



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention**

**Combined fourth to seventh periodic reports of States parties due in
2015**

Trinidad and Tobago*

[Date received: 11 January 2015]

* In accordance with the information transmitted to the States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document has not been edited.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ALTA	Adult Literacy Tutors Association
ASJA	Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat Association Inc.
ASPIRE	Advocates for Safe Parenthood
CANROP	Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDF	Community Development Fund
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CIM/OAS	Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organisation of American States
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Central Statistical Office
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
EAW	Electrical Association for Women
EDI	Education for All Development Index
FPATT	Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago
GAD	Gender Affairs Division
GATE	Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GIS	Government Information Service
GMS	Gender Management System
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
HFLE	Health and Family Life Education
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HWO	Hindu Women's Organisation
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IGDS	Institute of Gender and Development Studies
ILO	International Labour Organisation

IOM	International Organisation of Migration
MESECVI	Follow-up Mechanism on the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention of “Belem do Para”)
MuST	Multi-sector Skills Training Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIHERST	National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology
NPA	National Plan of Action
NRWPTT	Network of Rural Women Producers of Trinidad and Tobago
OAS	Organisation of American States
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
OJT	On-the-Job Training
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organisation
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
SALISES	Sir Arthur Institute for Social and Economic Studies
TDC	Transformation and Development Centre
THA	Tobago House of Assembly
TTD	Trinidad and Tobago Dollars
TTNVQ	Trinidad and Tobago Vocational Qualifications
UNDP, HDR	United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report
UNFPA	United Nations Development Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNIC	United Nations Information Centre
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
UN Women	United Nations Women
URP	Unemployment Relief Programme
UWI	University of the West Indies
WURP	Women’s Unemployment Relief Programme
YAPA	Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture
YMCA	Young Men’s Christian Association
YTEPP	Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme

Preamble

Pursuant to Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago submits its Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Combined Periodic Report on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention for the period 2001-2013.

The Report was prepared in accordance with the general guidance for the preparation of reports as contained in HRI/GEN/2/Rev.1/Add.2 by the International Law and Human Rights Unit of the Ministry of the Attorney General in collaboration with the Gender Affairs Division and assisted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Gender Affairs Division was previously located in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs from 2001-2010, and subsequently in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Restructuring and Gender Affairs from 2010-2011. Since July 2011, the Division has been located in the new Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development.

The preparation of the Report coincided with Trinidad and Tobago's national elections in 2007, and then again in 2010, which presented some challenges in completing and submitting the Report. Every effort was made to include the participation of stakeholders at all levels in the preparation of the Report, which further increased the period of preparation. This approach included collaboration with NGOs in the conduct of a series of National CEDAW Community Workshops in the nine administrative regions of Trinidad and Tobago in 2007, a comprehensive review of the work of all Government Ministries through their response to a questionnaire, and extensive desk research.

The Report is presented in three parts. Part One provides general information on the land and people, the general political structure, the economy, the framework for the protection of human rights, and the status of women. Part Two responds specifically to the Committee's concluding comments on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's Initial, Second, and Third Combined Periodic Report, while Part Three focuses on new provisions which advance CEDAW in the reporting period 2001-2013.

Part One: General information

Land and people

1. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is situated at the southern-most tip of the Caribbean archipelago, between latitude 10° N of the equator and longitude 60° to 62° W. The state comprises two islands: Trinidad, the larger, and Tobago, the smaller. The islands are located 11 km east of the coast of the South American continent, at the closest point, with a combined area of 5,128 km². The capital city is Port of Spain and is located in northwest Trinidad. The country has a temperature that varies between 22 and 32 °C. The official language of Trinidad and Tobago is English with Spanish designated as the second official language.

2. The estimated population in 2011 was 1,324,699. Women and men comprise almost equal numbers of the population, 50.17% Men and 49.83% Women, 27.9% of whom are estimated to be below 15 years of age and 8% are estimated to be 65 years and over¹. According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2013, Trinidad and Tobago's annual population growth rate stands at 0.3%. Life expectancy at birth was recorded as 70.3 years and the Total Fertility Rate was 1.6 (births per woman) (UNDP, HDR 2013)².

3. Trinidad and Tobago is noted for its ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. As recorded in the Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report, East Indians and Africans remain the two largest ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago. East Indians accounted for 35.4% of the total population while Africans accounted for 34.2%. In the 2000 census, the respective percentages were 40% and 37.5%. The difference between the groups narrowed from 2.5% in 2000 to 1.2% in 2011. The next largest group was described as 'Mixed' representing 22.8% of the population and disaggregated into the 'African/East Indian' 7.7% and 'Mixed Other' 15.1%. This group increased from 20.5% in 2000. All other ethnic groups totalled 1.4% although there was a relatively large 'not stated' category consisting of 6.2%. Trinidad and Tobago also has a rich religious composition. The largest religious groups include Roman Catholic 21.6 %, Hinduism 18.2%, Pentecostal/ Evangelical/ Full Gospel 12%, Spiritual Shouter Baptist 5.7% and Islam 5%.³

The judicial and political situation

4. Trinidad and Tobago is a sovereign democratic State founded on the rule of law. Formerly a British Crown Colony, Trinidad and Tobago became self-governing in 1956, achieved full independence in 1962, and became a Republic in 1976. Trinidad and Tobago's 1976 Republican Constitution is the supreme law of the country. It provides for the separation of powers into three branches of Government: the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.

5. Executive power is vested in the President, who acts in accordance with the advice of Cabinet except where otherwise stated by the Constitution. The Cabinet consists of the Prime Minister, who is leader of the majority political party in Parliament, the Attorney General and other Ministers of Government appointed by the Prime Minister from among

¹ Central Statistical Office, *Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report*, Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012

² United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2013, The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*, New York, 2013

³ Central Statistical Office, *Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report*, Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012

the members of Parliament. The Constitution vests the Cabinet with the general direction and control of the Government and makes it collectively responsible to Parliament.

6. The legislative power of Trinidad and Tobago resides in a bicameral Parliament, comprised of the Upper House called the Senate consisting of 31 appointed senators, and a Lower House called the House of Representatives consisting of 41 elected members.

7. Under the *Municipal Corporations Act, 1990* Local Government Councils administer nine (9) Regional, two (2) City, and three (3) Borough Corporations in Trinidad and Tobago.

8. The Judiciary comprises the superior courts (the Supreme Court of Judicature consisting of a High Court of Justice and a Court of Appeal), the inferior courts (the Magistrate Courts), and the Privy Council which is the Highest Appellate Court of Trinidad and Tobago.

9. Tobago was merged administratively with Trinidad in 1888, to form a single colony. Tobago's affairs are administered by the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) under the *Tobago House of Assembly Act, 1996*. The THA is a corporate body consisting of 12 Assemblymen elected by the people of Tobago, four (4) appointed Councillors and a Presiding Officer. The Assemblymen elect from among their members the Chief Secretary and the Deputy Chief Secretary. The THA is responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy in all spheres, except for National Security, Immigration, Foreign Affairs and the Judiciary. The Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago retains general direction and control of the THA in accordance with the Constitution.

The economy

10. The Trinidad and Tobago economy is based primarily on the export of crude oil, natural gas and petrochemicals. It has shown remarkable resilience during the current global economic crisis. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita stood at US\$15,511.70 in 2011, which was estimated to have fallen by 1.4%, following declines of 0.02% and 3.3% in the previous two years. Both the energy and the non-energy sectors declined.⁴ In 2012, the Central Bank reported real GDP growth as 0.2%. Although this was well below the bank's 1% forecast, the second half of 2012 saw the economy return to growth of nearly 1.5%. GDP growth expanded further to 1.7% in 2013. Based on estimates of the Central Statistical Office, the economy is expected to expand in real terms by 1.9% in 2014.⁵

11. Within the last reporting period, Trinidad and Tobago has seen a gradual decrease in the rate of unemployment. According to Central Bank data centre statistics, the unemployment rate decreased from 10.5% in 2003 to 4.9% in 2012. There was a slight increase in the unemployment rate from 5.3% to 5.9% in 2009-2010 during the time of the global economic crisis. However, in 2011, the rate continued on its downward trend as the economy recovered. In 2013, the Central Bank recorded the lowest unemployment rate in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. The rate fell from 4.7% at the end of 2012 to 3.7% at the start of 2013. The Central Statistical Office recorded at the end of the first quarter of 2013, that 635,100 persons were registered as part of the labour force. This represented an increase of 5,400 or 0.8% when compared to the fourth quarter of 2012. From a gender perspective, this increase in the labour force was reflected among males which rose by 0.1%, and women which increased by 1.9% when compared with the previous quarter. As regards the number of persons employed, in the first quarter of 2013, it was recorded that

⁴ Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, *2011 Annual Economic Survey*, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 2012.

⁵ Ministry of Finance and the Economy, *Review of the Economy 2014*, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 2014

the number of employed males increased by 4000 or 1.1% while the females increased by 7,500 or 3%.

The general framework protecting human rights

12. The fundamental human rights and freedoms of all citizens, adults and children, resident or alien within the jurisdiction of Trinidad and Tobago, are protected under the Constitution. The Constitution expressly declares that the fundamental rights which it sets out exist without discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex.

13. An individual whose Constitutional rights are violated or are likely to be violated by any branch of Government, or any servant or agent of the State, may apply to the High Court for redress. The High Court has original jurisdiction in Constitutional matters, with the provision to appeal to the Court of Appeal and further right of appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

14. In addition to the Constitution, other legislation provides the general legal framework for the protection of human rights. Those specifically related to CEDAW are detailed at Appendix II.

15. The *Judicial Review Act, 2000* provides a remedy for the violation of human rights if no alternative remedies are available, and if a person's rights have been violated by a body or authority exercising function in the nature of public law. The High Court must give leave or permission before proceedings are brought under Judicial Review. The High Court can then conduct a review of the decision or review of the conduct of the public authority to determine whether or not the authority acted within its powers and in accordance with the principles of natural justice. The Court can also award damages on an application of Judicial Review, if such damages would have been recoverable in an ordinary action begun by claim form or Constitutional motion.

16. *The Ombudsman Act, 1977* provides an administrative authority with jurisdiction for investigating alleged infringements of human rights. The Ombudsman investigates complaints made by individuals concerning administrative acts or decisions of Government agencies. The Ombudsman holds office for a period of five years and is appointed by the President acting in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The Ombudsman may refer matters to the authority competent to take disciplinary action or other proceedings where there is evidence of any breach of duty, misconduct or criminal offence on the part of any officer or employee of any government department or authority.

17. The Police Complaints Authority is a statutory authority established in 1995 consisting of five (5) members appointed by the President. The Authority receives complaints on the conduct of any Police Officer and monitors the investigation of complaints by the Complaints Division. The Complaints Division, set up by the Commissioner of Police and staffed by Police Officers, investigates and resolves *bona fide* complaints by way of counselling, instituting disciplinary proceedings or by criminal proceedings in Court.

18. Trinidad and Tobago has ratified several International Human Rights instruments which include, *inter alia*:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD);
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); and
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR);
- Charter of the Organisation of American States;

- The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (“Convention of Belem do Para”); and
- Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism.

In addition Trinidad and Tobago is party to several International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions which include:

- Medical Examination of Young Persons (Sea) Convention, 1921 (No. 16);
- Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention, 1925 (No. 19);
- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29);
- Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention, 1936 (No. 50);
- Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939 (No. 65);
- Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81);
- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87);
- Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97);
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98);
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100);
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105);
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111);
- Fishermen's Competency Certificates Convention, 1966 (No. 125);
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138);
- Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144);
- Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 147);
- Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150);
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159);
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

The status of women

19. The status of women in Trinidad and Tobago is comparable with many middle income developing nations with respect to most social indicators, including life expectancy, maternal mortality, education, employment and general well-being. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) of the 2013 United Nations Human Development Report measures the extent of discrimination by capturing the loss of achievement due to gender inequality in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and labour market participation. The higher the GII value, the greater the discrimination. Based on 2012 data for 148 countries, the GII shows large variations across countries ranging from 0.045 (Netherlands) to 0.747 (Yemen) with an average score of 0.463. Trinidad and Tobago was measured above average as 0.311.⁶

⁶ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2013, The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*, New York, 2013

20. The equal rights of men and women are guaranteed under the 1976 Republican Constitution. Within the past thirty years concerted efforts have been made to remove all legal barriers, and to provide a comprehensive legislative framework for the equitable advancement of women and men in Trinidad and Tobago. Important pieces of legislation supporting advancement in the status of women include, inter alia:

- a. **Legislative Council Order 10 of 1946** (Persons age 21 and over enfranchised);
- b. **The Jury Act, 1922** (as amended by Act No. 175 of 1961 to give equal rights to women to serve as jurors);
- c. **The Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Act, 1972** (upgrading and modernizing of divorce laws);
- d. **The Income Tax Ordinance, 1938**⁷ was amended to give married women the right to file separate income tax returns;
- e. **The Married Person's Act, 1976** (protects the rights of women who may have contributed in money's worth to the acquisition of property, which up until that point went solely into the husband's name);
- f. **The Family Law (Guardianship of Minors, Domicile and Maintenance) Act, 1981** (equalized the rights of women to the custody of their children, and also allowed women (whether married or unmarried) to be equally entitled as men to pass their nationality onto their children who are born outside of Trinidad and Tobago);
- g. **The Family Proceedings Act, 2004** (provides for legal proceedings in matters relating to family and provides for the use of probation officers and mediation)
- h. **The Counting of Unremunerated Work Act, 1996** (requires the Central Statistical Office and other public bodies to produce and maintain statistics relative to the counting of unremunerated work and to provide a mechanism for quantifying and recording the monetary value of such work.)
- i. **The Sexual Offences Act, 1986** and the **Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2000** (the law was extended to make the offence of rape applicable as against a husband to his wife);
- j. **The Offences Against the Person Act, 1925** was amended by Act No.11 of 2005 to introduce offences relating to harassment and includes actions such as loitering at a person's residence or workplace that causes the person to fear that violence would be used against him.
- k. **The Domestic Violence Act, 1999** (this Act allows a person to apply for a Protection Order under circumstances of domestic violence);
- l. **The Legal Aid and Advice (Amendment) Act, 1999** was enacted to amend the existing legal aid scheme to allow, *inter alia*, more persons to qualify for the grant of legal aid and to increase the fees payable to lawyers in legal aid matters. This amendment has also made provision for legal aid to be granted in respect of applications made under the **Domestic Violence Act, 1999**.
- m. **The Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2004** (requires employers to provide facilities to include women, and to protect the health of the unborn child.)

⁷ **The Income Tax Ordinance, 1938** was repealed by section 20 of the **Finance Act, 1966**. The right for every person to file separate income tax returns was incorporated by the **Income Tax Act, 1938 (as amended)**.

n. *The Maternity Protection Act, 1998* (provides for maternity protection and benefits);

o. *The Miscellaneous Provisions (Maternity Protection and the Masters and Servants Ordinance) Act, 2012* (amends the Maternity Protection Act, 1998 to increase maternity leave from 13 to 14 weeks);

p. *The Cohabital Relationships Act, 1998* (confers rights and obligations to common-law spouses with respect to interests in property and maintenance);

q. *The Equal Opportunity Act 2000* (prohibits certain kinds of discrimination including discrimination by sex in relation to employment, provision of goods and services, education and accommodation).

r. *The International Child Abduction Act, 2008* (provides for the application on Trinidad and Tobago of The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction);

s. *The Children Act 2012* (increases protection for children on various issues including protection from abuse, sexual offences, prostitution and child pornography);

t. *The Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011* (introduces the offence of trafficking in persons in accordance with the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children)

21. The overarching national policy framework is the Government's Seven Interconnected Pillars for Sustainable Development⁸. The Seven Interconnected Pillars are based on the underlying philosophy that every citizen, regardless of sex, must be afforded equal opportunities for personal growth, self-expression, enjoyment of life, and participation in the development process. Gender equality was identified as integral to ensure that the development plans of the various sectors address gender concerns.

22. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the implementation of concrete measures aimed at promoting gender equality and equity. The Gender Affairs Division (GAD) in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development is the national focal point for gender and development. The Division works in collaboration with state agencies, civil society and academia to promote an active and visible policy to mainstream gender perspectives into the policies, programmes, projects and activities of Government and civil society. The central areas of focus within the Division are gender sensitization and gender mainstreaming; legislative review and reform and the effective protection of the human rights of women; the socio-economic empowerment of women; the prevention of violence against women and girls; and policy development, analysis and research.

23. Gender and development, apart from national goals, is also guided by several international mandates including:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- The Plan of Action and the Belém do Para Convention of the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (CIM/OAS);
- The Beijing Declaration, Platform for Action and Outcomes Documents;
- The United Nations Millennium Development Goals;
- The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015; and

⁸ The People's Partnership, "Prosperity for All" Manifesto 2010

- The CARICOM Plan of Action.⁹

24. In 2002, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, agreed to the development of a National Policy on Gender and Development. The process culminated with the laying of a Green Paper version of the Draft Policy in Parliament in August 2009, and the call for public comment. Following administrative delays, the process was reactivated by the new Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, in October 2011. A Cabinet Committee was established to make proposals for the finalization of the Draft Policy on Gender and Development. The Committee met bi-monthly from December 2011 to June 2012, and submitted its report, as well as a proposed policy document. The Draft National Policy on Gender and Development continues to be the subject of evaluation by the Cabinet. The Draft Policy provides a framework to guide the advancement of gender equality and equity in Trinidad and Tobago in the public and private sphere, and to mainstream gender in the work of the Government and civil society.

25. The Government's budgetary allocation for gender-related activities has increased by a factor of 410.43% over the period 2000/2001 to 2011/2012 from a base of TTD\$2,314,653 to TTD\$9,500,000 over the review period.

26. An active women's movement comprised of hundreds of women's NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) are at the forefront of the work for the advancement of women in Trinidad and Tobago. These organizations engage in promoting the advancement of women in almost every sphere through advocacy, training, research and special projects. Several men's organizations which promote gender equality and equity have emerged, focusing on issues including the re-socialization of men and boys; positive masculinity, manhood and fatherhood; and the elimination of gender-based violence.

27. In June 2011, the Ministry of the Attorney General, facilitated by its International Law and Human Rights Unit, held a National Civil Society Consultation. Approximately fifty organisations representing a wide cross section of human rights issues, attended this consultation. The purpose of this meeting of civil society was to extract the views and recommendations of civil society regarding current human rights issues affecting Trinidad and Tobago so as to include these views and recommendations in the drafting of National Human Rights Reports. These issues were based on children's rights, women's rights, rights of older persons, civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Assistance for designing this consultation was received from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Part Two: Response to the concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women on the initial, second and third combined periodic report of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago

28. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago welcomed the comments and recommendations by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on its Initial, Second and Third Combined Periodic Report. The recommendations formed the basis for several initiatives promoting the advancement of the status of women during the period under review, 2001-2013. The following sections review the Committee's concluding comments, and identify specific actions taken to advance the recommendations.

⁹ CARICOM gave an undertaking to implement the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action from 1999-2004.

Recommendation 1: Incorporation of Article 1 into domestic legislation

1. The Committee is concerned that the Convention has not been incorporated into domestic legislation. The Committee regrets, in particular, that Article 1 of the Convention which defines “discrimination against women”, is not part of the legislation of the State party.

The Committee recommends that the State party give consideration to the incorporation of the Convention into domestic law. It points particularly to the importance of the incorporation of Article 1 of the Convention. The Committee requests that the State party report on progress made in this regard in its next periodic report, including information on whether the Convention has been invoked before domestic courts.

29. Trinidad and Tobago subscribes to the dualist doctrine of international law, whereby international conventions must be incorporated into domestic legislation for it to be enforceable. As regards CEDAW, there is no one piece of legislation that incorporates this Convention. In fact, the rights and obligations under CEDAW are incorporated and implemented through many pieces of legislation as according to the relevant subject matter. For example, discrimination against women in relation to marriage and divorce is dealt with under the *Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Act, 1972*, whereas, issues in relation to conditions of employment are addressed under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2004*. Individual Government agencies are responsible for the implementation of related international conventions and the International Law and Human Rights Unit of the Ministry of the Attorney General is mandated with the responsibility of reporting on the implementation of international conventions related to human rights.

Recommendation 2: Amending, repealing discriminatory legislation

2. The Committee notes with concern that, despite provisions in the Constitution, laws exist in the State party which may allow for discrimination against women.

The Committee recommends that an inventory be made of the laws that discriminate against women, with a view to their revision, amendment or repeal.

30. During the period under review, the following statutes which discriminated against women have been repealed:

- *The Masters and Servants Ordinance, 1938* was repealed in 2012 by the *Miscellaneous Provisions (Maternity Protection and The Masters and Servants Ordinance) Act, 2012*. This Ordinance, was enacted while Trinidad and Tobago was under colonial rule and was heavily biased towards employers and designed to discipline and suppress workers. The terms defined under the Ordinance such as “servant” and “employer” were limited and did not reflect current circumstances in Trinidad and Tobago;

- *The Employment of Women (Night Work) Act, 1939*, was repealed in 2004 by section 98(1) of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2004*. This Act prohibited women from being employed in night work, except under certain circumstances as expressed under the Act.

31. The Government recognizes that the statutes listed below discriminate against women. Under the national policy framework and the Seven Interconnected Pillars for Development, the Government is committed to reviewing and amending the following statutes, with a view to addressing discrimination against women and fully protecting their rights:

- *The Widows’ and Orphans’ Pension Act, 1934* which was enacted to regulate pensions of deceased public officers, and which excludes women from the definition of “public officer”;

- *The National Insurance Act, 1971* and the *Industrial Relations Act, 1972* which both exclude domestic workers.

Recommendation 3: Mainstreaming of Government Ministries on Gender Issues

3. The Committee is concerned that the apparent lack of coordination among Government bodies tasked with the oversight of gender issues and a failure to allocate responsibility for activities may compromise gender mainstreaming activities and that national women's machinery may be affected adversely by limited human and financial resources.

The Committee encourages gender mainstreaming in all government ministries, as well as the creation of an impact assessment of these efforts. It recommends that the State party clearly define the mandates of the various committees and councils concerned with gender issues and the level of interaction among them. The Committee encourages the State party to continue its process of restructuring the national machinery and to allocate the necessary human and financial resources to ensure effective implementation of governmental policies and programmes related to gender equality. It also encourages gender mainstreaming in all ministries.

32. The Draft National Policy on Gender and Development which continues to be the subject of evaluation by Cabinet,¹⁰ provides a framework for the establishment (as necessary) and coordination of the work of the various bodies tasked with responsibility for gender equality and equity in Trinidad and Tobago, utilizing a Gender Management System (GMS). These include, *inter alia*:

- The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development,¹¹ the Government body responsible for leading the advancement of gender equality and equity in Trinidad and Tobago. As lead agency, the Ministry is expected to report annually to Cabinet on progress made in implementing the National Policy;
- The institutional strengthening of the Gender Affairs Division as the executing agency responsible for guiding and supporting gender mainstreaming, and its heightened relations with all government agencies, relevant NGOs, the private sector, academic institutions, international agencies, and the media;
- The establishment of a Cabinet-appointed Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Draft National Policy on Gender and Development;
- The identification (as necessary), strengthening and equipping of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in each major Government division, to advance gender mainstreaming in policy-making, planning, programming and service delivery in those sectors for which the Ministry has responsibility;
- The establishment of a National Commission on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, an independent statutory body appointed by the President to monitor gender mainstreaming in all sectors, assist in the development of gender-sensitive indicators and other performance management tools and methodologies, and monitor Government compliance with relevant international instruments;
- The representation of the Gender Department of the Tobago House of Assembly on all inter-agency, inter-ministerial national structures and mechanisms formulated to co-ordinate, implement and monitor the National Policy; and

¹⁰ See paragraph 24

¹¹ Or any Government Ministry which is designated with the responsibility for Gender Affairs in the future.

- Ongoing partnership and collaboration with women's and men's organizations, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, professional associations, academia, faith-based organizations and other civil society organizations, to ensure success in the overall implementation of the National Policy.

33. The Gender Affairs Division is mandated to promote the principles of gender equality and equity through gender mainstreaming in all Government policies. One of the strategies to advance this is the Gender Focal Points' project. The focus of the Gender Focal Points' capacity-building project is to:

- Build the capacity of Gender Focal Points to plan, manage and monitor gender mainstreaming in their respective ministries/ agencies;
- Provide a holistic framework for the work of Gender Focal Points across various ministries, in support of the Draft National Policy on Gender and Development;
- Identify and put in place the resources to support the action of Gender Focal Points and their mainstreaming efforts in the various ministries; and
- Provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives to ensure that they are aligned with and meet national and international gender goals.

34. A three-day Gender Sensitization Workshop was held on June 28-30, 2006, with follow-up conducted in various sectors including Health and Labour, and on June 14-16, 2011 with similar ongoing work within sectors. These workshops were designed to introduce persons from various Government ministries and public agencies to the basic concepts of gender and approaches to gender analysis and planning aimed at empowering Gender Focal Points to carry out their mandate. These trained Gender Focal Points are consistently involved in activities of the Division. In addition, in-depth gender mainstreaming training and implementation has been initiated/ conducted with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Local Government. The Gender Affairs Division continues to collaborate with the Commonwealth Secretariat to undertake Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in 10 Government ministries. In March 2012, for example, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development hosted a workshop entitled "Gender Responsive Budgeting" in Port of Spain in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

35. A comprehensive plan for gender mainstreaming in Government ministries/ agencies has been initiated and will continue through the strengthening of Gender Focal Points and the establishment of a Cabinet Appointed Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Draft National Policy on Gender and Development. This will promote greater levels of understanding of the relevance of gender concerns at the macro-, and micro-levels of development in all sectors of Government.

36. The work of the Gender Affairs Division is informed by both Governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and international and regional bodies. Incorporating the gender perspective in all sectors of Government and the wider society is a broad-based activity pursued through extensive training and sensitization, and public education activities. The Gender Affairs Division conducts "Train the Trainers" workshops to assist representatives from both the Governmental and non-governmental sectors to include gender perspectives in their work.

Recommendation 4: Addressing violence against women

4. The Committee expresses concern that, despite innovative legislation, policies and programmes, violence against women remains a serious reality that is being perpetuated by deeply rooted traditional patriarchal attitudes, apparently tolerated by society.

The Committee urges the State party to place a high priority on measures to address violence against women in the family and in society in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation 19 and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Committee recommends that the State party introduce further measures to raise public awareness about violence against women and urges the State party to strengthen its activities and programmes to focus on sexual violence, incest and prostitution.

37. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is very concerned about the high incidence of violence against women and gender-based violence. Nine hundred and forty (940) reports of domestic violence were made to the Police in 2010, 68.2% of which were for "Assault by Beating." In 2010, Police received 215 reports of rape, 22 reports of incest, 158 reports of grievous sexual assaults and 278 reports of sex with minor females 14-16 years of age. In 2013, there were 551 reports of rapes, incest and other sexual offences to the Police.¹² Many cases of gender based violence, including sexual offences against minors go unreported by victims for fear of being re-victimized in the process.

38. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is seriously committed to eradicating violence against women and gender-based violence. In its bid to address this deeply rooted problem, the Government has adopted a multi-faceted approach which includes the following:

- A multi-sectoral Committee on Domestic Violence produced a Procedural Manual for Police Officers and a Report including comprehensive recommendations for addressing domestic violence. The Procedural Manual was approved by Cabinet.
- Ongoing training and public education by the Gender Affairs Division aimed at reducing the incidence of gender-based violence. A large volume of publications is produced each year aimed at public information and sensitization.
- The Division's National Domestic Violence Unit, featuring 24 hours, seven days a week Hotline was restructured in September 2004, with additional human and physical resources. This Hotline receives approximately 30,000 calls annually. The Hotline provides information, active listening support, and referrals to shelters and counselling services, as well as referrals for rapid intervention by the Police. It is geared toward victims of rape, spousal abuse, and other forms of violence against women and men. It needs to be noted that approximately 16% of calls made to the Hotline at present, are by men experiencing gender-based violence and abuse.
- Nineteen Domestic Violence Community Drop-in Centres have been strengthened, with social workers and Counsellors receiving increased remuneration, support and training. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development plans to develop standards/ guidelines/ tools to improve the performance of the Drop-in Centres. The Ministry is also in the process of setting up three new Shelters, two for female victims of domestic violence and one for male victims.
- Non-Governmental Organisations supported by Government agencies provide eleven Shelters for female victims of domestic violence, and a Rape Crisis Centre. Counselling services, support groups and resource facilities are also available within communities to assist in the prevention and treatment of domestic violence.
- The highly successful "Break the Silence" project was first launched in 2010 by the Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) at the University of the West Indies (UWI), which raised awareness nationally and conducted research in local communities on the incidence of child sexual abuse. The success of the project has

¹² Crime and Problem Analysis Branch, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

been largely attributed to the blue teddy bear logo with a plaster on its heart – a powerful branding and advocacy message directed at diverse groups of stakeholders, including community workers and service providers who strategically disseminate key messages and communication materials during events and activities to wide audiences.¹³ As a result of the success of the “Break the Silence” Campaign, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development in collaboration with UNICEF has identified the need to launch the “Break the Silence” Campaign on a national government-led level in Trinidad and Tobago. As such, for 2014 the Ministry has proposed to conduct a series of capacity building workshops with key stakeholders to include targeted training to police, media and civil society organisations. This will be accompanied by a national media campaign and community workshops designed to raise awareness and build community-based mechanisms to address child abuse.

- The Government Information Service (GIS) Radio Unit produced and broadcasted a series of radio programmes that focused on violence against women and addressed traditional stereotypes regarding the role of women and men in society. Specific programmes that encouraged the public to discuss these issues and become proactive in finding solutions included: “Women Can,” “Balancing the Sexes/Female Empowerment,” “Family Time, Let’s Talk,” “Domestic Violence,” “Domestic Violence – What is Love?,” and “Healing our Families.”
- The Family Court initiative was piloted in 2003, which provides victims of domestic violence with access to mediation and redress. Domestic violence cases are heard both in the Family Court and in the Magistrates’ Courts.
- Increased sensitization on the *Domestic Violence Act, 1999* which provides Protection Orders for victims, as well as penalties, fines and possible imprisonment for breaches of the Protection Order.
- Increased media attention to domestic violence has resulted in a clear shift in public opinion from views of the past, which considered domestic violence in the home as a private matter.
- There is a need for improved data collection on the incidence of violence against women, given the perception that police statistics do not adequately capture the high incidence of domestic and other forms of sexual violence that is reported by Government agencies undertaking work among communities. A Central Registry on Domestic Violence and Child Abuse was successfully piloted by the Gender Affairs Division through the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) of the University of the West Indies (UWI). This Registry, which is expected to be formally established in the near future, will collect, collate and analyze data on gender-based violence as a basis for informing policy and programmes aimed at reducing gender-based violence.
- Increased emphasis has been placed on the implementation of Masculinity Programmes to equip men with strategies to cope with their changing roles and responsibilities, to encourage shared family responsibilities, and to reduce the incidence of gender-based violence.¹⁴

¹³ http://www.unicef.org/lac/Break_the_Silence--Introduction_.pdf

¹⁴ See paragraph 41-43 for a description of the Masculinity Programmes implemented.

Recommendation 5: Overcoming traditional stereotypes regarding the role of men and women in society

5. The Committee is concerned about the entrenched stereotypical attitudes and behaviour with regard to the roles of women and men in the family and in society which tend to reinforce women's inferior status in many sectors of public life.

The Committee recommends that the State party take urgent measures to overcome traditional stereotypes regarding the role of women and men in society. The Committee emphasizes that a policy of gender equality in compliance with the Convention will require the re-conceptualization of the role of women in society from that of mother and wife, exclusively responsible for children and the family, to that of individual person and actor in society.

39. While the Government of Trinidad and Tobago takes on board the Committee's concerns, it should be recalled that women in the country have been economically active in the public sphere since the colonial period and currently show relatively high rates of participation in the labour force¹⁵. In addition, since the 1990s women and girls have been showing higher rates of educational participation and attainment than men and boys at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Women also exhibit higher rates of participation and seniority in the public service than men.

40. Despite the above gains, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago continues to implement programmes to overcome traditional stereotypes regarding the role of women and men in society. In the period under review, several initiatives were undertaken by the Gender Affairs Division.

41. The Division developed the "Defining Masculinity Excellence Programme" in a bid to address the gender stereotypes permeating the society. This ongoing series of "Train the Trainers" workshops, provides 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. The objectives of the programme are to:

- Foster improved gender relations between men and women;
- Provide gender sensitization/training for males in various target groups;
- Increase in the number of boys completing secondary and further education;
- Reduce the incidence of domestic and other forms of violence;
- Provide men with the space to share their feelings and concerns openly and non-violently; and
- Promote healthy and positive relationships in the home between men and women, and positive role modeling for children.

Since the programme's inception, over 1,000 men have been trained, several of whom are now in partnership with the Gender Affairs Division to target other men and boys. Additionally, a weekly radio programme was conducted utilizing the content of the Defining Masculinity Excellence Training modules to reach men who cannot attend the programmes.

42. The Gender Affairs Division presented a series of television programmes in 2008, entitled "Gender on Your Agenda: You've Got Male" which focused on specific gender issues affecting men. The programmes featured expert panelists who explored male gender issues related to masculinity and manhood, health and wellness, education, labour and the

¹⁵ See paragraph 11 above

workplace, popular culture, leadership and decision-making. The Division consistently uses radio, television and the press to engage in public sensitization and education on critical gender issues.

43. The Division also undertook a Distinguished Lecture/ Workshop Series which featured gender-based lectures by expert and renowned personalities. Lectures and workshops were held on subjects including: Gender and Health; Gender and HIV/AIDS; Gender and Education; Gender and Community Development; Gender and the Law; Women's Leadership; Gender-Responsive Budgeting; Gender and Climate Change; and Masculinity and Manhood.

Recommendation 6: Increasing the number of women in decision-making bodies

6. The Committee is concerned about women's under-representation in politics and economic leadership. It is concerned that factors impeding women's participation in these areas include 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, which reinforce the idea that politics is a male sphere.

The Committee recommends the introduction of strategies to increase the number of women in decision-making bodies at all levels and in all areas. To this end, the Committee recommends that the State party utilize temporary special measures in accordance with Article 4, Paragraph 1, of the Convention to increase the number of women in decision-making levels in government, governmental bodies, public administration and State-owned enterprises. It also recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to organize special training programmes for women and to conduct on a regular basis, awareness-raising campaigns in this regard.

44. There have been increases in women's overall participation in national leadership and decision making, and an increased commitment to accelerating the achievement of gender equality and equity in political participation and representation of women in public life. The statistics demonstrate the improvement in the participation and representation of women in public life. In January 2013, the Inter-Parliamentary Union's world classification of women elected to parliament ranks Trinidad and Tobago as 33rd with a 28.6% representation in the Lower House or House of Representatives and a 22.6% representation in the Upper House or Senate. In local government, women account for an average of 32% of mayors, aldermen and local councillors. A 2009-2010 survey conducted by the Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women, found that women comprised an average of 29% of members on boards and commissions of all statutory bodies, state enterprises, special purpose companies, listed private companies, credit unions and trade unions. (See Appendix I, Table 1)

45. An important milestone for the advancement of women and girls in Trinidad and Tobago was the election of its first female Prime Minister in May 2010, who subsequently became the first female Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth. Prior to her election as Prime Minister, she was notably sworn in as the first female Leader of the Opposition and earlier as the first female Attorney General. The Prime Minister has sought to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment is a key national priority for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and in this regard hosted a Regional Colloquium on "Women Leaders as Agents of Change" in Port of Spain, from June 28-30, 2011. The Colloquium, which brought together women parliamentarians from North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, called for transformational leadership in areas such as economic empowerment and security, ending gender-based violence, advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, equal pay for equal work of equal value, and shared family responsibilities. The "Port of Spain Consensus", the outcome document, made recommendations to address these and other issues. At the Colloquium, the Prime Minister

announced the creation of a Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, prioritizing gender issues in the national development agenda.

46. Building upon the success of the Regional Colloquium, the Honourable Prime Minister called for the *Side Event on Women's Political Participation*, which was held on September 19, 2011, in the margins of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Panellists and co-sponsors at this inaugural event included Her Excellency Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil; Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; the Honourable Hillary Clinton, former Secretary of State of the United States of America; Asha-Rose Migiro, former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; Michelle Bachelet, former Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women and former President of Chile; and Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and former Prime Minister of New Zealand.

The outcome was a *Joint Declaration on Women and Political Participation* which "encourages all States to take proactive measures to address the factors preventing women from participating in politics such as violence, poverty, lack of access to quality education and health care, the double burden of paid and unpaid work, and to actively promote women's political participation including through affirmative measures, as appropriate."

47. As further evidence of the input of women at leadership levels, in 2014 the High Court had 13 female judges, while 3 women serve as Justices in the Court of Appeal roster with a view to increasing the number of Court of Appeal judges to address the increasing case load. The Magistracy is supported by 40 women of a total complement of 56 Magistrates, led by Trinidad and Tobago's first female Chief Magistrate. Additionally, women hold top executive positions in private sector organisations in Trinidad and Tobago.

48. Within the realm of national security, the number of women police officers has increased drastically from 12 in 1955 to 1700 out of a total of 6000 in 2011. Women police officers have benefited from the transformation of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service which now uses a merit-based system of promotions, as opposed to the former system based on seniority. Therefore, all officers, female or male, have equal opportunities for training and promotions. Currently, the senior post of Acting Assistant Commissioner of Police is held by a woman police officer and the largest number of promotions of women police officers occurred in 2011. (See Appendix I, Table 2)

49. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has a Women's Affairs Unit to address the gender-specific concerns of women police officers, such as day-care centres for young mothers in the Service. The Unit has also begun a leadership programme which prepares women police officers to hold executive positions including Commissioner of Police. In addition, the Unit has piloted gender sensitization workshops for women police officers.

Recommendation 7: Elimination of discrimination in employment and education

7. The Committee is concerned that, despite high educational qualifications, women continue to be underpaid in every sector of employment, except the State employment sector. It is also concerned about the consequences of gender stereotyping in curricula and the impact of the fact that girls take traditional "female" courses and boy's traditional "male" courses on women's employment options and income. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of specific legislation prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace and providing a remedy for victims of sexual harassment.

The Committee encourages the State party to analyze the lack of correlation between the high level of education attained by women and their income levels; it urges the State party to implement curriculum reform and the revision of textbooks in order to combat traditional attitudes towards women and to help to create an enabling environment for women's presence in high-level and well-paid positions. It also

recommends that the State party avail itself of existing research and practice with regard to equal pay for work of equal and comparable value in order to overcome inequality in pay. The Committee further recommends that sexual harassment in the workplace, including in the private sector, should be penalized, and remedies provided for those affected.

50. Women and girls in Trinidad and Tobago show higher participation and attainment rates at all compulsory levels of education and tertiary education. However, the Government recognizes that this is still not adequately reflected in employment or income parity. While the number of women in employment has increased,¹⁶ women are still not equally represented in the labour force, nor are they rewarded equitably for their work despite having attained higher education levels.

51. The United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2009 recorded that for Trinidad and Tobago, women's average income as a percentage of men's in 2007 was lower in all occupational categories except in the public sector. In 2007, women's estimated earned income was US\$16,686 per annum, compared to men's of US\$30,554 per annum. The estimated ratio of female to male earned income was 0.55 for comparable positions, despite their higher educational achievements (UNDP, 2009).¹⁷

52. There are also substantially smaller proportions of women entrepreneurs and employers in the labour force. However, women feature predominantly among micro-entrepreneurs, and in recent times account for 50-60% of micro-enterprise loans. These trends demonstrate that women, through access to higher education, are realizing upward mobility through the labour force.

53. With respect to sexual harassment, as a form of gender-based discrimination in the workplace, related statutes such as the *Sexual Offences Act, 1986* are used to prosecute perpetrators of sexual harassment. Currently, however, there are no specific laws to provide remedies for sexual harassment. Private agencies and trade unions often incorporate anti-harassment provisions in their collective agreements and the Industrial Court has made several rulings in favour of victims of sexual harassment within the workplace. The Government has established a Steering Committee for Action against Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, which will oversee the conduct of a national study on the issue.

54. The Draft National Policy on Gender and Development commits Government to create and revise, where necessary, legislation mandating gender equity in hiring, promotion, salaries, separation and other conditions of work. This will require specific attention to legislation related to equal remuneration for work of equal value. The Draft National Policy further commits the Government to establish institutional mechanisms to effectively monitor and promote equal employment opportunities for men and women in the public and private sectors, and the conduct of gender audits at all levels with regard to hiring, promotion, separation, conditions of work, salary, minimum wage, and gender equity issues.

Recommendation 8: Inclusion of domestic workers within the definition of "worker" under the Industrial Relations Act

8. The Committee is concerned that, 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.

¹⁶ See paragraph 11 above

¹⁷ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2009*

The Committee calls upon the State party to bring domestic workers within the definition of “worker” in the Industrial Relations Act.

55. The Government is aware that domestic workers are not currently covered under the definition of “worker” in the *Industrial Relations Act, 1972*. The issue of re-defining a ‘worker’ has been included in the legislative agenda of the Legal Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. The difficulty in defining domestic employees as workers is that householders employing them would also necessarily be defined as employers, and be subject to action before the Industrial Court. This may have the adverse effect of discouraging householders from employing domestics. The issue continues to be addressed with the aim of reviewing the *Industrial Relations Act, 1972*.

56. *The National Insurance Act, 1971* has been amended in 2004, 2007, 2008, 2012, and 2013¹⁸. These amendments include: increases in the benefits payable to employees; provisions for stricter measures against recalcitrant employers; and provisions for employees to make payments on their own behalf. Public awareness has been increased to ensure that low income earners in particular are not excluded from benefits under the Act. National Insurance paid on behalf of domestics is now tax refundable as an incentive to promote compliance by employers.

Recommendation 9: Eradicating poverty among women

9. The Committee is concerned at the high incidence of poverty among various groups of women, in particular female heads of households. The Committee recognizes that women-headed households have been negatively affected by structural adjustment programmes and the changing global situation.

The Committee requests the State party to provide additional information on the programmes and projects that have been implemented to combat the negative impact of structural adjustment programmes on women, and in particular households headed by women, and to ensure that governmental policies to eradicate poverty are continuous, incorporate a gender perspective and do not marginalize women.

57. According to the Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report, the average household size is 3.3 persons. It should be noted that there has been an increase in the number of female-headed households, from 28% in 1990 to 33% in 2011. Low income single female-headed households tend to be poorer than those supported by male earners, and are more prone to social vulnerabilities. (See Appendix I, Table 3 for a summary of the characteristics of households in relation to gender and head of household for 2006.) To address these challenges, the Government has undertaken several key programmes as outlined below.

58. The Gender Affairs Division established the **Gender Equity Institute** during the review period. This Institute had responsibility for the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at advancing gender equity. This roving Institute has facilitated a myriad of gender-related training and institutional strengthening programmes to NGOs, community interest groups, and members of the general public. Courses included: Parenting, Leadership, Team Building, Training for Community Lay Counsellors, Business Development Programmes, and the Non-Traditional Skills Training Programme for men which was launched in 2004 with a course on Food Preparation.

59. The **Women in Harmony Programme** is in its eleventh year. It was designed to address the problem of unemployment among women between the ages of 26 and 45 who are single heads of households with low/ no skills, and low/ no income. The Programme

¹⁸The National Insurance Act, 1972 has been amended by Act: (No 9 of 2004); (No. 30 of 2007); (No. 17 of 2008); (No. 18 of 2008); (No. 2 of 2012); (No. 2 of 2013); (No 73 of 2013).

consists of an intensive eight weeks of full-time training in two modules: (i) Elderly Care and Agriculture, and (ii) Life Skills. The programme is being conducted in regions across Trinidad. Since its inception, over 5,000 women have been empowered and have gained employable skills.

60. Since its launch in 2001, the **Non-Traditional Skills Training Programme for Women** has trained over 3,000 women in non-traditional fields including Masonry, Plumbing, Technical Drawing and Blue Print Reading, Construction, Carpentry, Automotive Repairs and Electrical Installation. Women are provided with a total of 320 hours of training on a six-month, part-time basis. Technical/vocational skills are enhanced with gender sensitization and life coping skills, remedial numeracy, literacy and entrepreneurship skills.

61. The Ministry of Local Government initiated a **Women's Unemployment Relief Programme (WURP)** in 2001 for women aged 17 to 65 who are unemployed, vulnerable to, or living in poverty. The labour intensive (maintenance) programme employed an average of 2,760 women nation-wide, on a fortnightly basis. The programme also expanded its training to include non-traditional skills, orthopedics manufacturing, fish farming, construction and business management.

62. The Ministry of the People and Social Development has established a programme called the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) Social, which has employed over 200 mothers of children with cerebral palsy to work in social centres, enabling them to earn an income and provide care for children with special needs.

63. The **Prime Minister's Best Village Trophy Competition** is hosted annually by the Ministry of Community Development and will celebrate 50 years in 2014. The "Best Village" competition is a multifaceted competition, grounded in the reality of community life and engenders the spirit of multiculturalism since it is not limited to the performing arts of music, dance and drama. It contributes to the economic empowerment, personal growth and development of women in rural areas and keeps alive the community spirit to improve and develop the expertise of citizens in sports and the arts, as well as knowledge of our folk traditions. Overall this annual competition aims to:

- (i) Empower communities;
- (ii) Provide an opportunity for communities to be more conscious about their environment and participate in exercises that will enhance their surroundings and at the same time, develop a sense of self-worth;
- (iii) Encourage a sense of national pride, community spirit and community elevation through healthy competition and social interactions;
- (iv) Encourage the creativity of our peoples in their food and artistic talents;
- (v) Encourage specifically the retention of the Folk Art and the celebration of the arts in general; and
- (vi) Identify, preserve and record our historical and environmental sites throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

64. Another Government initiative aimed at addressing gender equity and alleviating poverty is the **Community Development Fund (CDF)**, a flagship programme of the Ministry of Community Development. The goal of all projects under this Fund is to initiate sustainable livelihoods for indigent communities with a means to closing the poverty gap. Programmes and projects funded include those initiated by NGOs and CBOs that aim to deliver basic social services and infrastructure to the poor and needy. Key aspects of the Fund include the involvement of the beneficiary population in the poverty alleviation efforts, as well as a technical assistance component which focuses on the institutional strengthening of NGOs and CBOs. Several projects which promote women's empowerment

have been funded by the CDF. The Sea Lots Action Committee Agriculture Project is one such project, which seeks to combat the negative impact of structural adjustment programmes on women and in particular households headed by women. Twelve (12) unemployed women, many of whom were female heads of households, were trained in Short Crop Agriculture and Grow-Box technology as a means of earning income for themselves and their families. The project is run on a cyclical basis, with another twelve (12) women being trained in subsequent three (3) month cycles.

65. The **Skills Training Programme** is coordinated by the Ministry of Community Development and is geared towards empowering women in rural areas, particularly with respect to employment and health. The Skills Training Programme has a twofold function. First, it provides critical support for low-income householders by equipping them with skills to engage in home-based production of goods and services that reduce household expenditure and allows for the more effective use of scarce financial resources, which improve their standard of living. Second, the programme trains unemployed and under-employed persons with the requisite skills to enhance their competitiveness in the job market and in the creation of sustainable self-employment initiatives.

66. The primary objectives of the Skills Training Programme are as follows:

- (i) To enable citizens to achieve economic empowerment and instill a clear view of the possibilities for development within the society;
- (ii) To provide meaningful opportunities for members of the society to participate in the mainstream of development;
- (iii) To foster self-reliance amongst citizens, and encourage them to take initiatives with respect to their own development as well as that of their communities;
- (iv) To promote a sense of self-worth among members of the community and within the country as a whole;
- (v) To stimulate creative endeavours; and
- (vi) To provide equal opportunities for a better quality of life for all members of the society.

67. The Skills Training Programme pays particular attention to education and training for the generation of sustainable employment opportunities to alleviate poverty and promotes equity and harmony in the society. The Programme provides Levels I and Level II training in the following subject areas:

- (i) Technical/Vocational Courses;
- (ii) Personal Development Courses;
- (iii) Handicraft Courses;
- (iv) Entrepreneurial (Micro-enterprise) Development/Management Courses.

Recommendation 10: Preventing the incidence of child marriages

10. The Committee is concerned that child marriages are sanctioned under several of the legal regimes regulating marriage. The Committee notes that such marriages are prohibited by Article 16, Paragraph 2, of the Convention, and that such marriages have serious consequences for girls, including with regard to health. The Committee is concerned about the high rate of teenage pregnancy and its consequences for girls' enjoyment of the rights guaranteed by the Convention, in particular in the sphere of education.

The Committee urges the State party to ensure that all its minimum age of marriage laws and other programmes to prevent early marriage are in line with the obligations

of the Convention. The Committee also recommends that Trinidad and Tobago introduce appropriate policies and programmes for sex education and family planning education.

68. A minor is defined, according to the *Citizenship of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 1976*, as “being a person who has not attained the age of 18 years.” However, the minimum legal age of marriage is determined by the specific laws and practices of the various religious denominations, as indicated above. The age of consent for marriage in Trinidad and Tobago is governed by both statutory law and the common law. Trinidad and Tobago’s four Marriage Acts, reflecting the country’s multi-ethnic population, have different provisions for the minimum age for marriage of young girls.

69. Trinidad and Tobago’s four Marriage Acts are as follows:

- The *Marriage Act, 1923*: Under this Act, which applies to Christian and to civil marriages, males can contract a marriage at age fourteen (14) while females can enter into marriage at age twelve (12) (which are the minimum ages for marriage at common law).
- Under the *Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, 1961*, section 8, the age at which a member of the Muslim community is capable of contracting marriage is sixteen (16) in the case of males and twelve (12) in the case of females. However, in the case of an intended marriage between persons either of whom is under eighteen (18), consent is required from a father and if deceased from a guardian.
- Under the *Hindu Marriage Act, 1945* the age at which a member of the Hindu faith is capable of contracting marriage is eighteen (18) years in case of males and sixteen (16) years in case of females. Notwithstanding this, the marriage of a male or female under the ages of eighteen (18) and sixteen (16) respectively may be solemnized where the appropriate consent of a parent or a guardian has been obtained.
- The *Orisa Marriage Act, 1999*, section 9 states: “The age at which a person, being a member of the Orisa faith or religion, is capable of contracting marriage shall be eighteen (18) years in the case of males and sixteen (16) years in the case of females. A marriage shall not be solemnized by a Marriage Officer if the intended husband is under eighteen (18) years of age or the intended wife is under sixteen (16) years of age unless the consent of the minor has been given in accordance with the following provisions of this section. The required consent to marriage by a minor shall be given by the mother or father of the minor and if the mother and father are dead, by the guardian or guardians appointed for the purpose by the President.

70. While the four Marriage Acts of Trinidad and Tobago allow for girls to be married at ages 12, 14 and 16, the practice of early marriage has decreased significantly. In the period 1997-2007, 104 marriages of girls under 15 years old occurred. However, no boys under the age of 15 were married in the same period. With regard to the 15-19 year-old age group, 8,406 girls were married compared to 1,302 boys.¹⁹ For the Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report, it was recorded that 22 girls at the age of 14 years were married while 15 boys were also married at the age of 14. Within the 15-19 age group, 902 girls were married while 235 boys were married for the same age group.²⁰

¹⁹ Central Statistical Office, Government of Trinidad and Tobago, *ASD Report 1997-2007*, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 2009.

²⁰ Central Statistical Office, *Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report*, Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012

71. In several instances, the minimum age of marriage is in conflict with the child protection goals of the sexual offences legislation. The latter establishes 16 as the age of consent to sexual activity.²¹ Despite the incremental changes taking place in the society, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is cognizant of the prejudicial nature of child marriages to the welfare and development of girls. The Government is also committed to the protection of all children, and to ensuring the ability of each child to develop to their full potential. Concerted action therefore continues to be taken to promote the elimination of child marriage.

72. In her address as Commonwealth Chair-in-Office at the opening of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Perth, Australia in October 2011, the Prime Minister stated that: “I created a Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, which is at this point in time, examining the issue of changing our laws with respect to child marriages.” In response to the Prime Minister’s statement, the CHOGM Communique stated as follows: “Giving due consideration to the domestic legislation of Member Countries, the Commonwealth may address the issue of early and forced marriage, and consider actions to support the rights of women and children and to share its best practices to promote the implementation of measures to tackle early and forced marriage.”

73. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development convened a National Stakeholder Consultation on the “Standardization of the Legal Age of Marriage in Trinidad and Tobago” on November 4, 2011. It is noteworthy that some 40% of participants were young people representing various faiths, who spoke out strongly against early marriage. The Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development held a follow-up consultation with religious leaders of the Muslim, Hindu and Orisa faiths to discuss the issue. In addition, during the recent parliamentary debate on the *Children Act, 2012*, independent senators in the Upper House or Senate spoke out against early marriage in Trinidad and Tobago. Public consultations were also held by the Hindu Women’s Organisation (HWO), a faith-based women’s NGO, and the Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat Association Inc. of Trinidad and Tobago (ASJA), to discuss the issue of early marriage.

74. The Government acknowledges that the incidence of teenage pregnancy is high and needs to be addressed. In his contribution to the debate on the Children Bill (now the *Children Act, 2012*), the Minister of Education in March 2012 quoted statistics from the Central Statistical Office (2006), indicating that 2,500 pregnancies occur annually among girls under 18. Initiatives being implemented to address this issue include an **Early Motherhood Programme** which was initially undertaken by the Ministry of Social Development, and is now under the purview of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. While providing information and support on how to care for their children, the main thrust of this programme is to encourage girls to continue their formal education. Additionally, the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago conducts programmes on teenage pregnancy including drop-in clinics, provision of information and services, and public sensitization.

75. With regard to sex education in the formal education system, the Ministry of Education has developed a Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum for primary schools. While primary school teachers are trained in the delivery of the HFLE curriculum, it is often not included in the curricula of primary schools. In recognition of the need for sex education in schools, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development is

²¹ Gaietry Pargass, “A Review of the Laws Relating to Child Sexual Abuse in Trinidad and Tobago”, Paper commissioned by the Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago and the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition Against Domestic Violence, for the action/research project on “Breaking the Silence: A Multi-Sectoral Approach to Preventing and Addressing Child Sexual Abuse in Trinidad and Tobago”, July 2009.

in the process of developing a sex and sexuality education programme aimed at raising the awareness of parents through the National Parent Teachers Association. It is anticipated that once parents become fully aware of the need for sex education, they may be more disposed to having HFLE introduced to their children in schools.

76. The Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago has passed several pieces of legislation aimed at the protection of children. These include:

- ***The Children's Authority Act, 2000***

This Act has been partially proclaimed to enable a Board of Management to be appointed and to work at putting in place sufficient infrastructure, policies and procedures to enable the Act to be fully proclaimed. The Authority, when fully established, would be responsible for inter alia investigating complaints of staff, children and parents of children with respect to any child who is in the care of a community residence, foster home or nursery. The Children's Authority Act has been amended in 2003 and in 2008 by Act No. 8 of 2003 and Act No. 14 of 2008 respectively.

- ***The Adoption of Children Act, 2000***

This Act makes provision for the regulation of procedures governing the adoption of children, which includes the establishment of an Adoption Board. The Board is charged with the responsibility, inter alia, to receive applications from parents, guardians, the Children's Authority and prospective adopters in respect of adopting children; make investigations for the consideration of the Court; co-operate and assist the Children's Authority in relation to adoption; make recommendations to the Court; and listen to the views of the child.

- ***The Children's Community Residences, Foster Homes & Nurseries Act, 2000***

This Act makes provision for the monitoring licensing and regulating of community residences, foster care and nurseries in Trinidad and Tobago. Under this Act, no person shall manage a community residence without a residence licence from the Children's Authority. In addition, this Act also establishes a foster care system to be managed by the Children's Authority.

- ***The International Child Abduction Act, 2008***

This Act was enacted and came into force on 15, October 2008, and provides for the application on Trinidad and Tobago of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The provisions of the Convention are attached to the Schedule of the Act and aim to secure the prompt return of children wrongfully removed to or retained in any Contracting State and to ensure that rights of custody and of access under the law of one Contracting State are effectively respected in the other Contracting States. The Act establishes a Central Authority known as the Civil Child Abduction Authority to discharge the duties as imposed by the Convention. The Civil Child Abduction Authority also operates under the mandate of the Attorney General.

- ***The Children's Life Fund Act, 2010***

The Children's Life Fund Act was piloted by the Prime Minister in 2010. It established the Children's Life Fund Authority, created to provide funding and critical support specifically for children needing life-saving, tertiary-level health care services.

- ***Miscellaneous Provisions (Minimum Age for Admission to Employment) Act, 2007***

This Act aims to give effect to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 138 relating to the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and establishes the minimum age for admission to employment as sixteen years. Further, it amends the *Children's Act, 1925* in relation to children in employment and also provides for rules relating to employers in the management of persons under the age of eighteen years.

- ***Family Proceedings Act, 2004***

This Act relates to any family proceedings arising out of a superior or inferior Court of record. It provides for the services of probation officers as well as mediators in family matters.

- ***The Children Act, 2012***

This Act relates to criminal offences against children and child offenders and seeks to repeal and replace the *Children Act, 1925*. This new regime strengthens the child protection system and makes provision for offences against children that were previously not included in the old regime. New crimes include, inter alia, offences relating to firearms; female genital mutilation; abuse of children through prostitution; sexual offences generally; dangerous drugs, tobacco and alcohol and offences relating to child pornography.

77. Trinidad and Tobago is a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). A Cabinet Appointed Committee has been mandated to implement the articles of this Convention. In this regard, a National Plan of Action for Children in Difficult Circumstances (NPA Committee) has been established to operationalize the CRC. This multi-sectoral Committee is engaged in the development of a National Strategic Plan for Children. Two of the strategies adopted to increase public awareness on the Rights of the Child include extensive public education programmes and the annual commemoration of International Children's Day.

78. A new National Youth Policy for the period 2012-2017 was developed by a Cabinet Appointed Committee, and was approved by Cabinet in November 2012 and charges the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development with the responsibility of developing and empowering young people from the ages 12-29 to make informed life choices. The overall goals of the policy include; enabling young people to lead, initiate and participate in actions that would lead to their development and that of their communities; ensure that young people have access to adequate resources; ensure a coordinated response from all stakeholders in the operation of youth-related programmes; and to develop qualities of citizenship and pride in young people. Additionally the Youth Affairs Division of the Ministry works in collaboration with other agencies (including the Ministry of Health, Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago (FPATT), Advocates for Safe Parenthood (ASPIRE), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and the Red Cross) to deliver sex education and life skills to out-of-school youths. Target groups and initiatives include youth groups, school "Edu-vans" and peer education programmes. The Division's roving awareness-raising programme, "The Youth Health Caravan" visits communities, targeting primarily the youth cohort and by extension, their families. Information is shared using a variety of methodologies, including the cultural and performing arts and drama. Young persons can access testing for HIV/AIDS, eye and blood pressure, and view displays with information on sexually transmitted infections, and other health related issues.

Recommendation 11: Family planning programmes for men and women

11. The Committee is concerned that family planning programmes appear to be aimed only at women and there is limited emphasis on male responsibility in this regard.

The Committee recommends the introduction of programmes to encourage men to take part in family planning responsibilities.

79. In the period under review, increased attention has been focused on the role of men in family planning, shared family responsibility, and building greater levels of gender equity. The Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development began collaborating with UNFPA in 2010-2011 to raise awareness among men and boys of their responsibility for sexual and reproductive health issues. Through this initiative posters and six (6) brochures (on Sexually Transmitted Infections, Contraceptives, Condoms, Pregnancy, Caring for Newborn Babies, and Infertility) were produced and distributed through exhibitions, a Men's Health Caravan, and a Fatherhood Fair held by the Ministry of National Security.

80. The Gender Affairs Division also implemented a **Defining Masculinity Excellence Programme**²² which focused on increasing gender equity between men and women by assisting men to understand and cope with the challenges of changing gender roles in their lives, and equipping them with the strategies to succeed in familial and other relationships. Two past participants were contracted by the then Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs to implement sustainable programmes reaching men and boys. Several men who were trained in this programme currently support the Gender Affairs Division in working with other men and boys.

81. The Gender Affairs Division's **Food Preparation and Home Management for Men and Boys** programme was piloted in 2003, and is currently being implemented in community centres across Trinidad. The programme aims to address shared family responsibilities and provide men and boys with life skills including, *inter alia*, food preparation, home management, financial management, home gardening, and men's health. Over 2,000 men and boys have completed this programme, which is delivered in a non-threatening, all-male environment. The participants benefit from the support of other men in promoting shared family responsibilities, including in the area of food preparation.

82. In an effort to reduce the incidence of risky behaviour and promote greater responsibility for contraceptive use, a **Men's Health Caravan** was established to provide health information and basic screening for men, especially those in rural communities. The programme includes testing for HIV/AIDS, high blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, prostate cancer, as well as vision screening and immunization. The Family Planning Association has also introduced an all-male clinic which increases access to similar health services.

Recommendation 12: Inclusion of data and information on rural women and policies to improve their situation

12. The Committee is concerned at the absence of details on any public policy for rural women, including in respect to employment and health. It is particularly concerned about the situation of older women in rural areas.

The Committee urges the State party to include in its next report more information and data on the situation of rural women, and of older rural women in particular, and on any policy aimed at their economic empowerment as well as their access to employment and health-care services.

83. The Draft National Policy on Gender and Development seeks to integrate gender equality goals into strategies aimed at increasing food security and natural resource exploitation, as a means of ensuring the wellbeing of women and men, their sustainable livelihoods and equitable access to productive resources. To this end, an investigation will

²² See paragraph 41

be conducted to gather national agricultural data, disaggregated by sex to identify the gender differential with regards to ownership, earnings, crop selection, marketing and other aspects of agriculture, to inform gender aware initiatives required to enhance the Agricultural sector.

84. Trinidad and Tobago's Draft National Policy on Gender and Development and Action Plan was developed through a process of wide stakeholder consultations which were hosted in each county in Trinidad as well as in Tobago. Additionally, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of the Attorney General, placed special emphasis on the participation of rural women in the preparation of the CEDAW Periodic Reports. Workshops were held in 2007 in each of the nine administrative districts to solicit contributions from women in rural areas to assist in shaping the Report and to identify their critical concerns. (See Appendix IV).

85. **The Women in Harmony Agriculture/Landscaping Programme**²³ Women between the ages of twenty six (26) and forty five (45) undergo twelve weeks of training in various agricultural and landscaping techniques which help to provide women with skills for self-sustainability. Entrepreneurship development is also a key module of this programme and start-up kits and other forms of technical and financial assistance are given to those women who have shown the potential to own their own businesses.

86. **The Network of Rural Women Producers of Trinidad and Tobago (NRWPTT)** is the Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP). The NRWPTT has been in existence for the past 12 years. The main goals of the Network are to provide rural women with access to credit for micro-business projects; to contribute to government policies that are sensitive to and supportive of the special needs of rural women producers; to contribute to the elimination of the gender bias in the ownership of land; and ensuring that women have the same opportunities as men to own property. The Network also seeks to provide marketing support for rural women producers and to offer training, research, technical support and outreach services. The NRWPTT, which recently held its 6th Annual Mango Festival, receives an annual subvention from the Ministry of Food Production.

87. The Government's HIV/AIDS education and awareness strategy includes the **HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention Programme for Rural Women**, between 18 and 45 years who are willing to obtain and share information about HIV/AIDS. In the rural area of Moruga, for example, a tangible result of this programme was the development of a resource centre and the establishment of an outreach programme.

88. Rural women of Trinidad and Tobago enjoy membership in the Country Women of the World though the membership of the **Trinidad and Tobago Federation of Women's Institute** which has unit associations in every county and contributes towards the development of national policies through its representation on national bodies. The Federation benefits from financial support from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and seeks to assist women homemakers to become self-sufficient. To improve the socio-economic status of rural women, the Federation offers services in education, training and tutoring.

89. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through its various ministries and agencies, have initiated programmes geared towards providing services to rural women. The Ministry of Local Government, for example, established a Rural Development Company in 2007 with a mandate to improve the situation of rural men and women, including the provision of essential services. The Ministry of the People and Social Development is currently taking a variety of services, including legal services, directly to

²³ See paragraph 59

people in rural communities. The Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development piloted a project to provide Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) training for rural women and in celebration of International Women's Day 2012, the Gender Affairs Division in collaboration with other Government agencies, the private sector and NGOs, held a series of community fairs across the country for rural women.

90. It has been widely acknowledged that financial dependence on one's spouse/partner may contribute to the vulnerability of women in situations of domestic violence, especially those in rural areas. Hence, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago through its ministries and agencies has implemented a number of programmes providing for the continuous retraining of women in non-traditional skills to allow them to negotiate better wages and higher levels of employment and break the stereotyping in the labour market. These training programmes also create job opportunities for women (inclusive of those in rural areas) in the non-agricultural sector and include:

- **The Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme (MuST)** provides training in construction and hospitality and tourism;
- **The Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP)** is an intervention strategy aimed at addressing the issue of escalating unemployment, particularly among young persons between the ages of 15 and 35. YTEPP Limited offers over 80 vocational courses in 12 occupational areas.
- **The On-the-Job Training (OJT) Programme** provides opportunities for nationals between the ages of 16-35, to gain practical experience and work-based training within companies in Trinidad and Tobago. The programme envisions the certification of all trainees under the National Occupational Standards through the Trinidad and Tobago Vocational Qualifications (TTNVQ)/ Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Framework. This new national accreditation system for vocational education allows certified persons to pursue further education and training.
- **The Women in Harmony Elderly Care Programme**²⁴ provides twelve weeks of training for women between the ages of twenty six (26) and forty five (45), including a three week practicum in basic anatomy and physiology, the role of the care giver, safety in the work place, HIV/AIDS, the ageing process and taking vital signs. Graduates of the programme are included in the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme's placement database from which nationals may source care givers for the elderly.

91. There has been an increase in the numbers of Health Centres providing primary health care, especially to rural persons. Apart from Hospitals with specialized Clinics, 102 Health Centres in communities provide rural men and women with access to health services. Additionally 10 mobile Health Clinics were commissioned in 2007, which allows for increased services to rural communities.

92. One of the Government's Seven Pillars for national sustainable development²⁵ is "Poverty Eradication and Social Justice— Preference for Poor and Disadvantaged" which stresses that "all citizens are entitled to a sustainable livelihood and the gap between the haves and have-nots must be closed." In the period under review, the Community Development Fund of the Ministry of Community Development coordinated a **Poverty Eradication Programme**, which included the following approaches geared towards the economic empowerment of rural and impoverished communities and persons:

²⁴ See paragraph 59

²⁵ The People's Partnership, "Prosperity for All" Manifesto, 2010

- Conducting relevant research within vulnerable communities to compile community profiles;
- Initiating community meetings to ascertain information on viable projects;
- Working with groups and various Government and non-governmental agencies and NGOs to develop sustainable projects and programmes;
- Sensitizing communities on social opportunities through community caravans that highlight programmes offered by various Government and non-governmental agencies;
- Implementing projects by providing the necessary resources as required for their sustainability.

93. The Ministry of the People and Social Development is also currently doing significant work on poverty alleviation, including the provision of social safety nets. Efforts are being made to raise the general standard of living in the country, through skills training, non-formal education and income generating activities. The Tobago House of Assembly's Community Development Unit offers various income generation courses such as landscaping.

94. The **Adult Literacy Programme** is coordinated by the Ministry of Community Development and is geared towards the economic empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly with respect to employment and health. As a fundamental human right, access to quality literacy learning opportunities and the continued development of the literacy skills of individuals, and communities are essential components of strategies for poverty reduction, equality, economic development, environmental protection, and the achievement of democracy. This is in keeping with the 'People Centred Development Plan'²⁶ which articulates Government's commitment to making human development a central thrust through the education system and through the creation of other infrastructure to support lifelong learning, skills building, institutional strengthening and the building of a competitive economy.

95. During the period under review, the Ministry of Community Development, in collaboration with the Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA), embarked on a literacy programme with the aim of stimulating the growth of a more informed population. The objectives of this initiative are to:

- (i) Develop mechanisms to reduce poverty and hunger;
- (ii) Assist in increasing the literacy rate;
- (iii) Promote gender equality and empower women;
- (iv) Reduce child mortality;
- (v) Improve maternal health;
- (vi) Assist in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases;
- (vii) Ensure environmental sustainability;
- (viii) Develop a community partnership for development.

96. The Ministry of Community Development has initiated Transformation and Development Centres (TDCs), to perpetuate the vision of empowering women and men to become contributors to development at the community and national levels. The target group for the TDCs includes persons displaced due to job loss, the homeless, unskilled persons,

²⁶ The People's Partnership, "Prosperity for All" Manifesto, 2010

single parent families with a history of mental imbalance, and persons unable to function physically due to ill-health. The TDCs can contribute significantly to the development and empowerment of women who are unemployed or unskilled, single parent mothers and disabled women.

97. The transformational process encompasses counselling, skills training, entrepreneurial development training, and assistance in locating job opportunities or creating self-employment. The specific objectives of the TDCs are to:

- Interview and register unemployed persons who are unable to meet their basic subsistence needs as clients of the centre;
- Provide a daily meal for clients;
- Assess clients and provide or refer them for relevant counselling, as required;
- Expose clients to employment oriented skills training programme; and
- Facilitate and assist clients in the transition from dependence on the services of the centres to a state of self-reliance and empowerment.

Recommendation 13: Response to specific issues raised in concluding comments

13. The Committee requests the State party to respond in its next periodic report to the specific issues raised in the present concluding comments. It also requests the State party to provide in its next report an assessment of the impact of measures taken to implement the Convention.

98. Part three of the Report details measures taken to implement the Convention during the period under review 2001-2013.

Recommendation 14: Acceptance of amendment to Article 20, paragraph 1 and ratification of the Optional Protocol

14. The Committee urges the State party to accept the amendment to Article 20, Paragraph 1, of the Convention, concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

The Committee also urges the State party to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

99. The Optional Protocol to the Convention has not been considered by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to date.

Recommendation 15: Dissemination of the Report

15. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Trinidad and Tobago of the present concluding comments in order to make the people of Trinidad and Tobago, in particular governmental administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken with regard to *de jure* and *de facto* equality for women and of the future steps that are required in that regard.

It requests the State party to continue to disseminate widely, and in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the general recommendations of the Committee, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

100. The Committee's concluding comments formed the basis for a National Consultation on CEDAW held in 2007, in which Government and non-governmental stakeholders participated. The event was attended by over 400 persons. Trinidad and Tobago's Report and the Committee's concluding comments were widely distributed. The

Government Printery published the documents, which are available in major libraries and documentation centres throughout the country.

101. The Gender Affairs Division also developed an easy to read brochure on CEDAW and the Committee's concluding comments, which is distributed to the public. The Beijing Declaration, Platform for Action and Outcomes Document of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly are available through the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and are often distributed by the Gender Affairs Division.

Part Three: Specific provisions to advance the Convention in the period under review 2001-2013

ARTICLE 2: *Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*

102. During the period under review, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago engaged in significant initiatives to promote the advancement of women and gender equality.

103. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development receives substantial budgetary allocations for its projects and programmes through the Government's Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). This programme is the budgeting and strategic planning tool available to the Government to translate its policies and plans into tangible projects and programmes designed to improve the standard of living of citizens and to provide for economic growth and human development. For the period 2012 there was a budgetary allocation of TTD\$ 29.6 million and for the period 2013 the budgetary allocation was increased to TTD\$ 38.7 million.

104. The Draft National Policy on Gender and Development aims to mainstream a gender perspective in the following areas of national life:

- Transformational leadership and governance;
- Macro-economy and trade;
- Labour and employment;
- Poverty alleviation and social protection;
- Agriculture and food security;
- Climate change and natural resource management;
- Education and human capital development;
- Unwaged economic activities, domestic and family life;
- Gender-based violence and human security;
- Health and well-being;
- Gender and special interest groups (youth, elderly, disabled).

The Draft National Policy promotes the inclusion of gender as an integral tool of analysis in national budgetary and planning processes, and as a means of integrating economic planning and gender planning. It promotes Gender-Responsive Budgeting and gender audits in the planning, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the national budgetary process. It also promotes national data collection and collation systems related to the economy, to ensure disaggregation of data by sex and the inclusion of gender perspectives to inform all economic policy decisions.

105. In its thrust to mainstream gender and create awareness among relevant policy makers, the Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child

Development, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, hosted a seminar under its Distinguished Lecture Series on the topic of “Financing for Gender Equity” in 2008. The seminar targeted policy makers from the public and private sectors, including the Ministry of Finance, as well as Permanent Secretaries of all Government Ministries; international agencies and key NGOs. The Gender Affairs Division has also engaged in a gender mainstreaming strategy that included: training of Gender Focal Points from Government ministries and agencies in 2010 and 2011, and a deeper collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Labour.

106. The Equal Opportunity Commission became operational in 2008 in accordance with the *Equal Opportunity Act, 2000* which allows persons to lodge complaints and have them investigated and conciliated or adjudicated. For the period April 2008 to August 2011, The Commission received 112 complaints from females, 49 of which alleged sex discrimination.

107. The Equal Opportunity Commission held two panel discussions in Trinidad and one in Tobago, on the theme of “Understanding and Promoting Equality in Trinidad and Tobago.” The Commission has also embarked on a series of awareness-raising programmes aimed at sensitizing the society and encouraging public discussion on the issue of equal opportunity, as well as to deepen the public’s understanding of the work of the Commission.

ARTICLE 3: *Development and Advancement of Women*

108. During the period under review, women in Trinidad and Tobago have experienced considerable improvements in their development and socio-economic advancement in several key areas such as educational, economic participation, political representation and legislative support. This was reflected in the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2013 where Trinidad and Tobago was ranked 50 out of 186 countries in the Gender Inequality Index, an improvement from 53 in the previous report.

109. The overarching national policy framework, the Seven Interconnected Pillars for Sustainable Development, seeks to promote progress for all in Trinidad and Tobago. Gender equality was identified as integral to this agenda “to create a more gender sensitive society with a greater awareness of women’s issues and rights.”²⁷

110. The National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST) launched the “Caribbean Women in Science and Their Careers” – the 5th publication in series on icons in science technology and innovation, and also collaborated with training institutions to produce a publication on Trinidad and Tobago Icons in Science, Technology and Innovation (volume 2), featuring 29 outstanding scientists, engineers and innovators in the country.

ARTICLE 4: *Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men*

111. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago supports the work of gender-related civil society organisations by way of technical and financial assistance. Hundreds of NGOs have continued to receive support to implement approved programmes, conduct training and capacity building, acquire property and participate in local, regional and international gender fora.

112. Extensive public sensitization and education on gender and development is conducted in order to promote gender equality and equity. These initiatives target the general public through various approaches. Gender training workshops are offered consistently to agencies such as schools, the Defence Force, Government ministries, Gender Focal Points within these Ministries, and civil society. In commemoration of

²⁷ The People’s Partnership, “Prosperity for All” Manifesto, 2010

International Women's Day, workshops are held nationwide on domestic violence, sexual and reproductive health, life skills, agriculture, employment and employability, health and safety and gender-responsive budgeting.

ARTICLE 5: *Elimination of Sex Roles and Stereotyping*

113. The Gender Affairs Division implemented the **Defining Masculinity Excellence Programme** in a bid to address the gender stereotypes permeating the society.²⁸

114. The Gender Affairs Division also developed a series of television panel programmes, entitled "Gender on Your Agenda: You've Got Male."²⁹

115. The Gender Affairs Division established an ongoing Distinguished Lecture/Workshop Series.³⁰

116. The **Non-Traditional Skills Training Programme for Women**, targets women between the ages of 18 and 50 who are unskilled, unemployed or earn low wages, and also provides training on a part-time basis for a six-month period with a stipend of TTD\$60.00 per day. This programme is designed to provide specialized technical and vocational training in the areas of construction, woodwork, automotive repair, technology, industrial maintenance and other training such as entrepreneurship, remedial literacy and numeracy based on community needs.

117. The training also includes entrepreneurship, life skills, gender, remedial literacy and numeracy, and other non-traditional skills based on community needs. The programme provides a total of 320 hours of training on a six-month, part-time basis, and offers a stipend of TTD \$60.00 per day for three days per week over this period. The programme targets women between the ages of 18 and 50 who are unskilled, unemployed or earn low wages.

118. The Electrical Association for Women (EAW) is an NGO which also provides non-traditional training in areas such as making circuit boards and fluorescent lights, repairing small household appliances as well as courses in pottery, concrete works, and furniture.

119. Similarly, efforts have been made to change the stereotypical perceptions and attitudes in relation to traditional male and female occupations, by actively encouraging women to pursue careers in agriculture. Through Phase I of the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA), over, 1,367 women have been trained in practical on-farm aspects of agriculture from 2005 to 2012 and continues to date.

ARTICLE 6: *Suppression of the Exploitation of Women*

120. Measures are ongoing to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women. One such measure pertained to the signing by Trinidad and Tobago in 2001 to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and their subsequent ratification in November 2007. An "Action Plan to Counter Human Trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago" was adopted in an effort to implement these instruments and following several meetings of a special Multi-Sectoral Task Force, the Trafficking in Persons Act was passed in 2011 which became operational in January 2013. A Counter-Trafficking Unit was established thereafter to, inter alia, investigate cases, screen, identify, protect and assist victims and raise public awareness about the crime. There has also been significant collaboration between the Government and civil society and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to address trafficking in persons, with one such being a national awareness programme entitled "Redefining Male Excellence: keeping the promise

²⁸ See paragraph 80

²⁹ See paragraph 42

³⁰ See paragraph 43

to end the sexual exploitation of women and girls, focused on ending the demand for sexual services”.

121. The Domestic Violence Hotline is a toll free service that is operated 24-7, inclusive of public holidays to provide the caller/client with counselling; initial contact with police; referral to a shelter; advice and support. The NGO “Families in Action” was contracted by the Government to manage and monitor the hotline service, and provide data collection and analysis for publication. In accordance with the Domestic Violence Act, 1999, the Sir Arthur Institute for Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) of the University of the West Indies (UWI) in St. Augustine was contracted to pilot a Central Registry for Domestic Violence Data.

122. Shelters in Trinidad and Tobago are managed by NGOs with the aid of Government subventions. There are currently twelve (12) shelters in Trinidad and one (1) in Tobago. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service manages one (1) transitional shelter that provides short-term accommodation for victims of gender-based violence before transition to other shelters. In accordance with international best practice, the operations of existing shelters are currently being reviewed and guidelines are being drafted for the establishment of three (3) model shelters for victims/survivors of gender-based violence, including one (1) for men.

123. Drop-in Centres offer weekly counselling services and other forms of interventions in communities. Access to Community Drop-in Centres and Resource Facilities has improved and a facility specifically targeting men was established. Where necessary, clients are referred to appropriate agencies to have their issues resolved and/or to enhance the services provided. An evaluation of the Centres has been conducted and efforts are being made to restructure the model.

124. Victims of gender-based violence can also access legal services through the Legal Aid Department, and the Ombudsman, whose services are made available in rural communities.

ARTICLE 7: *Equal Rights in Political and Public Life*

125. 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. In 2010, Trinidad and Tobago notably elected its first female Prime Minister who subsequently became the first female Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth. Prior to her assumption of the premiership, she was also sworn in as the first female Leader of the Opposition.

126. Trinidad and Tobago ranks 33rd in the Inter-Parliamentary Union *World Classification of Women Elected to Parliament, 2013* with a 28.6% representation in the Lower House or House of Representatives. In the Upper House or Senate, women were appointed to 25.8% of the seats and at the Local Government level, women account for 32% of the overall participation.

127. The Trinidad and Tobago Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women reported in 2010, that women averaged 29% of executive board membership of all statutory bodies, State enterprises, special purpose companies, listed private companies, credit unions and trade unions, thereby increasing women’s role in the shaping of legislation and policy development.

ARTICLE 8: *International Representation and Participation*

128. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago supports the representation and participation of relevant agencies and personnel in international and regional fora promoting gender and development. This includes those related to the United Nations Systems; the Organization of American States (OAS); the Commonwealth Secretariat and

the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Trinidad and Tobago collaborates with regional and multilateral agencies in the work to promote gender equality and equity inclusive of the following:

- Cabinet’s approval and disbursement of a Grant of US\$5,000.00 annually to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) since its establishment in 2010 and its predecessor the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).
- Cabinet’s approval and disbursement of an annual Grant of US\$15,000.00 to the Follow Up Mechanism on Implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (MESECVI), as well as the submission in 2010 of Trinidad and Tobago’s second National Report on the implementation of that Convention.
- Partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to conduct an ongoing **Distinguished Lecture/Workshop Series**. A publication of all the lectures is in the process of being compiled.
- Partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on several initiatives, including Training Workshops on “**Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health,**” and “**Masculinity in the Caribbean.**” The UNFPA assisted the Gender Affairs Division in evaluating the **Defining Masculinity Excellence Programme**, and in conducting a public education programme sensitizing men on key gender and sexuality issues.
- Partnership with the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) to provide the gender sensitization workshops and materials for “**Gender Mainstreaming in the Health Sector**” for health professionals throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

ARTICLE 9: Equal Rights to Acquire, Change or Retain Nationality

129. *The Citizenship of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (Amendment) Act, 2000* provides equal rights for men and women to acquire, change or retain nationality.

ARTICLE 10: Equality in Education

130. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the provision of equal access to education at pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This is evident in the equitable distribution of schools across the country. The focus of the Government’s policy, “Education for All” is designed to provide equal treatment, attention and opportunities to both boys and girls. In this regard, boys and girls are exposed to the same school curriculum that is free of gender bias at all levels.

131. According to the United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2013, Trinidad and Tobago has achieved a high level of gender parity in education as the population of males and females with at least a secondary education are 59.2% and 59.4% respectively.

132. With regard to tertiary education, the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses programme (GATE) covers 100% of the tuition expenses for undergraduate programmes and 50% for postgraduate programmes at all accredited tertiary level institutions. This has allowed access to tertiary education to increase from 7% in 2000 to approximately 40% in 2012. The 2012-2013 Annual Report for the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine recorded that the total number of students for on-campus enrolment was 19,017. The percentage of T&T students for on-campus enrolment was reported as 90.4%. The comparative distribution of on-campus enrolment by gender for 2012/2013 was 64% females and 36% males. Females have extended their options, and are now equal to or outnumber males in previously male-dominated fields such as the physical and natural sciences, with engineering remaining the only exception.

133. In 2010, Trinidad and Tobago recorded a high United Nations Education for All Development Index (EDI) with a ranking of 49 among 120 countries. Trinidad and Tobago also scored a value of 0.962 on the EDI with the value of 1 representing full achievement. An Adult Literacy Rate of 0.988 was also recorded on the EDI.

134. The **Women in Harmony Programme** commenced in 2002, in response to numerous requests from women, particularly single parents, for opportunities for training and employment to improve their economic situation. It is designed to address the problem of unemployment among women between the ages of 26 and 45, who are single heads of households with low/no skills, low/no income, and limited educational capabilities.³¹

ARTICLE 11: *Elimination of Discrimination in Employment*

135. In the 1st quarter of 2010, unemployment stood at 5.1% overall. The labour force comprised a total of 371,000 men with a participation rate of 76.5%, and 261,600 women with a participation rate of 52.8%. While women have experienced an average annual increase in the labour force participation rate of 2.4% since 1990, men, have experienced only a 1% increase in participation over the period, despite having a larger participation rate in the labour force.³²

136. Trinidad and Tobago has improved its legislative landscape to address discrimination within the workplace, namely, the ***Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2004***, which requires employers to implement provisions for women and the unborn child. Furthermore, the ***Miscellaneous Provisions (Maternity Protection and the Masters and Servants Ordinance) Act, 2012*** was enacted to increase the time of maternity leave from 13 to 14 weeks.

137. Vocational training is conducted for ‘at risk’ young women in the 15-18 age group. Courses offered in this training include, food preparation, garment construction, pastry-making, book-binding, cosmetology and dance.

138. The Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) provides short-term employment for eligible persons within the communities. The Women’s Programme provides training in areas such as craft, furnishings, cleaning, painting, community work, geriatric care and beautification of surroundings. This programme is designed so that participants can work and learn new skills simultaneously so that they gain working experience and a skill.

139. In 1996, Trinidad and Tobago was one of the first countries to enact a ***Counting Unremunerated Work Act, 1996***, which required the Central Statistical Office (CSO) to conduct surveys of all unremunerated work, including housework and childcare. Information was collected on the hours spent doing housework and other related activities within the 2000 National Census. The data supports the notion that the time spent engaging in activities within the private sphere, which is dominated by women, is valuable. (See Appendix I, Table 4)

ARTICLE 12: *Equality in Access to Health Care*

140. There have also been several advancements in healthcare, including the following:

- Upgraded Mt. Hope Women’s Hospital of the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex;
- Completed refurbishment works and sanitization of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Diagnostic Laboratory and Births Department of the Mt. Hope Women’s Hospital of the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex; and

³¹ See paragraph 59

³² “A Guide to Investing in Trinidad and Tobago, 2011”, Division at Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Ltd.

- Increased subvention to an NGO which promotes breastfeeding, from TTD\$5,000 to \$100,000, which included commencing an initiative to provide free milk to “at risk” mothers and children.

141. The Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago (FPATT), an NGO that receives an annual subvention from the Government, partnered with the University of the West Indies (UWI) Open Campus in 2005-2006, to develop curricula and a methodology to train and certify nurses and other health care professionals in the delivery of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. This initiative has improved the quality of sexual and reproductive health care services offered to the general public.

142. Since the last census in 2011, it has been observed that Trinidad and Tobago has a significant ageing population with women comprising the majority in this age group. For 2011 it was recorded that for the 65-69 age group the number of males was 21,582 and the number of females was 23,055. For the 70-74 age group and the 75-79 age group, females continued to outnumber males with increasing disparity. For the age group of 80 years and over, the number of males was 9384 and the number of females was 13,966.³³ As such, the Division of Ageing of the Ministry the People and Social Development has developed a National Policy on Ageing which addresses, inter alia, critical health issues for the ageing population such as standards for hospitals and care facilities.

143. The prevalence of HIV and AIDS among women continues to be of concern because of the potential for transmission to their infants. Such transmissions have declined by 85% within the period under review, however, due to the Government’s Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) Programme, a total of 95% of pregnant women attending public antenatal clinics are tested. HIV positive mothers receive anti-viral drugs to prevent transmission to their babies.

144. In Trinidad and Tobago, females in the age group 15–24 continue to have the highest rate of HIV infection, of which 50% of the new HIV/AIDS cases occur in women and girls. The HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention Programme for Women was launched in January 2004 in communities nationwide to train women as agents of change and advocates the reduction of HIV/AIDS in the nation.

ARTICLE 13: *Equal Access to Social and Economic Benefits*

145. Ministries and State agencies apprise women of business opportunities available to them. One such initiative was the Women and Entrepreneurship Conference hosted by the Government in 2005. The Craft Training Programme for Women is also designed to promote employment through training in various craft disciplines, as well as through initiatives geared towards the revitalization of the handicraft industry of Trinidad and Tobago. The programme, which is geared toward single, unskilled or unemployed women between 25 and 50 years old, promotes the development of the craft business and life skills necessary to facilitate the establishment of successful, home-based craft businesses.

146. Loans are also provided by the Government for the start-up and expansion of small and micro-enterprises. In the year 2006, women accounted for over 80% of loan applicants, 54% of whom were successful. In addition, Fund Aid, a private agency supported by Government, provides loans to poor persons with limited collateral to develop micro-enterprises, of which approximately 60% of the applicants are women.

147. In 2008, the Government collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to host a seminar entitled “Financing for Gender Equity.” The seminar

³³ Central Statistical Office, *Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report*, Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012

targeted policy makers from the public and private sectors, including the Permanent Secretaries of all Government Ministries; as well as international agencies and key NGOs.

148. These aforementioned efforts contributed to Trinidad and Tobago being favourably ranked in the 2013 Women's Entrepreneurial VentureScope (WEVentureScope) index, which was newly released by the Inter-American Development Bank Group. The country was ranked eighth in terms of its support for women's entrepreneurship.³⁴

ARTICLE 14: *Promotion of equal access and participation for Rural Women*

149. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of the Attorney General, placed special emphasis on the participation of rural women in the preparation of the CEDAW Periodic Reports. Workshops were held in 2007 in each of the nine administrative districts to solicit the participation of women in shaping the Report and identifying their critical concerns (see Appendix IV).³⁵

150. Efforts continue to be made to enhance the access and participation of rural women in the country by partnering with civil society. The Network of Rural Women Producers of Trinidad and Tobago (NRWPTT) is one such NGO targeted toward enhancing the productive capacity of rural women and improving their income and livelihoods through the provision of technical and marketing support, training and outreach activities. The NRWPTT has adopted an integrated approach to women's empowerment by drawing on local, regional and international partnerships to provide developmental opportunities for women, and participates annually in local events to commemorate International Women's Day, World Biodiversity Day, International Rural Women's Day and World Food Day.³⁶

151. The annual flagship event of the NRWPTT is the Mango Festival and Conference which focuses on exploring the innovative and entrepreneurial possibilities of the mango. Some of the benefits include:

- Generation of income and increased economic activity for women;
- Development of the rural cottage industry;
- Opening of doors for women to participate in international events and increased networking with regional organisations/institutions.

ARTICLE 15: *Equality in Legal and Civil Matters*

152. During the period under review, several pieces of legislation were passed relating to the status of women and children.³⁷

ARTICLE 16: *Equality in Marriage and Family Law*

153. Marriage in Trinidad and Tobago is governed by the following legislation:

- *The Marriage Act 1923;*
- *The Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act 1961;*
- *The Hindu Marriage Act 1945; and*
- *The Orisa Marriage Act, 1999.*

154. These Acts all require free and full consent to marriage and only make a distinction between the sexes, on the basis of age. In accordance with the Muslim, Hindu and Orisa

³⁴ Women's Entrepreneurial Venture Scope, "Promoting entrepreneurship for women", Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), www.weventurescope.com/en/Home/Ranking

³⁵ See paragraph 84

³⁶ See paragraph 86

³⁷ See paragraph 20

Marriage Acts, persons below 18 years of age, as all others, may enter into marriage only after having given their full consent. Furthermore in cases of marriages involving minors as allowed by the above mentioned legislation, the Marriage Act also necessitates the consent of the parents of a consenting minor is also required.

155. *The Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Act, 1972 (as amended)* was enacted in 1972 to amend the grounds of divorce, nullity and judicial separation to facilitate reconciliation in matrimonial cases, to regulate matrimonial proceedings and to amend the law related to the property of married, divorced and separated persons. Under this Act, a wife is afforded the same rights, with respect to property, as the husband. The *Married Persons Act, 1976* protects a woman's rights to enter into a contract in her own name and without her husband's permission. This Act also makes provision in respect of the rights of women regarding the administration of property.

156. The FPATT provides training and information and facilitates access to various methods of contraception for women and men. Women's sexual autonomy within marriage is protected in part by the *Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000* which amended the *Sexual Offences Act, 1986* so as to cover all forms of sexual violations, including marital rape, various kinds of sexual assault, incest and sexual indecency.

157. In recognition of the high prevalence of common law unions, the *Cohabitational Relationships Act, 1998* was enacted to enforce the rights of common law spouses. Prior to this enactment, it was estimated that no fewer than 40,724 people lived in common law unions, without protection of their rights. Under this Act, common law spouses living in a cohabitational relationship for not less than five (5) years or who have a child arising out of that relationship, have the right to make an application for maintenance and adjustment of property, to the Magistrates' Court and the High Court.

158. In Trinidad and Tobago, women are given equal rights to men with regard to child custody as prescribed in the *Family Law (Guardianship of Minors, Domicile and Maintenance) Act, 1981* which makes provisions for the custody and maintenance of children.

159. Violence and abuse within marital and familial structures are dealt with by means of the *Domestic Violence Act, 1999* which was enacted to repeal the *Domestic Violence Act, 1992* with the aim of ensuring a prompt and equitable legal remedy for victims of domestic violence. *The Legal Aid and Advice (Amendment) Act, 1999* has made provision for legal aid to be granted in respect of applications made under the *Domestic Violence Act, 1999*. In domestic violence cases, where legal aid is required as a matter of urgency, the Director of the Legal Aid Authority now has the power to issue an Emergency Certificate to enable that person to acquire prompt representation.

Conclusion

160. The foregoing presents the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Combined Periodic Report on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for the period 2001-2013. The Report is prepared pursuant to Article 18 of the Convention.

161. As a young developing nation within a rapidly advancing world economy, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is pleased that it has made significant strides for the advancement of the rights of women and girls. The contributions made by women and girls in the areas of academia, politics, science, arts and culture in the society has had tremendous impact towards the development of Trinidad and Tobago as a whole. It speaks to the freedom of opportunity with which women and girls benefit as equal with men and boys.

162. Despite these advances, the Government undertakes to remain committed to the eradication of violence against women and combating the issues of discrimination that violate the Convention and prohibit the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. As elaborated in the Government's "Seven Interconnected Pillars for Sustainable Development," its overarching policy in relation to women's rights is to create a more gender sensitive society with a greater awareness of women's issues and rights by shaping policy and implementing practices that are gender-sensitive, to improve the standard of living for women and girls, and to embrace an active approach to the promotion of gender equality and the implementation of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
