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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 XXXIV Assembly of Delegates of the Inter-  
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Gender Affairs Division  
Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs  
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REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
TO THE 34<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES TO CIM

I. GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary, reflecting the status of women and changes occurring in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago between 2006- 2008, to the thirty-fourth 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 km<sup>2</sup>. 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.

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).

The Trinidad and Tobago economy has shown remarkable resilience in this turbulent international environment. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stands at 152 billion in 2008, more than doubled since 2004. It is projected to rise to over 165 billion in 2009. Preliminary data show that real GDP is estimated to grow by at least 3.5 percent in 2008 which is comparable with the average global growth rate. The economy is heavily dependent on energy and energy- related sectors for most of its export earnings, however, the non-energy sector continues to register rapid growth; and for the first time in many years, the non-energy sector grew at a faster rate than the energy sector. Growth in the non-energy sector has been broad-based, covering construction activity, manufacturing, tourism, wholesale and retail trades, and financial services. The unemployment rate at the end of the second quarter of 2008 stood at 4.2 percent, unprecedented in our nation's history and favourably comparable with developed countries.

## STATUS OF WOMEN

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.

Trinidad and Tobago continues to perform favourably in the United Nations' Gender Empowerment Index, in which it appears 23 among the Nations of the World. The number of Seats in parliament held by women, and the number of female legislators, senior officials, managers, and professionals and technical workers have all increased during the period under review, and women's employment rate grew by 2.8% annually.

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; "*a society in which women and men contribute to and benefit from, equitable access to and control of resources*" (Vision 2020 Gender and Development Report).

## II. FOLLOW-UP ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PROGRAMME ON THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION OF THE CIM

### A. The Legal, Political and Socio-economic Situation

#### LEGAL SITUATION

Trinidad and Tobago has a fairly comprehensive legal framework supporting gender and workplace issues. Within the review period several pieces of legislation were passed relating to the status of women and children. These include the Occupational Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2006; the Homes for Older Persons Act of 2007, The International Child Abduction Act 2008, and the Children Authority Amendment Act, 2008. The legal framework also includes Laws relating to, Sexual Offences, Minimum Wages (Amendment), Counting of Unwaged Work, Maternity Protection, and Attachment of Earnings (Maintenance).

## THE POLITICAL SITUATION

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's political participation is currently at a historical high, closely approaching and in most instances outstripping international benchmarks which promote at least a 30 percent participation of women in national leadership. Women also currently hold many non-traditional portfolios, including Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives; Attorney General and Minister of Finance.

### **Women's Participation Rate in Politics(Comparison Pre/Post Elections 2007)**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent Total</b>
<b>House of Representatives</b>				
Pre-elections	29	7	36	19.4
Post-elections	30	11	41	<b>26.</b>
<b>Senate</b>				
Pre-elections	20	11	31	35.4
Post-elections	18	13	31	<b>41.9</b>
<b>Parliament (HOR &amp; Senate)</b>	46	24	72	<b>33.3</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>				
Pre-elections	20	5	25	20
Post-elections	17	8	25	<b>32</b>

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Employment among women has grown. The labour force registered 628, 400 persons at the end of the 4th quarter 2006, representing 353,000 men and 236,900 women. The labour force participation rate for males was 74.9%, and 53.6% for females. The number of employed males rose by 7 600 or 2.2% while the females increased by 6 600 or 2.8%. As a result of the boom in economic activity and solid macro-economic management, an average of approximately 14,400 new jobs was created annually. The poverty rate has decreased significantly from 35 percent in 1990 to 16.7 percent by 2006, and women's employment status has been improving overall.

### B. An Outline of Public Policies and Progress Implementing the Inter-American Programme on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality

The GAD enhanced the National Machinery for Gender and Development through continued strengthening of Sectoral Focal Points in Government Ministries. 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.

The **Gender Equity Institute** tasked with responsibility for the implementation of programmes and projects to advance gender equity was strengthened within the review period. This roving Institute continues to facilitate a myriad of gender related, training and institutional strengthening programmes to various NGOs, community interest groups, and members of the general public. These Programmes relate to Parenting, Leadership, Team Building, Training for Community Lay Counsellors, Business Development Programmes, and the Non-Traditional Training Programme for Men: A Course in Food Preparation and Fine-dining, in which a total of four hundred and eighty-nine (489) men and boys over the age of fourteen (14) participated in the training which was conducted at twenty-four (24) centres throughout Trinidad.

Extensive **public sensitization and education on gender and development** continued to promote gender equity and equality. 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 continued its **Distinguished Lecture/ Workshop Series**. This Series features gender based Lectures by expert and renowned personalities, which promote public education and sensitization on gender issues. Within the period of review Lectures focused on the areas of gender and health, including HIV/AIDS; gender budgeting; gender and education; governance and leadership and masculinity and manhood issues. this Series has attracted some of the nation's and region's finest professionals in their various fields including Justice Desiree Bernard, the only women serving on the Caribbean Court of Justice; Prof. Linden Lewis of Bucknell University, Pennsylvania; Ms. Winnie Byanyima, Director of Gender Bureau for Development of Policy, UNDP Headquarters New York; Honourable Syringa Marshall-Burnett, President of the Jamaican Senate, and Professor Errol Miller PhD., a past Senator in the Jamaican Government and renowned educator.

In Division continued its **National Television Panel Series** entitled "Gender on Your Agenda." During the period under review Panels were held on the Livelihood Strategies of Grassroots and Community Women; the Young Women of the 2000s, and Celebrating the Achievements of Women. A Masculinity Series was conducted within the same period sub-titled "You've got Male" and including six segments, namely, Male on Male Violence and Crime; Negative Peer Pressure and the Young Male; Men's Health; Men and their Family Relationships; Men and Money Matters; and Education and the Performance of Boys. Distinguished Panellists were drawn from all facets of society, including academia, community activists, youth, the judiciary, government agencies, and the private sector. **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**, an ongoing series of "Train the Trainers" Workshops, continued 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 twelve cycles of the Programme have been conducted, targeting over 600 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 cannot attend the Programmes. The Youth Training Centre

(YTC) and the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) also benefitted from outreach under this programme. **A Street Theatre Programme**, utilizing the “Roy and Gloria Dramatic Interactive” takes the content of the Defining Masculine Excellence Programme to the street corners, bars and sporting facilities to interact one on one with men and their families.

The GAD supports the **development and capacity building of gender related NGOs and CBOs** 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.

The GAD **collaborates with other state and non-state agencies**. In December and January, the GAD collaborated with the Best Village Unit, and the National AIDS Co-ordinating Committee (NACC) to present to the national community, an HIV/AIDS production. This production was delivered through a very powerful play, “Keeper of the List”; a Distinguished Lecture; musical presentations, and distribution of literature on HIV/ AIDS. In June 2008, the Gender Affairs Division collaborated with the United Nations Population Fund to conduct a two day Workshop on Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health. In July 2008, the Division collaborated with the Ministry of Social Development to host a Round-table Discussion on Research, Policies and Programmes related to men and boys. Through this exercise, previous areas of research and eighteen (18) programmes which specifically target males were identified. This information was shared with relevant stakeholders and will inform future policies and programmes.

C. An Outline of Public Policies and Progress Implementing the Strategic Plan

Within the context of poverty eradication; education and the empowerment and advancement of women, the GAD continued several of its programmes, including **the Women in Harmony Programme**, which is in its eight 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 twelve week, full time training in two modules; Elderly Care or Agriculture/landscaping and Life Skills and is conducted in regions across Trinidad. Since its inception over six thousand (6000) women have been empowered and became employable. During the period of review **an onsite child care component** was added to the Programme, to enable mothers with young children to participate.

The **Non-Traditional Skills Training Programme for Women** has trained over three thousand (5000) 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. Women are then placed on jobsites for a one month practicum.

Numerous employment and small businesses opportunities have been birthed from these programmes with links forged to the National Entrepreneurial Development Company to facilitate access to business loans and training.

D. Measures to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women

**The National Domestic Violence Unit, featuring a 24 hours, seven days a week Hotline** continued receiving extensive Staff training during the review period. The Hotline received approximately 30,000 calls within the period, with an average of 3,000 clients in situations of gender based violence being supported each year. The Hotline provides information, active listening support, and referrals to rapid intervention by the Police, shelters and Counselling Services. Access to **Community Drop-in Centres and Resource Facilities** was improved during the period, with a facility specifically targeting men being established. The GAD conducted ongoing **training and public education** to reduce the incidence of gender based violence. **A large volume of publications were produced and distributed** aimed at public information and sensitization.

In 2008 the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs secured the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) of the University of the West Indies to pilot a **Central Registry for Domestic Violence Data**. The Pilot will inform strategies for the establishment of the Registry within government in 2009. **The Procedural Manual for Police Officers on Domestic Violence** was adopted during the period and is being utilized.

III. FUTURE ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE INTER-AMERICAN PROGRAMME ON THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION OF THE CIM

- Finalize the National Policy on Gender and Development and its five year action plan to systematically advance gender equity in the work of government and the wider society.
- Improve its human and financial resources. The GAD will soon fill key permanent positions at the managerial level that will result in enhanced training, research, programmes and policy analysis. Efforts to address this have commenced with the posting of advertisements in the newspaper to fill existing vacancies.
- Implement a comprehensive plan and programme of gender mainstreaming in governmental agencies that 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 all levels of development, and in all sectors of government.

- Engage in rigorous public education and sensitization programmes to promote wider understanding of gender and development issues, and specifically a major public education campaign on gender based violence as mandated by the Cabinet.
- Advance the legislative agenda in partnership with the relevant government agency, including Sexual Harassment, Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value, and Paternity Leave, based on mandates emerging from the soon to be approved National Policy on Gender and Development.
- Increased outreach, collaboration and partnership with NGOs, CBOs and other actors toward the further promotion of gender equality and equity in Trinidad and Tobago.

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