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NATIONAL REPORT: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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**NATIONAL REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
FOR PRESENTATION AT THE XXXIII ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES OF THE INTER-
AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN (CIM):
El Salvador, November 2006**

**Gender Affairs Division
Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs
July 2006**

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FOR PRESENTATION AT THE XXXIII ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES OF THE
INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN (CIM)**

Introduction

This report provides a summary, reflecting the status of women and changes occurring in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago between 2004- 2006, to the thirty-third Assembly of delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women.

Trinidad and Tobago is a twin island state situated at the Southern-most tip of the Caribbean Archipelago, between latitude 10° North of the equator and longitude 60° to 62° West. The islands are located 11 km east off the Coast of Venezuela and the South American Continent, at the closest point, with a combined area of 5,128 km². The estimated mid year population in 2005 was 1.294 million. Women and men comprise almost equal amounts of the population, each approximately 50 %, 27.9 % of which is estimated to be below 15 years of age and 8% is estimated to be 65 years and over. Trinidad and Tobago is rich in ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, approximately 40.35 of the population is of East Indian decent, 39.6% of African decent, 18.4 % is of mixed decent, 0.6% Caucasian, and 0.4% Chinese.

General Aspects

The status of women in Trinidad and Tobago compares favourably with many middle income developing nations. The equal rights of men and women are guaranteed under the 1976 Republican Constitution. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the implementation of concrete measures aimed at promoting gender equity and equality. The Gender Affairs Division (GAD) of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs is the national focal point for gender and development. The Division works collaboratively with state agencies, academia and civil society to promote an active and visible policy to mainstream gender perspectives in policies, programmes, and projects.

Gender and development is also guided by several national and international mandates including the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the CIM Plan of Action, the Belém do Para Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Commonwealth Plan of Action, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The overarching National Policy Framework is Government's Vision 2020, which seeks to attain developed country status for Trinidad and Tobago by 2020. Gender equality was identified as integral to this process and accordingly a Sub- Committee on gender and development was established to ensure that the development plans of the various sectors addressed gender concerns.

The GAD is currently reviewing a Draft National Policy for Gender and Development for finalization by September 2006. This Policy will provide a framework to guide the promotion of gender equity and equality in Trinidad and Tobago, both in public and private spheres.

I. JUDICIAL, POLITICAL, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

The legislative power of Trinidad and Tobago now resides in a bicameral Parliament, which is comprised of the upper House called the Senate and a Lower House called the House of Representatives. The Constitution establishes a Supreme Court Judicature for Trinidad and Tobago consisting of a High Court of Justice and a Court of Appeal. A Chief Justice has overall responsibility for the administration of Justice and heads an independent judiciary. The Judiciary comprises the higher judiciary (the Supreme Court of Judicature) and the lower judiciary (the Magistracy).

Trinidad and Tobago has a buoyant economy. In 2004, real Gross Domestic Product increased by 6.5% and at market prices stood at TT \$71, 878.0 million, witnessing the 12th consecutive year of positive growth. The economy is heavily dependent on energy and energy-related sectors for most of its export earnings, however there have been positive growth in the non energy sector including manufacturing, construction and tourism.

II. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CIM STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION

Eradication of Poverty

The **Gender Equity Institute** was established and restructured, within the review period, with responsibility for the implementation of programmes and projects to advance gender equity. This roving Institute facilitates a myriad of gender related, training and institutional strengthening programmes to various NGOs, community interest groups, and members of the general public. These have in the past included Courses in Parenting, Leadership, Team Building, Training for Community Lay Counsellors, Business Development Programmes, and the Non-Traditional Training Programme for men, which was launched in December 2004 with a Course in Food and Nutrition, targeting 35 men.

The **Women and Harmony Programme** is in its sixth year. It was designed to address the problem of unemployment among women between the ages of twenty-six (26) and forty-five (45) who are single heads of household with low/ no skills, and low/ no income. The Programme consists of an intensive eight weeks full time training in two modules; Elderly Care and Agriculture, and Life Skills and is conducted in regions across Trinidad. Since its inception over five thousand (5000) women have been empowered and became employable.

The **Non-Traditional Skills Training Programme for Women** has trained over three thousand (3000) women in Non-Traditional areas including Masonry, Plumbing, Technical Drawing and Blue Print Reading, Construction Carpentry, and Electrical Installation. Women are provided with a total of 320 hours of training on a six-month part-time basis in technical/vocational skills, gender sensitization and life coping skills, remedial numeracy, literacy and entrepreneurship skills.

Elimination of Violence

The GAD conducts ongoing training and public education to reduce the incidence of gender based violence. A large volume of publications are produced each year aimed at public information and sensitization. **The GAD has a National Domestic Violence Unit**, featuring 24 hours, seven days a

week Hotline. The Hotline **was restructured in September 2004, with additional human and physical resources**. This Hotline received approximately 24,000 calls within the period under review. The Hotline provides information, active listening support, and referrals to rapid intervention by the Police, shelters and Counselling Services. Community Drop-in Centres and Resource Facilities are also available within communities to assist in the prevention and treatment of Domestic Violence.

Action is continuing to develop a **systematic format for Domestic Violence Data Collection** among the various responsible agencies. The objective of this exercise is to develop a Central Registry for Domestic Violence Data. A Procedural Manual for Police Officers was developed by a Multi-Sectoral Committee to guide approaches to Domestic Violence.

Education

Primary School Enrolment reveals that the number of male pupils 75,299 or 51.11% exceeds the number of female pupils 72,029 or 48.89% by 3,270. The pattern is different in Secondary Schools where girls 57,257 or 51.2% outnumber boys 54,524 or 48.8% by a margin of 2,733. In the Technical Vocational Schools the trend is quite different with 74.4% males compared to 25.6% females. When data was broken down by subject area, except for Home Economics, and Business Education and Management, males greatly outnumbered females, pointing to traditional choices based on gender.

The options for young men are still greater than for young women who do not successfully complete formal education, therefore there is less incentive for boys to complete formal secondary education. When dropout rates are examined at the Secondary level, the trend of greater numbers of male dropouts (492 males at a rate of .90 compared to 365 females at a rate of .64, CSO 2001) continues, and is receiving attention.

In 2001-2002, there were 2,608 (38%) male and 4,339 (61%) female Trinidad and Tobago students enrolled at the University of the West Indies on all three campuses. Females comprised 60% of students enrolled in undergraduate degree programmes, 66% of certificate programmes, 82% of diplomas, 61% of advanced diplomas, 54% of higher degrees and 66% of specially admitted students at the St. Augustine campus. While females have extended their options, males appear to be reducing theirs. The numbers of males have been declining in the Humanities, Education, Social Sciences, Agriculture and others. Conversely, female students are now equal to or exceed males in previously male-dominated fields such as the physical and natural sciences, except for engineering. The university-educated population however, is a small proportion of the national population, therefore, **educational attainment for both man and women are now targeted for improvement with the introduction of free tertiary education and the development of the University of Trinidad and Tobago** which increases the number of available training opportunities and options.

Participation of Women in the Structures of Power and Decision-making

There have been increases in women's overall participation in national leadership and decision-making and increased commitment to establishing mechanisms to accelerate the achievement of gender equity in political participation and representation at all levels of the electoral process. Women have acted as Prime Minister on several occasions, and a woman holds the position of President of the Senate, and also serves as the Acting President of the Republic.

Type	Male	Female	Total	Percent Total
House of Representatives	29	7	36	19.4
Senate	20	11	31	35.4
Mayors	5	0	5	0
Councillors and Aldermen	107	49	156	31.4

Workplace

In the 4th quarter 2005, unemployment stood at 6.7% overall, representing an unemployment rate of 4.9% for men and 9.4 % for women. Labourforce is comprised of a total of 371,000 men with a participation rate of 76.5%, and 261,600 women with a participation rate of 52.8%. Women have been experiencing an average annual increase in participation rate of 2.4% since 1990. Men, although having a larger participation rate in the Labourforce, have experienced only a 1% increase in participation over the period.

Trinidad and Tobago has a fairly comprehensive legal framework supporting gender and workplace issues. Within the review period the Occupational Safety and Health Act No. 1 of 2004 was proclaimed, repealing the Factories Ordinance 1948 and the Night Work Act Chapter 88:12, which limited women's economic participation. The Act requires employers to provide facilities to include women, and disabled persons, and to protect the health of the unborn child. The legal framework also includes Laws relating to, Sexual Offences, Minimum Wages (Amendment), Counting of Unwaged Work, Maternity Protection, and Attachment of Earnings (Maintenance).

Health

Fifty percent of new HIV/AIDS cases occur in women age 15-24. The **AIDS Education Training of Trainers Programme for Women** in Communities, launched in January 2004, has been expanded in communities across the nation. The Programmes trains women as change agents to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS in their nation.

The Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago (FPATT), which receives an annual subvention from government, partnered in 2005- 2006 with the School of Continuing Studies of the University of the West Indies to develop curricula and methodology to **train and certify Nurses and other Health Care Professionals in the delivery of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services**. This initiative has the potential to improve the quality of sexual and reproductive health care services offered to the general public.

The Ministry of Health now provides **free medication for person with chronic diseases** through its own facilities and private Pharmacies across the nation. This programme is particularly beneficial to the elderly, of whom women comprise the majority. The Division of Ageing of the Ministry of Social Development have developed a **National Policy on Ageing**. The Division has established Day Activity Centres that have proven successful in providing care and support for elder persons. The Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, which trains persons ages 17-25 to care to elderly persons, celebrated its 12th successful year. Annually, approximately 1,500 youth are trained in this National Service Programme.

National Machinery responsible for the Advancement of Women

The GAD enhanced the National Machinery for Gender and Development through the identification and training of Sectoral Focal Points in Government Ministries. Cabinet Permission is also being sought to re-vitalize an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender and Development. Action continues to finalize the **National Gender and Development Policy**, which will guide an effective approach by state and private institutions to promoting gender equity and equality in Trinidad and Tobago.

Extensive **public sensitization and education on gender and development** is conducted in order to promote gender equity. These initiatives target the general public through various approaches. Gender Training Workshops are offered consistently to agencies such as Schools, the Armed Forces, Government Ministries, NGOs and Community Based Organizations, Gender Focal Points within their Ministries, and other key agencies.

The GAD established an ongoing **Distinguished Lecture/ Workshop Series**. This Series features gender based Lectures by expert and renowned personalities that can promote public education. Past Lecture/ Workshops have included Gender and Community Development and two, 2 day Workshops targeting 80 Community Leaders, Masculinity and Manhood Issues and two, 2 day Workshops targeting over 60 sixty men, as well as a Lecture on Gender and the Law, Strategies to Combat Domestic Violence presented by the only Female Justice serving in the Caribbean Court of Justice.

In Division developed a **Six-part Television Panel Series** entitled "Gender on Your Agenda". The Programme explores gender issues with expert panellist in the areas of Popular culture, Masculinity and Manhood, Leadership and Decision-making, Labour and workplace Issues, Education, Health and Wellness. **Radio, Press and Television** spots are used consistently to promote public education and sensitization on critical gender issues and on the programmes of the GAD.

The Defining Masculine Excellence Programme is an ongoing series of "Train the Trainers" Workshops, targeting men from various state and private agencies with the knowledge and skills to improve their social relationships, and to provide training, community support and outreach to other men and boys in vulnerable circumstances. Since its inception, over eight cycles of the Programme have been conducted, targeting over 320 men, several of whom are now in partnership with the Gender Affairs Division to reach other men and boys with personal development skills.

A weekly Radio Programme is conducted utilising the Content of the Defining Masculine Excellence Training Modules to reach men who can not attend the Programmes.

An important aspect of the work of the GAD relates to the **development and capacity building of gender related NGOs and CBOs**. The Division gives support to the work of such agencies by providing training, and technical and financial assistance. During the period over one hundred NGOs received support to implement approved programmes and projects, conduct training and assistance to acquire property and participate in local, regional and international gender forums.

III. FUTURE ACTIONS TO ADVANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CIM PLAN OF ACTION

- Improved human and financial resources. The GAD will soon fill seventeen (17) new positions to enhance training, research, programmes and policy analysis to advance the CIM Plan of Action and gender and development work in the nation.
- A comprehensive plan and programme of gender mainstreaming in governmental agencies has been initiated and will continue through the strengthening of Focal Points and the re-constitution of a Cabinet Appointed Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender and Development. This will promote greater levels of understanding of the relevance of gender concerns at the macro, meso and micro and non-social levels of development in all sectors of government.
- The GAD will engage in rigorous public education and sensitization programmes to promote wider understanding of gender and development issues and the CIM Plan of Action, aimed at changing behaviour and promoting gender equity especially within private spheres. This is also important as Trinidad and Tobago prepares its fourth and fifth Reports on the implementation of CEDAW.
- The GAD will seek to advance the legislative agenda to include Sexual Harassment, Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value, and Paternity Leave based on the CIM Plan of Action and research emerging out of and the Draft National Gender and Development Policy.
- The National Policy on Gender and Development, once finalized and accepted by the Cabinet, will mandate further advance gender equity in the work of government and the wider society.
- Increased outreach, collaboration and partnership with NGOs, CBOs and other Non Governmental actors to advance the CIM Plan of Action and work to promote gender equality and the advancement of women in Trinidad and Tobago.