has signed a convention of objectives and means with the State. It is an essential relay for the action of the public authorities in terms of access to rights, employment and education for women and families, the fight against sexist and sexual violence and the promotion of equality between women and men. The CIDFF have centres all over the territories to provide a clear information to women in need and accompany them in difficult times.

It came as surprising that all overseas do not have a CIDFF, despite the inequalities well known. La Réunion and Martinique do not have such centers despite the numerous local associations in place. The benefit from being a CIDFF is to gain from the support of a national federation which can provide resources and help. In 2020, at a national level, 74 CIDFF had an employment service aimed at women job seekers encountering integration difficulties. In 2021, the total amount of funding for the "employment integration support offices in the CIDFF" scheme initiated by the Ministry for Equality between Women and Men, Diversity and Equal Opportunity amounted to 1 839 450 euros and was increased by 700 000 euros, an increase of 38%¹⁰.

However, even though CIDFF centres in Guyane and Guadeloupe do exist, they do not provide information and support for employment. Indeed, when contacted the CIDFF Guyane indicated that they did not have a "professional and employment integration service" at all while the CIDFF Guadeloupe indicated that the person in charge was not reconducted and thus their centre needed to cease this activity towards women.

The only overseas CIDFF that has an active women employment and integration action is the CIDFF Mayotte, an exception since 2021. The reason why the centre covers these topics is because it used to be an association, Narihime, which already carried these activities of accompanying women to employment.

Narihime decided to move towards becoming a CIDFF to facilitate work with partners, have access to more financial resources, notably from the department and recruit a more diverse range of professionals such as sociologists, psychologists, etc.

The Head of CIDFF in Mayotte believes all the overseas do not have an employment service due to restrained resources and a priority put on the fight against violence against women. Indeed, the Virage survey conducted by INED in 2018 has shown that women in the overseas were particularly victims of domestic violence, around 20% of women in Guadeloupe and Martinique, 15% in La Réunion, but also violence against women in higher proportions in all spheres: at work and in public spaces.

The Head of the Mayotte CIDFF explained "*we need to have a holistic approach, and fight against exclusion from the very beginning, that's why we act on the family overall, we also include the children and family of the women we accompany to make sure that we do not lose*

¹⁰ [Communiqué de presse \(13 janvier 2022\), Insertion des femmes dans l'emploi](#)

the person". In 2021, the CIDFF Mayotte accompanied 54 women via trainings, helping them apprenticeships or finding a job. The women who had recourse to the CIDFF stated their will to find a job in order to *"be more autonomous, less dependent on their partners and avoid situations of violence within the household"*. The Head of the CIDFF ensured that their work was crucial as it was the only place where *"when a woman comes, we take our time, listen, identify all the obstacles she faces and then try to provide solutions"*. To her, it was crucial to have such a centre in Mayotte as *"questions around gender equality, parity, no one asks them. Of course, the law exists, it's the same applied here too but there are so many other problems that this one is not a priority at all in Mayotte"*. However, she regretted the lack of data despite the studies carried by Insee which, to her opinion, does not cover precisely enough the situation in each part of the department. She believes informality is also not depicted accurately as despite high unemployment rates, a majority of women does work and sometimes holds several jobs at the same time.

However, even by integrating this network, and being connected to other institutions such as Pôle Emploi or the local missions, the head of the CIDFF Mayotte regretted a lack of coordination between all institutions. Notably, she underlined that in the "DOMME" program carried by LADOM to send single mothers for a training in hospitality services, none of the women they had identified were selected to undertake and benefit from the training. She noted a multiplication of services and initiatives on the field but lacking sufficient funding and support from institutional partners which decreases the efficiency of the overall ecosystem. Furthermore, the training offer is not adapted and sufficient at all for the needs of the territory. Most women will undergo training in the care sector as it is the fastest access to employment. An issue which arises for most of their beneficiaries is the ability to access the trainings which we describe later.

Recommendation:

10. Encourage the creation of CIDFF in every overseas territory, driven by the FNCIDFF or the Ministry for Gender Equality, through the partnerships of several associations which would allow women to have access to all information on their rights, including economic rights and gain support for their professional integration.

2. *The DRDFE (Regional directorate for women rights and gender equality) direct most of their resources to the fight against violence against women and do not achieve sufficient coordination with local actors for employment*¹¹

The DRDFE have the aim to implement public policies on women's rights and equality between women and men in the region, in line with government guidelines. If they play a strategic role

¹¹ All DRDFE from the 5 departments were contacted, however only one, the DRDFE Guyane, replied by sending us material on their actions. However, we conducted a monitoring of the prefectural website and social media of the DRDFE which had one: in Martinique most information were publicized on their website while Mayotte and La Réunion used Facebook and even Instagram for Mayotte.

in coordinating the action on the territories, the actors we met indicated that due to lack of resources, both in persons and financial, they needed to prioritize on the activities carried and supported.

For Martinique, out of 24 news advertised on the prefectural website from 2013 to 2019, 14 showcased actions led on the fight against violence against women, 2 concerned employment, and in particular gender parity in employment and 8 tackled other topics such as 8th of March or parity in politics.

The Facebook page of the DRDFE Reunion, even though very active, mainly shared statistics and information on gender equality and women's rights but at a national level with few posts on local initiatives. Finally, the most active and diversified in the topics covered on its social media was the DRDFE from Mayotte, tackling domestic violence, challenging social norms and showcasing portraits of women entrepreneurs emphasizing on the opportunities and challenges they encountered.

Focusing on the DRDFE from Guyane, the situation in the territory in 2021 is alarming, in line with what is observed by the Insee: *“Social needs have worsened over the past 5 recent years through the permanent recomposition of the population: early exit from the school system of young girls, early motherhood, household growth single parents, inactivity of women...”* (taken from the documents sent to us by the DRDFE). These phenomena are analysed by the MFV study which latest edition will provide a better panorama of this recomposition. In a document transmitted by the DRDFE to the Ministry for Gender equality, the directorate indicates *“Considering the situation in Guyane, the issue of training, professional integration, autonomy and the education of women is a priority.”* To remedy to this situation, several measures have been engaged by the prefectural service on women entrepreneurship via a regional action plan for women entrepreneurship and in collaboration with the association Les Premières, discussed later, or through regional conventions with Pôle Emploi. However, the document reveals that these partnerships, notably with Pôle Emploi or with the directorate for economy, employment and solidarities (DREETS) remain *“to be developed, these actions rely more on personal commitments than on a common methodology”* (p.6). The document also mentions as an activity indicator the number of women followed via the employment service of the CIDFF, however, such a service does not exist in Guyane. Out of the three objectives by the DRDFE: supporting gender equality between men and women; accessing rights and professional equality and fighting against violence and prostitution, the latter receive the most budget, with 55,36% of the funds allocated. We can clearly see that the emphasis here is put on the fight against violence, which can be explained by the fact that in 2020, Guyane was the overseas region where the femicide/number ratio of inhabitants was the highest in France, with a rate of 0.72 per 100 000 inhabitants compared to a French average of 0.18 per 100,000 inhabitants. Professional equality and access to rights received 43,41% of the budget, representing 176 500 euros.

3. The lack of coordination between actors can be resolved through a Platform for Employment

This lack of coordination between actors, had been identified in Martinique too, in the “Territorial scheme for economic development, innovation and internationalization” developed by the Territorial Collectivity of Martinique (CTM) in 2017¹². If they do not tackle women directly in this scheme by outlining clear measures or identifying them as a clear target population, the stakeholders do regret that “Today the actors of Education (...) the actors of Employment (Pôle Emploi, Training organizations, local operators, LADOM), the economic actors (social enterprises and commercial enterprises) (...) operate in a non-coordinated way not only in their respective circles, but have developed few relationships between circles. This creates duplication, inefficiency, and even neutralization.” (p.23). If the observation is shared overall, it does seem urgent to find a solution.

In their scheme, the local authorities for Martinique recommend the creation of a “create a Platform for Employment, with the objective of strengthening knowledge on the respective missions, optimizing resources, transferring data, and ultimately, collective optimization of tools up to that point implemented separately. This platform will be backed by a monitoring centre covering societal evolution to provide information on changes in mores, mentalities and behaviors that could affect the types of jobs and training. The watch will also be technological, to better assess the training and employment opportunities in perspective to be considered.” (p.23-24).

A first digital fair for employment took place in 2021 in Martinique between Pôle Emploi and all partners. However, here the rate of “illectronism” or inability to properly use digital devices raises a question. Indeed, it is way higher in the overseas than in Mainland France, 26% (excluding Mayotte) and 16% respectively (Legleye and Rolland, 2019). Women are most often in this situation rather than men (17,4% against 15,5% for national levels). Thus, having recourse to such platforms could exclude further the ones already far from employment.

Recommendations:

- 11. This very ambitious project of Platform could be generalized to all overseas, and once again including a gender lens, particularly through the monitoring centre on mentalities and behaviors**
- 12. Ensure that these platforms are accessible to everyone, including those without access to or ability to use digital devices and act on “illectronism”**

The monitoring centre seems particularly relevant in such platforms for the overseas as in the interviews we carried with working women from the overseas, all mentioned “cultural factors” which would have an incidence on their career paths and choices.

The general practitioner mentioned “*in my community, culturally, women do not tend to go abroad for very long studies, especially for medicine, they would prefer becoming nurses or other paramedical activities which would allow them to stay on the territories*”.

¹² [Schéma De Développement Économique, D'innovation Et D'internationalisation \(STDEII\), 2017](#)

Similarly, the high civil servant describes women who “*do not dare, women in mainland France they dare more than women from the overseas, every time I’m shocked by what I hear, mentalities are deeply anchored*”. If much precaution should be taken on these discourses which tend to essentialize a category of women without exploring the real causes preventing them from pursuing higher careers, the creation of a social monitoring agency would bring more perspective on these common beliefs.

C. Access to entrepreneurship for women

At a ministerial level, women entrepreneurship in the overseas appears as one important way out of unemployment in a context where the private sector is less developed. Indeed, people in the overseas who cannot access salaried work due to insufficient jobs creation, are turning to non-salaried jobs. Indeed, in 2012, 11,2% of workers in mainland France were non-salaried while this figure was above in all overseas from 12,1% in Mayotte to 20,8% in Guadeloupe. As of 2021, in La Réunion 23% of enterprises were led by women from which 97% have less than 10 employees. Their sustainability rate after 5 years is of 50% compared to 61% for men. In Martinique, in 2015, at the contrary among business creators, 37% are women, i.e. four points more than the average in the overseas departments. In mainland France and Corsica, 28% of women create their own businesses.

Many measures are in place for entrepreneurship in the overseas, deployed through the Chambers for Commerce mainly and accompanied since the deployment of BpiFrance, the National investment bank, in the overseas, in 2014, via the special packages designed for the overseas such as the “Prêt de Développement outre-mer” launched in 2017 with the aim to provide a better support to small and medium enterprises but not for creation. Initiatives specifically directed to women have been started by BpiFrance in mainland France such as the “Garantie Egalite Femmes”, a funding assistance scheme specifically targeted at women entrepreneurs to create, takeover or develop businesses. This guarantee, set up by the France Active network and endowed by the Social Cohesion Fund, focuses more particularly on women entrepreneurs who are far from employment or in precarious situations. It is available in the overseas territories, but further information on its use and adoption can not be found. Additional partnerships with associations such as Force femmes to promote entrepreneurship among women over 45 years are existing, however, our research did not find a territorial approach, targeted at women declined at a territorial level for the overseas. However, considering their unique situation as far from employment, encouraging such initiatives in the overseas is crucial. In particular the one targeting women unemployed after 45 since these women do not usually go back into the labor market and become long-term unemployed. The actors and entrepreneurs we met recommended the creation of a specific program designed for women entrepreneurs in the overseas with a territorial approach that speaks to them directly. The reason to have a specific approach for overseas is that women entrepreneurs in the overseas face extra-issues as they indicate difficulties finding funds because they are women and negotiating with suppliers or partners because they come from the overseas.

Recommendation:

13. Work with the Bpi to design a specific program or decline existing programs for the women overseas which makes it easier for them to find information and have access to support

However, initiatives do exist and are backed by the State, through the DRDFE when relevant. Les Premières is part of these initiatives that are working well and now working in partnerships with public authorities to enhance female entrepreneurship. Les Premières is an accelerator mobilizing the economic potential of female entrepreneurship via an overall approach going from financial education, management, and human resources to communication, accountancy, and legal help. It is a member of the Premières network, a national network of incubators dedicated to female entrepreneurship. The particularity of such an initiative is that they target women who are the furthest from employment via their programs as they have decided to go meet women in the territories, despite the difficulties of traffic (canoe, plane) such that their presence throughout the territory is estimated at 60% in urban areas and 40% in rural and isolated municipalities. Sometimes in partnership with the regional public training operator or Pôle Emploi, the association also works hand in hand with the Territorial Collectivity of Guyana (CTG), the Amazonian Park, or the town halls of remote municipalities. They provide an overall follow-up until 5 years after the creation to make sure all needs of entrepreneurs are taken into account and help is provided along the way. Currently, 250 female entrepreneurs are being followed by this network and 320 projects have been received for the creation of around 40 small enterprises. Based on the approach initiated in Guyane, a project to create an incubator for women entrepreneurs, highlighted in 2018 during the Overseas Conference (*Assises des Outre-mer*), is now being carried out in Guadeloupe.

Recommendation:

14. Enforce the creation of similar “Premières” networks, based on the same model in all overseas including Martinique, La Réunion, and Mayotte. Make sure to exchange good practices and share knowledge, particularly on the logistics to reach the furthest from employment.

The entrepreneurs we met or whose discourses we analysed regretted a lack of coordinated approach between all actors.

In particular, an analysis of the portraits¹³ of entrepreneurs featured by the DRDFE Mayotte on their social media highlights a difficulty for women due to the lack of coordination between the department and the municipalities which did not facilitate all their installation, research for a local, etc. Moreover, the entrepreneur from La Réunion we interviewed regretted that her main interlocutor, Pôle Emploi, was not able to redirect her: *“They sent me to a network that was not at all made for me, I lost even more time, but eventually this network redirected me to an association which managed to help me. They didn’t know all the programs existing and the best suited to my situation.”*. Entrepreneurs also point to difficulties in administrative procedures that lengthen their processes and discouraged them at some points due to the stress it generated. Especially, the entrepreneur from La Réunion who is launching her enterprise in a very new

¹³ An example is featured in Annex2

sector, the one of “home optician”, regretted that “*they don’t know at all how to deal with new business models and innovation, I had to find on LinkedIn people in mainland France to help me out on legal stuff and help me understand the regulation and what I needed to do*”.

Recommendations:

- 15. Thus, we believe, having a unique portal for women entrepreneurs in the overseas would facilitate greatly their research for financing options and administrative and legal help in setting out their businesses. The Bpi or Ministry for Overseas in partnership, could manage such a portal which would inventory all existing programmes and networks, by need and would be updated on a regular basis**
- 16. Encourage networks across regions, between overseas, but also with mainland France. Joining networks such as Les Premières as recommended before would permit to do so and bring access to information to a wider number of women**
- 17. Train Pôle Emploi and other local operators agents to better accompany projects carriers, in particular on the innovation side**

To increase the access to entrepreneurship to all overseas citizens, the CESE, in a report in 2015 has evaluated the opportunity brought by microfinance in the overseas, a solution so far used mainly in developing economies. OECD defines microcredit as the “access to funding for small projects, led by marginalized people who aspire to create their own jobs, often due to a lack of other professional prospects and because they are denied access to traditional sources” (Reifner et al, 2002, p.26). The report by the CESE estimates that the economies of the overseas are well suited for this tool due to the high number of companies employing only the founder of the enterprise compared to mainland France. Besides, entrepreneurs are confronted to financing difficulties more often in the overseas. Besides, the report estimates that microfinance can allow informal enterprises, often found in the care sector, construction or cleaning services to transition to the formal one as this tool is particularly suited to people with low-qualification and low-resources and comes with a support throughout the process. Indeed, a note by the IEDOM (Issuing Institute for Overseas Departments) in 2019 highlights that “it appears more difficult for companies in the overseas to obtain financing, a bank overdraft or open a bank account compared to mainland France. Indeed, more than 32% of business creators in the overseas experienced difficulties in obtaining funding compared to only 20% in mainland France in 2014” (p.6). The entrepreneur from La Réunion we met clearly indicated “yes it was harder to get funds, no one was taking me seriously also because I was carrying a very new project which is not developed yet here. I could feel they were taking me for a young girl with no experience”. One of the main actors in the microfinance environment is the Adie, (*Association pour le droit à l’initiative économique* - Association for the right to launch their economic initiative). The project leaders funded by Adie are mostly women: 54% in the overseas compared to 41% in mainland France, reaching 79% of microcredit beneficiaries in Guadeloupe, and about 60% in Martinique, Guyana and Mayotte (IEDOM, 2019). This joins the situation of women in developing countries mainly benefiting from microcredit finance even though some critics on the framework qualified as neoliberal and patriarchal are risen (Guérin et al., 2011 ; Montalieu, 2002 ; Rahman, 1999).

Both the CESE and IEDOM recommend to further the use of microfinance as a response to precariousness even though much efforts have already been led with the creation of an Observatory for banking inclusion by the French Central Bank in 2013. The efforts made to target women with these solutions should be pursued as they are the ones living in greater levels of precariousness and poverty. Indeed, “In France, women mainly turn to microfinance when they are unemployed” (Guérin 2002). Here again, professional segregation remains an issue. A study on the solvability of women enterprises created thanks to microfinance advances “Women beneficiaries of microcredit begin their entrepreneurial projects mainly in the sector of services related to health, education, sales, but the agricultural sector is also frequently chosen. Most of the time, they choose these fields because they have worked there before or because they know that they have the ability to adapt quickly.” (Cazabat et al., 2020, p.17). The authors conclude that, similarly to developing countries, thanks to reinforced support and higher level of funding, women benefiting from microcredit are more solvable.

Recommendation:

- 18. Thus, designing specific microfinance devices targeted to women to increase the number of women entrepreneurs appears suited to the overseas context to help them integrate the labour market as non-salaried. To this end, in its report from 2015, the CESE already advised on increased efforts of communication on personal and professional microcredit towards target publics including women. Once again, noting the various actors intervening in this field: Adie, Bpi, AFD, etc. but also territorial collectivities, creating a unique portal on accessing microcredit would allow to find information more easily**

D. The case for civil servants in the overseas

The career path of agents from the civil service has always been in the debate in the overseas, considering the weight of the sector in local employment we described earlier. We have highlighted in the state of play, the important disparities in occupation and salaries of women in the civil service in the overseas.

In a report on employment in the overseas for the Ministry for the Overseas in 2013, the deputy Patrick Lebreton in his recommendations advised to:

- “Regionalize competitions for administrative B and C executives”
- “Regionalize the management of executives working in the civil service”
- “Open a general preparation institute for the civil service (IPAG) per overseas”

If these recommendations have not been followed yet, such developments are regularly put out in the debate. The High civil servant we met is a strong advocate for the “*creation of an IRA in one of the overseas*”, a Regional Institute for the Administration and training of civil servants, which would also have “*a specific angle on the overseas and addressing their specificities, and allow its students to enter the Ministry for Overseas more easily as well as encourage knowledge sharing between all departments*”.

She believes these measures are “*particularly suited for women in the overseas working in the civil service who do not undertake training requiring mobility to mainland France which is hard to organize, especially because of familial context*”.

However, she noted that the two circulars adopted by joint ministries (Labor, Overseas, Civil Service and Home Office) since 2010 for the return to the “country” of civil servants, are encouraging women and men equally to go pursue a career in the civil service with the hope to come back. The first one from the 23rd of July 2010¹⁴ relates to the promotion of the emergence of a civil service that is more representative of the overseas area it administers, notably by promoting access to agents from the overseas territories to management positions. Secondly, a circular from 9th of March 2017¹⁵ aims to accelerate the mobility of agents from the overseas in mainland France to their territory of origin, asking public employers to really take into account in the positions assignment "centers of moral and material interests of the civil servant" (CIMM). The High civil servant emphasizes “*with these two circulars, in particular the one under Sarkozy, we saw a big shift, with more and more civil servants who had left coming back*”.

This was for the territorial aspect. Now, focusing on women’s employment and professional mobility in the civil service, in 2013, an agreement on professional equality between women and men in the public sector¹⁶, has allowed to engage a new dynamic on a national level to enforce gender equality and parity in what is the first work provider in France. If this agreement, signed by the Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault has proved to be very ambitious with measures including: carrying out a proactive policy to eliminate wage inequalities between women and men, facilitating equal access for women and men to training in order to promote their career path, removing barriers to progress, etc., it did not in its text include any disposition for territorial approaches, even less for the overseas but rather giving orientations to be applied in each part and by each employer of the public sector.

It is only in 2014, that a joint ministerial committee presided by the Ministry for Women’s rights and gender equality and the Ministry for the Overseas territories specifically addressed how to ensure a good balance in the public sector in these territories¹⁷. It is a shift from what was done previously, as the Ministry for Overseas directed its actions for gender equality mainly on the fight against violence against women.

In this plan, ambitious measures are developed to ensure parity in the public administration for the overseas, however these do not seem entirely fit to the issues faced in the territories. No

¹⁴ [Circulaire du 23 juillet 2010 relative à la mise en œuvre des mesures transversales retenues par le Conseil interministériel de l’outre-mer pour favoriser l’émergence d’une fonction publique plus représentative du bassin de vie qu’elle administre](#)

¹⁵ [Circulaire du 1er mars 2017](#) relative au critère du centre des intérêts matériels et moraux dans une des collectivités régies par les articles 73 et 74 de la Constitution ainsi qu’en Nouvelle-Calédonie en tant que priorité d’affectation prévue par l’article 60 de la loi n°84-16 du 11 janvier 1984 portant dispositions statutaires relatives à la fonction publique de l’Etat

¹⁶ [Protocole d’accord relatif à l’égalité professionnelle entre les femmes et les hommes dans la fonction publique - 02/08/2013](#)

¹⁷ [Comité Interministériel des Droits des Femmes et de l’Egalité entre les Femmes et les Hommes, \(2014\) Feuille de route 2015 du Ministère des Outre-mer](#)

evaluation on the effective implementation of these measures and the eventual impact they had has been led so far.

In a first measure, both ministries aim to “Ensure respect for parity in positions of responsibility and functional jobs in the prefectural corps overseas” (p.6). In 2014, there were 12 women (2 prefects and 10 sub-prefects) out of 56 positions, a proportion of 21.4% compared to 17% in 2013 and 9.7% in 2012. Today, out of 44 positions, no women are prefects and a bit less than 30% of sub-prefects positions are occupied by women.

However, one reality is that the nominations even though encourage the promotion of women at such levels, an aspect raised by the High civil servant we encountered was the fact that most of the prefects and sub-prefects at those positions were not originated from the overseas. If nominations and the concept of “regional preference” are a very sensitive topic in the overseas, it is seen as an obstacle to pursue high careers and undertake competitive exams to access those positions such as ENA (*Ecole Nationale d’Administration*, National School of Administration). Indeed, as seen in our table below, very few of the high civil servants at the prefectural level do come from the overseas.

Number of prefects and subprefects by gender and birth location in the 5 overseas territories

Territories	Men	Women	Coming from the overseas (when information available)
Guadeloupe	7	0	NA
Guyane	8	2	Available for 1 woman
La Réunion	7	3	2 men
Martinique	5	5	Available for 2 women
Mayotte	3	3	NA
Total	31	13	2 men – 3 women

Source: Prefectural services websites of the 5 overseas territories

The High civil servant we interrogated for the purpose of this study is among the only ones which today occupies such a position in an overseas territory while coming from the same region. She explained “*I had to move to mainland France to work, I started at the very bottom but eventually, pushed by people and opportunities which came into my way I went up and had the chance to be nominated back on my territory. This was not my goal at all from the beginning. We’re very few exceptions, this is not the rule, however I’m happy to be back and serving [my region of origin]*”.

To be noted, that as explained by Oraison (2015), regional preference is unconstitutional and such debates would happen to be detrimental to national unity as it would create inequalities between citizens in access to employment and could be used for other political purposes by groups all over the country. If we do not wish to reopen this debate here, the birth location and

possibility to work back on one's territory is solely explored as a trail to explain the choice in career path.

The second measure for gender equality in the public service for overseas is to “Ensure parity in functional jobs within the central administration and overseas” (p.7) with the objective to “build a pool of agents for access to category A+, monitoring will be undertaken to follow the appointment of category A agents to positions of responsibility and to functional jobs”. Indeed, a study led by INSEE Antilles-Guyane in 2022 in the three territories highlights that “Several barriers are at the origin of this unequal distribution [between men and women]: for example, career breaks linked in particular to maternity; access to vocational training [this training is often far from the workplace, which complicates the organization of family life]. They would prevent female employees from obtaining the same hierarchical careers as their male counterparts, called “glass ceiling”” (Salibekyan, 2022a).

If such a measure is necessary and should be saluted, the High civil servant declares “*The issue, particularly in the territorial public service, is to get the agents who are stuck in category B and C and move them up, especially women. They were there 30 years ago, they're still here 30 years later, same place, same job, same salary, there is no strategy to make them move*”. In Martinique, 33% of women hold a category B position and 39% category C. It is the opposite for men, 44% have a category B position and 27% category C. Similar rates are observed in Guyane (Salibekyan, 2022b). Thus, targeting agents already in category A is a short-term solution, however, the strategy should be built in advance to ensure a progression over all levels.

Recommendation:

- 19. One way to remedy to this situation to promote public agents, and in particular women who do not access executive positions in the civil service, and would be to agree, when recruiting civil servants and evaluating current ones, on a career path and a plan for professional mobility at a medium-term, informing them of all training and internal exams available to them to move up the ladder, focusing particularly on agents that have been there for a long time.**

E. Dead angles in addressing women's employment in the overseas

1. Discriminations

The legal advisor we met, confided that “*discriminations in employment are high even in our territories. Compared to someone from mainland France you always fear they won't choose you, it's common to think they're better and often, since the heads and directors are themselves from mainland France, they tend to prefer hiring people from there, especially at executive positions*”. Such beliefs have been growing over the territories for years, and activists are particularly vocal on social media such as Facebook and Instagram on this topic (one example is the Instagram page *Réyoné Déraciné* for La Réunion), revealing that executive positions were not advertised on local job markets but directly on national ones.

In 2021, for the first time, a study exploited a discrimination test carried out in the French overseas departments using the testing method (Anne et al, 2021). The central idea was to

locally measure the extent of discrimination in access to employment for people of overseas origin, which had never been done before. Carried on male restaurant waiters, the study finds out that candidates of overseas origin are discriminated against in relation to the candidate of metropolitan origin, with candidates from the overseas having 30% less chance to be called back for a job interview. Surprisingly, the magnitude of discrimination is the same both in Paris and in all of the overseas. Such discriminations are prohibited by the law. Considering these results an increase in controls of such practices and sanctions should be taken. The study suggests implementing public policies such as positive discrimination of an economic nature with an incentive to hire overseas professionals. It also underlines the role of education with the development of trainings in the overseas departments.

This study was carried out on men; however, it would be interesting to see if similar results are applicable to women. Similarly conducting the same study for executive positions would also be beneficial for the state of research. In a study on the additionality of discrimination between origin and sex (Petit et al, 2013), the authors found out that “Whatever their origin, women have a lower probability of accessing a job interview. Whatever their gender, French people of foreign origin have a lower probability of accessing a job interview. This is true for all profiles with one exception, Asian women” (p.140). This last study did not include any person from an overseas background. Even though this study concludes that “accumulation of several discrimination factors does not necessarily lead to a strict addition of penalties” (p.140), investigating it in this very specific context, with a predominance of single mothers would allow to shed a light on the various obstacles faced, or not, by women.

Furthermore, in a report for the Prime Minister on the “Discriminations in access to public employment” in 2016, Yannick L’Horty shows that “Geographical origin has a very marked negative effect on the chances of success in the admission tests for civil service exams. Not being born in mainland France significantly reduces the chances of success in writing in 7 out of 8 exams” (p.68). This covered applicants from abroad and overseas.

To better understand the extent of these discriminations, the Head of study from Insee Reunion-Mayotte we met acknowledged that there *“is a strong demand for statistics which differentiates by place of birth. However, for us, as a national institution with limited capacity to interpret the data it would be very dangerous to just release data without contextualizing and bringing explanations. Such data could be wrongly interpreted and increase community tensions which an institution like ours want to avoid”*.

Recommendations:

- 20. Increase capacity for interpretation using statistics on discrimination in employment in the overseas, adopting a gender-lens, by partnering with research centres**
- 21. Control and sanctions establishments and enterprises which practice such discriminations**

2. Measures to encourage professional trainings for women are not adapted to reach the populations the most in need

If trainings are developing throughout the territories, and the offer has increased, it is not targeted at the most vulnerable populations which are also the ones furthest from employment. The head of CIDFF Mayotte highlighted that the training offer available was clearly not sufficient in the territory. Nevertheless, for her, it is not the biggest issue:

“the problem is that, ok, efforts are made to try and come closer to women to offer information. However, once it is done and we find a training for them, it is almost impossible for them to attend as they need to move to other part of the territory. You need to keep in mind that we don’t have a reliable system of public transportation, women need to find taxis, for a journey of around 45 minutes-1 hour, which are often already full in the morning, and even if they find one in the morning, how can they ensure they will find one in time to be back to pick their children from school? When all they have is the RSA, a bit less than 600 euros and they need to choose where to allocate the money, they will not choose to put it in a taxi to go to the training centres. Professionals who are providing these trainings can be more mobile than these women, and this should be accounted for.”

Furthermore, unemployed women are not able to find daycare solutions for their children to actively look out for a job, as the very limited options are already provided to women in working positions. Indeed, coverage rate for daycare solutions at the national level are measured at 56.6% but only 2,5% in Mayotte, 9.9% in Guyane, 26.9% in La Réunion, and around 42% in the Antilles (CNAF, 2018). This situation is due to a lack of infrastructure well acknowledged by the family allowance fund (Caisse d’allocation familiales, Caf), which has been working towards increasing the capacities.

Furthermore, a study by Insee Reunion (Grangé and Merceron, 2020) highlights that “young people living in circuses, in the isolated territories of the mountains and in the rural communes of the South-East combine remoteness from services and social difficulties” (p.1) despite efforts undertaken by actors such as the Caf with their mobile offices or the numerous departmental offices throughout the territory and hundreds of associative structures. Indeed, the study points that “Access to equipment related to training is more complex to understand, because the choice of a sector is an essential criteria in a school or vocational training course.” (p.2).

Recommendation:

- 22. Offer solutions from the beginning in the design of trainings which accounts for the difficulties encountered by women, mainly childcare issues to avoid them from dropping out once started. For example, the possibility to have they children cared for at the training centres could be implemented**

3. The particular situation of family caregivers

Finally, the question of aging in the overseas is at stake when talking about the overseas population. Breton et al (2009) show that Martinique, Guadeloupe and La Réunion are among

the French departments most affected by demographic aging due to longer life expectancy, fewer births and emigration of young workers, posing a huge challenge on local public policies and organization of the society, in particular caring for aging dependent people. Indeed, as shown by Insee in the previous section, many women drop out of the labour market, in order to take care of a dependent relative. An assistant researcher at INED indicated that the new MFV survey carried out in 2019-2021 will allow to assess *“if we see a “pivotal generation” of women around 40-45 years who are dropping their jobs to take care of the elderlies. It is expected that these women will not go back to employment. However, we see a shift in the intergeneration solidarity we were seeing so far, so this remains as a hypothesis, data will tell us what is the reality seen on the field”*. Indeed, the overseas territories are strongly marked by family solidarity, due to different familial organizations described by INED in their MFV study but also a lack of infrastructure, with three times less infrastructure to welcome dependent people. Indeed, the overseas department (without Mayotte) can welcome 45,4 people over 75 years old per thousand, contrary to 122,6 per thousand in mainland France. The cultural evolution witnessed in recent years due in particular to the large number of young people who have left to study or work in France raises the alert on the situation of women left in the territories to provide caregiving to the elderlies.

At the national level, 60% of the caregivers are women, they are less often employed than male caregivers and devote more hours into caregiving (Briard, 2017). This study underlined that *“no study retraces the professional career of caregivers, which would make it possible to assess the professional consequences of the help in order to calibrate support measures more accurately”* (p.1). Mechanisms for a better recognition of the activities of family caregivers with dependent people have been deployed on a national level, such as the daily caregiver allowance which is paid to people who stop working occasionally or reduce their activity to take care of a dependent relative. Caregivers can also claim care leave to care for a disabled person or a person with a loss of autonomy. However, this leave is available under conditions and for a limited period, pushing workers, and mainly women to drop their jobs overall. The head of the CIDFF explains *“most of the women they do not even know that they could have access to such an allowance! There is no information shared on these situations; and finally, after years of taking care, when they reach 50-55 it is too late for them and they can’t be back on the labour market”*. Indeed, as described in the report on *“Promoting access to employment to women in the rural territories”* (CGET, 2019), in the rest of France, these women often refer to the CIDFF when looking for employment opportunities. As described, the lack of CIDFF competent on employment in the overseas do not allow women to have access to reliable information on their rights and opportunities.

Recommendation:

- 23. Provide all information on trainings and rights to people acting as caregivers when they are identified, in particular women, considering they stop working for caregiving in higher proportion, to help them reintegrate the job market**

Conclusion

To summarize we provide a table with the main characteristics of the programmes we described in our research in Annex3.

If the will to enhance women's employment and address the issues faced by women on the labour market is noticeable, particularly driven by national engagement towards gender equality, the situation on the field remains mixed. Employment rates for women in the overseas have increased, however their activity rate does not necessarily follow and remain far from the national figures. Nevertheless, a real intention to go towards population considered the furthest from employment, namely single mothers, needs to be noted.

We can count a number of initiatives at the local level, however their sustainability and efficiency can be questioned, notably due to the lack of coordination between all actors on the field, fragmented policies over territories without a clear strategy for employment with a gender lens.

Furthermore, both at national and local levels, priorities are put on issues which are considered urgent for the overseas and mobilizing most capacities and resources: (i) addressing youth unemployment; (ii) the fight against violence against women.

Finally, a lack of evaluation of the programmes in place does not allow to assess if they correctly tackle both the territorial aspect and gender dimension of employment policies. The programmes need to be evaluated as they tend to reproduce inequalities on the labour market, namely professional segregation, underemployment and downgrading. Aspects concerning the unemployment of women over 45 years old and discouraged unemployment are overlooked and need to be addressed in light with the demographic evolution happening in these territories. An increased collaboration between territories and knowledge-sharing on the policies which have worked should be enhanced considering the similarities on some issues such as: integration of single mothers, reaching the furthest geographically, providing help in childcare during the women training period, etc.

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Annex

Annex 1. Definition of the main indicators as provided by Insee

Activity rate

The activity rate is the ratio of the number of active people (employed and unemployed) to the total corresponding population.

Employment rate

The employment rate of a class of individuals is calculated as the number of employed individuals in the class divided by the total number of individuals in the class. It can be calculated on the whole population of a country, but is most often limited to the working age population (usually defined, in international comparison, as persons aged 15-64), or to a sub-category of the working age population (e.g. women aged 25-29).

Unemployment rate

The unemployment rate is the percentage of unemployed in the labour force (employed + unemployed).

According to the international definition adopted in 1982 by the International Labour Office (ILO), an unemployed person is a person of working age (15 years or older) who simultaneously meets three conditions

- being unemployed, i.e. not having worked for at least one hour during a reference week
- be available to take up a job within 15 days;
- having actively sought work in the previous month or having found a job starting in less than three months

Underemployment

Underemployment includes employed persons as defined by the ILO who fulfil one of the following conditions:

- they work part-time, wish to work more and are available to do so, whether or not they are actively seeking work
- they work part-time (and are in a situation other than that described above) or full-time, but have worked less than usual during a reference week due to short-time working (technical unemployment) or bad weather

Annex 2. Example of portrait of women entrepreneurs featured by the DRDFE on their social media in Mayotte

CES **FEMMES** CHEFFES **D'ENTREPRISES**



BOUSTOINI
NAFISSA

FONCTION :
GÉRANTE

ENTREPRISE :
RESTAURANT LA MARINE

Contact infos :

| fleur.de.mayotte@hotmail.fr
| **Facebook :** Fleur A.S
| **Mobile :** *non renseigné*

Parcours et Formations

J'ai commencé par un BEP secrétariat-comptabilité à la Réunion. Puis, un BAC pro secrétariat comptabilité en métropole. À l'obtention de mon BAC pro, je suis revenue à Mayotte pour faire un BTS PME-PMI au lycée de Mamoudzou.

Après mon BTS, j'ai commencé à travailler chez UNSAF à Mamoudzou en tant que formatrice d'adultes en informatique pendant 2 ans. Puis, j'ai décidé de me mettre à mon compte en ouvrant le magasin « Maman Joe » entre 2007-2016. Entre temps, j'ai lancé le restaurant la Marine le 06 juin 2011. Et depuis, je suis la gérante.

Avec l'insécurité sur le territoire, on est obligé de s'adapter. Pour cela, le restaurant est en partenariat avec le gîte 'le Cocologe » qui se trouve à Mtsamboro en proposant de la restauration.

Services proposés et statut

À la Marine, on propose différentes prestations : de la restauration traditionnelle en passant par la gastronomie régionale et européenne. Depuis peu, on fait des locations des bungalows, des sorties découvertes notamment la marche d'Acoua, des sorties bivouacs, des réceptions mariages, la location des kayaks et la mise à disposition des emplacements pour des tentes.

Démarches pour le lancement (Accompagnement, structures ou dispositifs sollicités)

Pour le lancement du magasin « Maman Joe », j'ai bénéficié de l'accompagnement de la boutique de gestion et d'une subvention du conseil général à l'époque pour lancer mon projet. Avec le restaurant la Marine, c'est plutôt l'Adie qui m'a accompagnée notamment sur des prêts pour investir sur les outils de travail et la modernisation du site.

Difficultés rencontrées

Manque d'accompagnement de la municipalité. Mais également, l'aménagement tant au niveau de la route qui mène sur le site (à côté du terrain de foot) et la propreté vue que les caniveaux ne sont pas entretenus par la mairie. Il est également très difficile de faire les démarches administratives à Mayotte car trop de lenteur.

Annex 3. Table summarizing the main employment policy measures deployed in the overseas

Program	LADOM Passport for the Mobility for Vocational Training (PMFP)	LADOM DOMME
Place of implementation	All overseas	Réunion - Mayotte
Description	French public body responsible for supporting the migration of French overseas residents seeking a qualification or professional integration elsewhere (mostly in mainland France).	5 single mothers from La Réunion and 7 from Mayotte are taking part in this qualifying training in hospitality of 11 months made for low-qualified workers, with their 14 children
Objectives	49,9% of beneficiaries of programs by LADOM were women but with disparities: 44,09% in Martinique / 62,14% in Mayotte 65% of Professional integration rate of female beneficiaries by 2023	Integration in the hospitality sector in Mainland France or back on the respective islands as wanted by the beneficiaries
Gender lens	Not applied throughout the agency	Yes
Comments	The satisfying “ Professional integration rate of female beneficiaries” is mainly driven by the high percentage of female public enrolled in the health sector	Experimentation to be reconducted if successful (no specification on eventual expansion to other territories)

<p style="text-align: center;">LADOM Cadres d' Avenir Mayotte</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SMA</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Mayotte</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">All overseas except Mayotte where it will be deployed by 2025</p>
<p>Promote the training of local executives to support the development of Mayotte. Students and professionals with high potential are selected to carry out university training in France or La Réunion in a sector deemed to be a priority for Mayotte, for a maximum period of 5 years and with a commitment to return to practice in Mayotte to benefit the island of their learned skills</p>	<p>SMA is a military system for socio-professional integration for the benefit of young people aged 18 to 25. Its priority mission is to develop and strengthen the employability of approximately 6 000 young volunteers per year by enabling them to acquire professional skills and social skills while offering them full socio-educational support.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">24 Mahoran took part</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Target was 30% of female beneficiaries by 2017, reached in 2020 Insertion rate of female volunteers of the SMA at 79,1% since 2019</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">No gender lens</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Yes the feminization of its recruitment + SMA2025+ aims to go further to by targeting directly young single-mothers</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Risk of professional segregation</p>

CIDFF	DRDFE	Platform for Employment
<p>Only active in Mayotte on employment</p> <p>Relay for the action of the public authorities in terms of access to rights, employment and education for women and families</p>	<p>All overseas</p> <p>Implement public policies on women's rights and equality between women and men in the region, in line with government guidelines</p>	<p>Martinique</p> <p>Create a Platform for Employment + monitoring centre covering societal evolution to provide information on changes in mores, mentalities and behaviors</p>
<p>In Mayotte: move from a mission from employment to a BAIE (<i>Bureau d'Accompagnement Individualisé vers l'Emploi</i>, Service for personal support toward employment) to receive even more financial support from the State</p>	<p>Increase coordination with other actors for employment such as Pôle Emploi</p>	<p>Enhance coordination between all actors on employment which are working separately</p>
<p>Main focus in the other overseas (Guyane and Guadeloupe) is the fight against violence against women which could explain the lack of resources to tackle employment issues</p>	<p>In Guyane in 2021, Professional equality and access to rights received 43,41% of the budget, representing 176 500 euros</p>	<p>No</p> <p>First deployed virtually by Pôle Emploi in 2021, pay attention to high rates of illectronism in the overseas</p>

Programmes by Bpifrance	Les Premières
<p>National and overseas</p> <p>Prêt de Développement outre-mer” launched in 2017 with the aim to provide a better support to small and medium enterprises but not for creation</p> <p>“ Garantie Egalite Femmes” -> no territorial declination partnerships with associations such as Force femmes to promote entrepreneurship among women over 45 years -> no territorial declination</p>	<p>Guyane firstly and then extended to Guadeloupe</p> <p>Accelerator of female entrepreneurship via an overall approach going from financial education, management, and human resources to communication, accountancy, and legal help</p> <p>320 projects have been received for the creation of around 40 small enterprises in Guyane</p>
<p>Prêt de Développement outre-mer” no gender lens</p>	<p>For Guyane: Reach the furthest from employment: presence throughout the territory is estimated at 60% in urban areas and 40% in rural and isolated municipalities</p> <p>Partnerships with local actors</p>
	<p>Supported by the DRDFE Guyane</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Access to microfinance</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Circulars in 2010 and 2017 to facilitate the return of civil servants from the overseas in their territories</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Adie present in the overseas and at national levels</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">All overseas</p>
<p>Access to funding for small projects, led by marginalized people who aspire to create their own jobs, often due to a lack of other professional prospects and because they are denied access to traditional sources</p>	<p>Promoting access to agents from the overseas territories to management positions</p> <p>Accelerate the mobility of agents from the overseas in mainland France to their territory of origin, asking public employers to really consider in the positions assignment "centers of moral and material interests of the civil servant" (CIMM)</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Promotion of the emergence of a civil service that is more representative of the overseas area it administers</p>
<p>Project leaders benefiting from microfinance are mainly women contrary to what is observed in France where men are mainly concerned (54% in the overseas vs 41% of women in Mainland France)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">No</p>

Measures for gender equality within the civil service in the overseas	
All overseas	<p>Ensure respect for parity in positions of responsibility and functional jobs in the prefectural corps overseas</p> <p>Ensure parity in functional jobs within the central administration and overseas</p>
Yes	<p>Build a pool of agents for access to category A+, monitoring will be undertaken to follow the appointment of category A agents to positions of responsibility and to functional jobs</p>
<p>Do not tackle agents in lower categories B and C for whom professional mobility is more difficult</p>	

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Female labour market in French overseas: at the crossroad of social, territorial and gendered disparities

Lamia Mounavaraly

Abstract

Addressing the high rate of unemployment in the overseas territories has been a preoccupation for policymakers since the 1970s. Indeed, a number of programs designed to tackle the difficulties faced by these regions, namely low development of the private sector, narrow labour market, lack of training, etc., have been put in place throughout the years through mobility or State aid such as subsidized contracts to enhance employment. However, the socio-economic situation of the population has not always been accounted for, in particular the one of women which are often found far from employment or in underemployment. Besides, issues such as downgrading and professional segregation also identified as challenges at the national level, are exacerbated within these territories. In this research we aim at analyzing the employment policies to promote women's integration on the labour market in the overseas. We find that national policies directed to the overseas are starting to implement a gender lens and go towards the furthest from employment such as single-mothers. However, on the field, the priority is given to youth unemployment at large and the fight against violence against women, mobilizing most resources. Finally, a lack of coordination between all actors is slowing down the adoption of efficient programmes designed for women and addressing issues such as discouraged unemployment or caring for dependent relatives. We provide recommendations based on the policies analysed for a better consideration of both territorial and gender perspectives when addressing overseas female labour market.

Key words

Overseas territories; female labour market; employment policies