

Application Form submitted by the initiative to participate in the Transformative Cities People's Choice Award

GENERAL INFORMATION	
<b>Location:</b>	Port Louis, Mauritius
<b>Title of the Transformative Initiative:</b>	Power Shift Campaign
<b>Name of organization:</b>	People's Cooperative Renewable Energy Society Ltd
<b>Type of organization:</b>	Cooperative Society.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.klrmoris.org">www.klrmoris.org</a>
<b>Category and Edition:</b>	ENERGY. Transformative Cities Award 1st edition (2018).
STORYTELLING	
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>The Global Power Shift Campaign is an initiative aimed at tackling the privately owned, non-renewable energy infrastructure in Mauritius, while at the same time providing labour for unemployed farmers and stimulating local food production.</p>	
<b>Context and problem definition</b>	
<p>In Mauritius, most of the energy consumption (85%) and most of the food consumption (85%) are imported goods. 60% of all locally produced energy comes from private companies, which mainly produce non-renewable energy mainly Coal and are in the hands of the sugar oligarchy. The Remaining 40% is produced by the Central Electricity Board (CEB) a State Owned entity.</p> <p>Many farmers are dependent on sugar planting. However, the sugar production is in hands of the oligarchy and in recent years, planters have been paid less and less for their crops, causing them to leave their lands.</p>	

In January 2013. In total opacity, the Mauritian government gave new licenses to a New privately owned Malaysian Multinational called CT Power, to open up a new coal Power plant on the island. When popular movements and social organisations heard of this, they decided it was time to take action.

### **Design and Initiation**

The initiative started with a massive, 21 days hunger strike in the public central garden of Port Louis, organised by the youth. Supported by the trade unions, social movements, the progressive political party Resistance & Alternatives and the island's planters, the strike soon turned into a big movement for fair and renewable energy and against the oligarchy's grip on the energy production. A support committee was established, with representatives of the trade unions, the political party and the various social movements participating in the protest. Together, we came up with 3 demands for the governments:

1. The government had to stop all negotiations with CT Power
2. A National Energy Audit Commission needed to be set up, with representatives from both the state, Academia's, the Private Sector and the members of the social coalition. This commission needed to review all of the country's energy policies.
3. All the secret agreements between the state and existing private power plants had to be released.

The government accepted all our demands. They stopped the negotiations with CT Power and released all private agreements. They also established the National Energy Audit Commission, in which members of our movement took place. This marked the start of the Global Power Shift Campaign

### **Implementation**

The newly established commission by the state published a report, in which all our arguments renewable energies were promoted and celebrated. The report offered two paths for the future: The first one was to stay on the same, non-renewable, course and the second and preferred one was a turn towards renewable energies, especially through solar power.

After the hunger strike, we launched the Renewable Energy Collective (KLR) and, together with the Centre for Alternative Research and Studies (CARES) we started the campaign For

a Power Shift, which led to the establishment of the People's Cooperative Renewable Energy Coalition. We realized we couldn't only oppose the private energy suppliers, but also had to provide a solution ourselves.

We started working with planters and SME's to see how the shift to renewables could best be made. Together with a renowned German renewable energy expert, Dieter Seifreid, we designed a form of energy production with which we would be able to gain the support of all local farmers. We realized that if we wanted to produce energy in a different way, we had to stop thinking about it as a commodity. Instead, we needed to adopt the cooperative model. This is how we established Cooperative Renewable Energy Society Ltd, comprising all the groups in our coalition and open to anybody who wanted to be stakeholder.

To become a stakeholder each person needs to buy 100 shares. In the decision making process, each person would have one vote, regardless of the amount of shares he or she owns. This way, no one can take control of the cooperative based on his or her investment and everybody is equal.

Our plan was to tackle the country's two main problems with one solution: To place solar panels on the lands of the (now unemployed) sugar planters, in order to produce renewable energy. With this energy, the idea is to create greenhouses where food can be produced. Not only can local and renewable energy production in Mauritius be improved, but also local food production.

With this model, we have ensured the participation of many small planters, who are willing to offer their abandoned land. In return, they become stakeholder of the cooperative and are able to grow crops in the greenhouses.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to start producing energy due to the government's unwillingness to give us a permit. Lobbying by the Multinationals and oligarchs, who are afraid to lose money when we begin producing, has led to impossible financial and experiential demands in tender processes, excluding us from participation.

Nonetheless, we will now start a pilot, without a government permit. With the pilot, we want to make visible what we want to achieve. By already producing green energy for food production on a small scale, we will show the government and others how our system works and how valuable it can be. This way we can regain the momentum of 2013 and rebuild the mass movement from there.

## **Results achieved and Evaluation**

Although we have not yet been able to start producing renewable energy due to the government's reluctance to give us a license, we have already achieved a number of significant results throughout the campaign.

First of all, we have forced the government stopped the new Coal Power plant. At the same time, we have ensured the government released all secret documents regarding their negotiations with private sector energy companies.

Second, due to our campaign, the government has set much higher renewable energy goals. We forced the government to release new tenders, in order for our cooperative to be able to join. Unfortunately, they tailor made tenders for Multinational only, we did not yet succeed in getting the license.

Third, we have already made agreements with planters, whose lands we may use for solar power production, as soon as we get the license. We have executed viability studies in order to test our model and we have the support of the entire local community. All is set to start producing both energy and food in a sustainable manner.

## **Political Strategies**

During the start of the campaign, the main strategy employed was mass mobilization around the hunger strike. This mobilization gained a lot of media coverage, leading to a dialogue with the government. Alliances were built with all the trade unions and youth- and social movements from that moment onwards.

Within the power shift campaign, the following groups are united: Ecologists, youth, students, researchers, environmental NGO's, the Federation of Public Sector & Other Unons (FPSOU), the General Workers Federation (GWF), the Centre for Alternative Research and Studies (CARES), the NGO EcoSud, the Institute for Environmental and Legal Studies (IELS), the Kolektif Lenerzi Renuvlab (KLR), the political party Resistance and Alternatives, the Small Planters Association, the Rodrigues Government Employees Association and societal cooperatives.

### **Related legislations**

The government has agreed to set more ambitious renewable energy goals than before. However, they remain in favor of the multinational corporations rather than our bottom-up initiatives when it comes to the implementation of renewable energy measures.

### **Lessons learned**

The real problem is politics. People can come together and start different activities to change their situations, but we have learned that we need to tackle the question of power relations in society.

The Power Shift campaign shows us that we need to challenge the political power to make real change. Political and economic elites have a neo-liberal agenda and work for the status quo. They see all things as commodities: Food, water, electricity, the ocean and even human life have become objects in this vision. We have learned to challenge this vision by showing how things can be done in a different way.