

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

UPR

Trinidad and Tobago has made significant strides in establishing a foundation for securing women and girl's human rights. Over the past 15 years UN Women, formerly UNIFEM, has worked to consolidate and/or build partnerships and enhance collaboration with women's organisations, government, academia and civil society in Trinidad and Tobago to support this work. Its main counterparts have been the Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture & Gender Affairs and women's organizations within civil society.

Trinidad and Tobago's 4th and 5th CEDAW reports remain due; however in November 2009 the territory's Cabinet accepted the draft National Policy on Gender and Development. The policy was developed through a process of national and community consultations, and was first submitted to Cabinet in 2004. Cabinet approval was withdrawn in 2005 on the basis of reproductive rights and the decriminalisation of same sex intimacy. While the policy provides governmental and civil societal agencies guidance in dealing with gender and development issues in light of the country's national, regional and international human rights obligations, it avoids the critical themes of sexual and reproductive rights. Lack of reproductive rights contributes to high maternal mortality rates.

In 2009 and 2010 UN Women in partnership with the Institute of Gender Development Studies (IGDS) St Augustine Unit, supported research that investigated the manner in which HIV and AIDS campaigns address the gender dimension of HIV transmission, through the research project Building Responsive Policy: Gender, Sexual Culture and HIV and AIDS in the Caribbean. The research examines how sexual cultures impact on women's sexual activity, and how they inform existing policy and programmes for HIV/AIDS prevention. UN Women will continue to support initiatives that promote sexual rights especially among the most marginalised. In 2011 and 2012 UN Women will support the Caribbean Coalition on Women, Girls and HIV in building leadership skills among positive women and girls in Tobago.

Violence against women in Trinidad and Tobago remains an unfortunate reality that is perpetuated by deeply rooted traditional patriarchal attitudes that are reflected in the social and cultural infrastructure. Violence against women in Trinidad and Tobago remains an unfortunate reality that is perpetuated by deeply rooted traditional patriarchal attitudes that are reflected in the social and cultural infrastructure. Many community leaders assert that abuse of women, particularly in the form of domestic violence, continues to be a significant problem. Reliable national statistics are still not available, but women's groups estimated that from 20 to 25 percent of all women suffered abuse.

Much of UN Women's work in Trinidad and Tobago from 2007 has focused on the administration of justice as an important site for state compliance and accountability for women's rights. Through the UN

Women research project Child Support, Poverty and Gender Equality in the Caribbean. The four-year project (which was first piloted in Barbados) found that despite improvements in the justice sector, particularly through the pilot Family Court, there is dissatisfaction with: delays; low levels of awards; noncompliance with court orders; and limited avenues for enforcement of court awards. Collaborating partners in Trinidad & Tobago included the Family Court.

UN Women has also been promoting public health and human rights approaches in response to domestic violence, through the programme Partnership for Peace: A Violence Prevention Programme. In 2007 the programme was extended to Trinidad and Tobago where partners include the Family Court, Probation Department and Judicial Education Institute. In the programme, men confront harmful ideas about women and about masculinity, examine unequal power relationships that fuel violence and accept personal responsibility for ending violent behaviour. In 2010 UN Women increased the capacity of Partnership for Peace partnering institutions to effectively run the intervention programme. This will continue to be a priority area in for UN Women.

UN Women has worked closely with civil society partners in the region to strengthen men's role in promoting gender equality. In 2009 UN Women, in collaboration with UNFPA, has engaged men in Trinidad through an exploration of masculinity as it is expressed in the region. In 2010 UN Women played a critical role in the re-establishment of CariMAN, the Caribbean Male Action Network, which is registered in Trinidad and Tobago. UN Women will continue to support the Network recognising that men play an essential role in securing women's rights and promoting gender equality.

High incidence of poverty among various groups of women, in particular female heads of households remains a reality in Trinidad and Tobago. Despite high educational qualifications, women continue to be underpaid in every sector of employment, except the State employment sector. Additionally, although domestic workers are entitled to a minimum wage under the new Minimum Wage Order, they are not included within the definition of worker in the Industrial Relations Act. UN Women has been working in collaboration with ILO to strengthen the capacity of the National Union of Domestic Employees to advocate for domestic workers right to decent work. UN Women will continue to support initiatives that increase women's entrepreneurship and decent work opportunities, including through the promotion of equitable financial and trade policies.

Trinidad and Tobago elected its first woman Prime Minister in 2010; however women continue to be underrepresented in political and economic leadership. Women hold twenty-nine percent of the seats in parliament. Traditional perceptions of gender roles, stereotypical attitudes, women's disproportionate share of household and family responsibilities, as well as structural and cultural barriers, such as the lack of maternity leave for women parliamentarians, are factors that impede women's voice and participation in leadership. UN Women has supported the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership in promoting women's leadership and will collaborate with CIWiL, the OAS and the government of Trinidad and Tobago in a consortium for women politicians in the region in June 2011.

