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NATIONAL REPORT: SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

(Item 3 b) on the agenda)

**REPORT OF
ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
TO THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON WOMEN.**

I. GENERAL ASPECTS

A summary reflecting the status of women in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Population Profile

The 2001 Population and Housing Census reports the population of St. Vincent and the Grenadines at 106,253 representing a 0.2% decline during the intercensal period. The percentage of female is 50.5% while the percentage of male is 49.5% reflecting a 1% difference. These figures reflect a reversal in trend over the previous census when there were slightly more males than females.

Table: 1 Distribution of Population by Age and Sex, 2001

Age Group (Yrs)	Females	Percentage	Male	Percentage	Total	%
Under 15	16,058	30.5	16, 517	30.8	32,575	30.7
15-29	14,522	27.6	15,001	28	29,523	27.8
30-44	10,777	20.5	11,659	21.7	22,436	21.1
45-64	6,923	13.2	7,056	13.2	13,979	13.2
65+	4,347	8.3	3,393	6.3	7,740	7.3
	62,627		53,626		106,253	

Source; Housing and Population Census Report 2001.

The figures in Table 1 illustrate a fairly equal distribution of males and females in all age groups.

During the period under review, the labour participation rate for 2001 was 59.4 %, lower than the 62.3% recorded in the 1991 Census. According to the census report, the male participation rate declined by 6.7% while the female's participation increased marginally by 0.2 %. However, whilst there was an overall increase of 3.2 % in the number of persons employed, there was a greater increase in the number of females (13.8%) compared to males (-2.4%) who gained employment in the same period"(SVG CEDAW Report, Ellis- Browne, 2004) .

The 2001 Census also showed that:

- ❖ There were 1104 live male births and 1005 live female births.
- ❖ There were 426 male deaths compared to 339 female deaths.
- ❖ The labour force participation rate declined by 3% between the period 1990 and 2001.
- ❖ The data revealed that females continued to be less economically active than males.

II. JURIDICAL, POLITICAL, AND SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION

Juridical: The Government has taken some policy, legislative, or administrative measures to protect the rights of women and girls. One of its major initiatives is the institution of the Family Court in 1995. Prior to 1995, women had no place of complaints for family maintenance, except to the Social Welfare Department within the then Ministry of Housing. This Division had very little authority of enforcement. With the institution of the Family Court women, were provided with an avenue of recourse. Maintenance Orders for the support of children can now be enforced. Additionally, legal measures were established for the protection of women and children. Protection Orders and Occupation Orders (for the offender to leave the home) can now be issued and enforced through the Family Court.

Mediation and counselling are optional measures provided for directly or indirectly by the Family Court. These are instituted as measures to deal with family conflict prior to the processing of applications.

The Equal Pay Act NO.3 of 1994: This Act addresses equal remuneration for all workers, including agricultural and industrial workers. This Act, allows for maternity leave to be granted to women. The passing of the Equal Pay Act did not necessarily result in identical wages for men and women working in agriculture, but it did much to change the attitude toward the work of women. It should be noted that failure to pay women equal wages can result in the employer having to pay a fine if convicted. Recently, several other pieces of legislation relating to employment and wages were passed.

Several other pieces of legislations related to employment and wages were passed/revised during the period. The Wages Regulations Orders Nos. 12-18 of 2003 revised expanded and updated minimum payment for particular groups of workers, some of which include areas of work where women dominate. These include: security guards, tourism and domestic workers.

The Domestic Workers Order No 12 of 1989 was revoked by the wages Regulation (Domestic Workers) Orders, 2003. The 2003 Order now regulates the wages for domestic workers.

Political:

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a parliamentary democracy which is a relic of the Westminster model. The country gained its Independence from the United Kingdom in 1979 and celebrated its 27th Anniversary of independence on October 27th this year. The country is governed by a Prime Minister and other ministers of government appointed by the Governor General after general elections.

General elections were held in 2001 and 2005 with the same political party forming government on both occasions. The newly elected government in 2001 renamed the Women's Affairs Division the Gender Affairs Division and transferred it from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Women's Affairs and established it within the of Ministry of Social Development, Cooperatives, Family, Gender and Ecclesiastical Affairs. After the 2005 election the Ministry was again renamed the Ministry of National Mobilisation, Social Development, Non-Governmental Organisations Relations, Local Government, Gender Affairs, the Elderly and persons with Disabilities.

The 2001 elections saw an unprecedented six women contesting general elections in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Two of them won their seats and were appointed as minister. In the 2005 period only three women contested, two of whom won their seats.

Deliberate efforts were made to increase the number of women in Parliament. In 2001 there were five women. Two were duly elected, two were appointed senators and one appointed as Attorney General. This figure decreased by one in 2005. There are now four women in Parliament.

Socio Economic Factors:

St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a State with an area of only 150 square miles and a population of just over 106,000, people (Population and Housing Census, 2001) can be classified as a small, open and extremely vulnerable economy. Its economy is sustained by income earned by agriculture, tourism and other combined services. Its smallness along with its dependence on banana exportation as its main income earner has made it open to economic shocks as a result of recent developments in the World Trade Organization; and Trade Liberalization has significantly reduced income from the banana industry.

Since the period of last reporting, the State experienced serious economic challenges. Of noteworthiness is the continued decline in the banana industry resulting from the impact of developments in the World Trade Organizations and Liberalization of the banana trade. The continued decline in the banana industry created a grave economic challenge for our State and has had adverse effects on the social situation in the country.

In addition, the country experienced on many occasions bad weather, with a number of hurricanes, which left many of the agricultural crops, destroyed. The uncertainty of the market and adverse weather conditions caused a very significant decline in export earnings from bananas. In spite of this decline, banana is still the most important productive sector. Its contribution to employment and assistance to poverty reduction in SVG cannot be overstated.

Women have significantly affected by this fall out. Those who were employed directly by the banana industry can be regarded as being most affected. Nevertheless, the reduction in the revenue to the State as a result of the falling sales of its chief income earner (banana) has also had indirect impact on Vincentians, many of whom are women.

The failing fortunes of bananas and the woeful economic climate is perhaps one of the factors that influenced the migration of females during the period under review. As indicated, the 2001 Census figures show a net decline in the population, and the disaggregated data shows that this decline mainly occurred in the under 29 age range.

Overall, the 2001 Census revealed that the unemployment rate for all age groups increased between 1991 and 2001, with a higher unemployment rate among males. The rate of unemployment for males increased to 22.7% percent from 18.4% in 1991, whilst for females the rate declined from 22.1 percent in 1991 to 18.6 percent in 2001. The overall unemployment rate was 21.1 percent compared with 19.8 percent in 1991.

The tourism sector, which displaced agriculture as the greatest contributor to the GDP in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, has proven to be vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters such as hurricanes as well as international events e.g. the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, both of which resulted in reduced numbers of visitors to the Caribbean region. Nonetheless, the thrust of the Government has been to focus on macro economic **and social policies and** programmes which target poverty reduction. It is expected therefore that the impact of this will be reflected positively in subsequent CEDAW reports.

III. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CIM STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION

This point should include:

Guidelines on public policies and legislative reforms and development programs to implement the Strategic Plan by government agencies and institutions of civil society, with particular attention to the four priorities for the year 2000, specifically:

a. Eradication of poverty and discrimination --empowerment of women

Poverty in St. Vincent is estimated at 37%. The Government of SVG has declared war against poverty. It has outlined five basic guidelines in this fight, namely:

1. Provide greater budgetary assistance to the poorest section of society.
2. Put in place a many sided programme of collective action involving the government, the private sector, non governmental organisations, international agencies and individuals at home and broad in the fight against poverty.
3. Finance measures to assist the rural poor to utilise their land and raise their production level.
4. Restore an economic climate and pursue economic policies, which favour strong economic growth.
5. Make education and the empowerment of the family vital tools in the struggle against poverty.

A national body the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), instituted in 2002 comprises representatives from the public, private, and civil societies. NESDC reflects an excellent partnership between government and other stakeholders in the fight against poverty. It acts as an Advisory body to the Government and has the mandate to coordinate the poverty reduction programmes.

A sub group of NESDC is a Poverty Reduction Task Force (PRTF). The PRTF is responsible for development of strategies for national, social and economic development. The Gender Affairs Division is represented on this Task Force. So far the PRTF has put in place an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP), which will serve as Government's guide to poverty reduction. This document includes strategies and recommendations for gender equity.

Gender Budget Analysis

Based on recognition of the important poverty reduction and income redistribution effects of gender budget analysis, and of its usefulness in monitoring international commitments made by government to improving gender equity, the Gender Affairs Division of St. Vincent and the Grenadines proposed a project which allowed for working with the Ministry of Finance in developing policy guidelines and indicators for gender-sensitive budgeting. The project “Analysing the gendered impact of Government policy in three key sectors in St. Vincent and the Grenadines: Education, Agriculture and Social Development”, builds on the initial work done by ECEMP. The paper provides recommendations to the government for a more gender aware formulation of the budget. The intention is that resources would be allocated to areas where they are most needed.

Poverty Reduction for Rural Women

In response to the IPRSP, the Gender Affairs Division implemented a project to improve the livelihood and income of rural families. The project pays special attention to capacity building, organization and strengthening and technical assistance to agricultural related businesses. The implementation of this capacity building/income generation project for rural women increases the potential for rural women to earn.

Public Assistance

An analysis of the Public Assistance programme shows that a greater number of women than men are accessing social welfare from the government. The assistance is provided in the following areas:

- ❖ **Transportation to school age children**
- ❖ **Foster care**

b. Human rights and the elimination of violence against women

In 2004, the Government purchased a property to house a crisis centre. The building is due for renovations in 2007 and its operation is scheduled for late that year.

Education and training for communities on the issue of domestic violence is ongoing. A series of sessions have been held nationwide to sensitize the nation on the issue. Every year in November, a week of activities is held to commemorate International Day to End Violence against women.

c. Education

Education is a priority area for the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It has consistently attracted a significant portion of the National Budget. Approximately 23% of the Budget has been allocated to this Sector over the years. The current attention on Universal Education with emphasis on improved quality and access is an indication that this trend will continue.

Table 2
Primary and All-Age School Enrolments (2001)

Type	Male	Female	Total
Grades 1 –6	8099	7563	15662
Grades 7-8	1153	736	1889
Private	394	420	814
Total	9646	8719	18365

Source: Education Sector Development Plan, 2002-2007.

Table 3
Secondary School Enrolment by type and Gender, 2001

School Type	Male	Female	Total
Government Secondary	2111	2710	4821 (61%)
Government Assisted Secondary	1209	1837	3046 (39%)
Total	3320 (42%)	4547 (58%)	7867 (100%)

Source: Education Sector Development Plan, 2002 -2007.

Statistics collected by the Ministry of Education are showing that there is increasing participation of women in the education system and women are displaying greater success rates than their male counterparts.

In spite of that fact, Marsha Caddle in her research report on Gender Budget Initiative: Analyzing the Gender Impact of Government Policy on Key Sectors Education, Agriculture and Social Development in SVG revealed that “formal labour market participation rates are lower for women than for men, although there has been a narrowing of the gap over the past decade. There is also severe feminization of poverty, particularly in the rural areas, and in one of the poorest areas identified under a recent poverty assessment study, female headship was 95.8%. Census data indicates that 40% of households in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are female-headed, and also reveals a significant pattern of migration among women under the age of 29”

The country’s combined Fourth and Fifth Periodic Reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) highlight growing male unemployment and the increased incidence of HIV/AIDS as priority areas of concern.

Teen mothers Programme

The Gender Affairs Division, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, has created opportunities for continuing education for school dropouts. Special emphasis is being made to ensure equal opportunity for teen mothers. School places are being guaranteed for these young women who would have had to terminate their school life as a result of pregnancy.

This year, the Gender Affairs Division with support from an ECHMP consultant formulated a policy paper on this programme to submit to Cabinet as an interim measure. This policy paper will

be a precursor to a policy document, and will call initially, for a policy statement on the return of teen mothers to school. In addition, recurrent funding has been accessed for the programme.

d. Women participation in power and decision making

Increased number of women in Parliament in 2001 – 2 elected women
First female Attorney-General appointed March 2001
First female Deputy Governor-General appointed
Two (2) appointed Senators representing women and youths

More women than men head the administration in the public sector. At present, there are four women in parliament. The four represents 4/22 or 18 %. Two are elected officers and one an appointed officer. They all belong to the ruling political party. The fourth woman is the Attorney General- Public Servant. Eighteen men sit in Parliament representing 18/22 or 82 %.

IV. FUTURE ACTIONS TO ADVANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CIM STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION

a. At the national level, to improve the status of women.

Political Measures

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has promised an “activist agenda for women”. In this regard we foresee greater resources made available to support programmes for women.

Public Policies

The Cabinet has agreed to support the formulation of a National Policy and Action Plan on gender Equity in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to express the States policy on priorities for programming and transformation. So far the policy cycle has commenced. The situational gender analysis as the preliminary to the policy and action plan has completed. Thanks to UN ECLAC for its financial support to this stage in the policy process.

A series of consultations on the findings have taken place. At this point, the country is developing its sectoral plans that can filter into the National Policy and Action Plan. In addition, the Terms of Reference for the consultant working on the National Policy and Action Plan is being finalized.

At this point, the country is developing its sectoral plan that can filter into the National Policy and Action Plan. Cabinet has also agreed to establish a National Commission on gender Equity as one of the mechanism to support the implementation of the National Policy.

Cabinet has also appointed the umbrella national women’s organization (The National Council of Women) to all important Government Boards and National Committees (e.g. Constitution

Review Commission, Poverty Reduction Task Force- Chair, NESDC, Social Investment Fund). The intention is that the representation would result in greater outcomes for women.

- b. At the regional level, to support actions promoted by the CIM in the short term.**

Legislation Measures

The OECS Harmonization of Laws- the OECS Secretariat has been working to improve the legislation for the OECS. So far the revised draft Domestic Violence Act has been completed. The Gender Affairs Division would now move to present input for the inclusion of the articles of the Belem Do Para in this revised Act.

Other Policies

The OECS Social Policy Unit is currently preparing its Human Development Report.

Advocacy/Gender Sensitization

Gender Sensitization is an approach used to inform the public of the role and programming of the Gender Affairs Division as it seeks to transfer an understanding of the concept of gender and issues related to the CIM Action Plan. A series of country wide community based discussion is being held to discuss the concept of gender, and the critical areas of concern for women.

The Division also acts as a source of information on gender related and other social issues. Text, magazines and other literature are available for use by the public. The Gender Affairs Division also produces a weekly radio programme.