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BARBADOS' COUNTRY REPORT TO THE ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATE
OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN (CIM)
2006-2008

Prepared by the Bureau of Gender Affairs
Ministry of Family, Youth, Sports and the Environment
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1. GENERAL ASPECTS

This report provides a brief situational analysis of the status of women in Barbados and highlights the policies and programmes employed to promote gender equality during the period 2006-2008.

There have not been many major changes in the status of women since the last report. The political landscape however has seen some significant developments. The opposition leader and the leader of government business in Senate are now females.

The areas of employment and education provide some encouragement with women being the main beneficiaries in these two areas.

In the area of domestic violence the harmonization of efforts to combat the scourge has been aided with the introduction of the Domestic Violence Protocol initiative.

1.1. JURIDICAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATIONS

The Juridical, political and socio-economic situation of women in Barbados continued to show improvement during the period 2006-2008.

At the Juridical level there are now six (6) female judges in the High Court out of a total of 10 which represents some 60% while there are presently 5 female Magistrates out of a total of 11. This constitutes some 45% of the total magistrates.

The General Elections held on 15 January, 2008 saw a marginal decrease in the number of women at the ministerial level with one (1) elected female Minister of Government (5%) and two female cabinet members (11%). In sum a total of eight females (12%) out of 68 candidates contested the last general elections but only three were successful (37%). The Opposition leader is female and out of 10 members there are 2 females (20%) while in the Senate, there are 7 females, and 14 males.

The society continued to experience growth and women continued to benefit as a result. This is evident from the decline in unemployment rates where the latest available figures indicate a decrease in unemployment among women by 1.6 percentage points to 9.8 in 2006 compared to 11.4 in 2005. The actual number of females unemployed in 2006 stood at 6,900 as compared to 8,200 in 2005.

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

Eradication of Poverty

The Government of Barbados continued its efforts to alleviate the pockets of poverty which exist.

The Bureau of Social Policy, Research and Planning was established in 2007 with its main responsibility for policy formulation, social planning, social research, inter-agency collaboration, networking and building partnerships and civil society collaboration. One of the objectives of this Bureau is to develop policies that promote efficient and effective programmes to eradicate poverty.

The Bureau is currently in the process of conducting a Country Poverty Assessment in collaboration with the Caribbean Development Bank. Training for members of various teams was scheduled to begin in June 2007 and field work in September 2007.

The Bureau is also in the process of developing a Barbados Human Development Report in conjunction with United Nations Development Programme which would speak to policy issues. This Report would seek to examine Barbados' current development path, examining both economic growth and social development strategies. It would also attempt to identify gaps and weaknesses which could hinder the achievement of the strategic goals identified in the National Strategic Plan (2005-2025) and would also enable policymakers to assess the country's vulnerabilities and make informed decisions.

The Poverty Alleviation Bureau too has embarked upon a number of programmes to assist with the alleviation and eradication of poverty. These include:

The Poverty Alleviation Enhancement Programme

This programme combines the programming aspects of the Bureau's work and seeks to complement the services offered to clients through the provision of a range of activities within the client's households and their communities. The Programme responds to other financial and non-financial issues highlighted during the clients' assessments which contribute to their impoverished situations.

Skills Development and Work Place Success Training Programme

This programme focuses on group training. It seeks to provide participants with personal development skills and skills required for success in the workplace. The majority of the clients who seek assistance from the Poverty Alleviation Bureau are encouraged to participate in the self development module of the programme while those clients who display an interest in working in the productive and services sectors are encouraged to participate in the skills component.

The Programme's Objectives area:

1. To provide the opportunity for unemployed clients of the Bureau to acquire appropriate skills, knowledge and techniques to improve themselves and increase their access to employment.
11. To provide the clients with the tools necessary to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to use their strengths to enhance their all round development.
111. To equip clients with basic knowledge of the computer.
- 1V. To promote group/individual projects in micro-business activity

Household Intervention Programme

This programme specifically seeks to:

- Build capacity of household heads through the provision of socio-economic opportunities.
- Effect positive attitudes and behavioural change at the household level.
- Enhance the quality of life of household members thus alleviating poverty.
- Encourage the involvement of civil society and corporate Barbados in activities geared towards poverty alleviation at the household/community level.

The target group for this programme will be made from those households which benefited from and those who are seeking the services of the Poverty Bureau and whose assessment records indicate the need for more in depth and urgent interventions.

Mentorship Programme

The purpose of this programme is to develop a cadre of twenty-five volunteers (including retired professionals): trained in social work; counseling and social development, to lend support to the Bureau's realization of its goal to eradicate poverty.

In an effort to encourage greater impetus to succeed and to keep focus on the positive path they have begun, clients who participate in the Bureau's training programmes are offered on-going advice and guidance by assigned mentors.

Youth in Agriculture Programme

The Barbados Government has also implemented a Youth in Agriculture Programme. This programme targets young people who are interested in making a living from agriculture. Participants in the programme are taught horticulture, daily cultural practices such as planting crops, weeding control and hydroponics. It is expected that after twelve months, participants would be able to utilize the skills and knowledge that they gained to either open their own business or secure employment with an organization.

Education

In education women continue to be the main beneficiaries at the tertiary level.

The enrollment figures at the University of the West Indies (U.W.I) and the Barbados Community College continue to reflect a majority of female at these two institutions. For the period 2006/2007 of 3,865 students enrolled at the Barbados Community College 2,539 or 66% were female.

The enrollment figures at the University of the West Indies presented a similar picture with some 3,413 (68%) females being enrolled out of a total of 5051 students.

Participation of women in Power Structures and Decision Making

In terms of their participation in power structures and decision making the status of women remained virtually unchanged.

There are presently 26 Permanent Secretaries within the general public service, but only 9 are females which represent 35%.

Within the Attorney General's office women still occupy the positions of Solicitor General, Chief Parliamentary Counsel and Principal Crown Counsel. Likewise they still hold the positions of Registrar of the Supreme Court and that of the Registrar of Corporate Affairs, Head of the Civil Service/Cabinet Secretary and the Chief Personnel Officer.

Available data on the composition of the public boards, government management committees boards of management, commissions and like entities where individuals are named, reveal that for the period 2003-2005 women occupied 210 of the 751 positions representing 28%. This was better than in the private sector where a recent survey by the Barbados Employers Confederation (BEC) revealed that less than 12% of women in Barbados held seats on the Board of Directors.

Employment

Barbados continues to develop a culture of equal job opportunities and pay for both women and men in the various economic sectors.

Government is considering substantial amendments to some labour laws including one that would allow large supermarkets to open twenty-four hours.

The Shops Act would be reviewed to widen the provision of services; the Holiday with Pay Act would be reviewed to remove the ambiguity inherited in the existing legislation.

Government is moving towards a full Employment Relations Act to deal with collective bargaining and rights disputes outside of the new employment rights regime.

The Severance Payments Acts is to be revisited to ensure compatibility with the new labour legislation as well as enacting a new piece of legislation on occupational safety and health with a section which relates to an employee's right to refuse dangerous work.

Health

Statistics from the Ministry of Health indicates that more males than females were diagnosed with both HIV and AIDS during the first half of 2007. Eighty-six people were newly diagnosed with HIV with 49 of these cases being male and 37 being female. There were 28 persons diagnosed with AIDS of which 15 were males. At the end of June 2007, 2027 males and 1215 females were HIV positive. 1403 males had AIDS in comparison to 645 women. 978 men died of HIV related death in comparison to 335 females.

The Ministry of Health is expected to open a special resistance lab this year to test the different strains of HIV/AIDS virus to see what pills can be used.

In an effort to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS and to increase education on the disease the Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership premiered a new television show entitled LIVE UP in a hope of inspiring and empowering people to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Violence against women

The Government of Barbados continued its multi-sectoral approach to violence against women.

The Bureau of Gender Affairs and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) continued to commemorate International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Sixteen Days of Activism.

During 2007, the Bureau of Gender Affairs under the theme "Demanding Implementation, Challenging obstacles to end Violence," held a number of activities to keep this issue in the public domain.

At an open air service held by the Barbados Mothers Union, the Bureau of Gender Affairs paid respect to those women who had lost their lives as a result of acts of violence crimes over the past seven years.

The Business and Professional Women's Club started its Relationship Abuse Prevention Programme (TRAP). This programme is designed to sensitize hundreds of students at five primary and secondary schools to domestic abuse and sexual assault issues.

Migration

Trafficking in Persons

In the area of trafficking in persons there have been concerted efforts to sensitize persons to this scourge. There has been the sharing of information with infomercials in the local newspapers, on radio and on television. There are nine (9) thirty (30) second slots divided between both radio stations and three of these were aired during prime time. In addition there were nine (9) fifteen (15) second slots on local television, three (3) of which were during prime time.

The Director of the Bureau of Gender Affairs also made organizational presentations to a number of private sector and non-governmental organizations on the subject.

Apart from activities where human trafficking was the focus, a conscious attempt was always made to have brochures and leaflets on trafficking in persons available to participants in activities coordinated by the Bureau of Gender Affairs.

In the wake to these efforts there is no indication that the incidence of trafficking is a common practice in Barbados. In spite of this and acknowledging the attraction of Barbados to potential human traffickers, it is intended that information campaigns and other strategies would be developed to increase awareness of this phenomenon. In addition to this, the Bureau of Gender Affairs has developed a draft protocol, based on the protocol to prevent suppress and punish trafficking in persons, in order to protect victims and to punish traffickers. A workshop was held in 2008 where its partners reviewed the draft protocol.

In addition to this the Bureau will conduct a survey to ascertain the true extent of human trafficking on the island. This survey should determine whether or not there is a need for new legislation or any other action.

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

At the national level research will form a key part of the strategies to address gender issues and to guide the introduction of mechanism to ensure equality and equity.

At the regional level there will be active participation in fora to ensure that policies and programmes aimed at advancing the status of women are promoted in regional initiatives.

There will also be the promotion of collaborative efforts to attain the principal priorities and policies of various conventions, plan of actions and agreements aimed at achieving gender equity and equality.