



## STEPPING IT UP:

### A STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

#### 1.0 Introduction

CARICOM Secretariat is committed to practicing and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and working with Member States, international and regional partners to accelerate the attainment of agreed upon gender equality commitments. The current reform process "Turning Around CARICOM" presents an opportune time to enhance targeted policy and planning efforts to reduce gender gaps and improve equality outcomes. Gender equality is a driver of economic growth and sustainable development and therefore integral to the priorities set out in the *Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community 2015 – 2019: Repositioning CARICOM*.

*Stepping it up: a strategy to achieve gender equality in the Caribbean Community* (referred to as the CARICOM Gender Equality Strategy), provides a framework for strategic actions to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment within the context of the new global development framework, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also provides increased coordination to support Member States reach compliance with international conventions and commitments such as the 1979 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*.

This Plan reflects CARICOM's Gender Equality Policy that states as its goal "to strengthen the capacity of CARICOM Secretariat to champion the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women while working with Member States, international and regional development partners to build economic, social, and cultural prosperity. The Policy also aims to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the work of the Community".

Building on the *Plan of Action to 2005: Framework for Mainstreaming Gender into Key CARICOM Programmes*, this strategy acknowledges areas of progress towards gender equality in the Region and calls for a scale up of efforts to close existing gaps and address persistent challenges.

Many international, regional and national reports and frameworks helped to guide the writing of this strategy including those prepared for the Beijing +20 Review and UN documents related to the planning and implementation of the SDGs; the CARICOM Strategic Plan; the *CARICOM Regional Gender Analysis of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy and its Impact*; and the *Country Gender Assessments* commissioned by the Caribbean Development Bank.

In addition, this strategy has been informed by recommendations formulated at the Sixth Meeting of the Directors/Coordinators of Women's/Gender Bureaux held in Barbados from the 6 – 7 of May, 2014

and later approved by the Council on Human and Social Development (COHSOD) at their Twenty Sixth Meeting held in Georgetown from the 14 – 15 of May, 2014. Priorities for a regional plan were further articulated at the Special Meeting of the Directors/Coordinators of Women's/Gender Bureaux

held in Barbados from 23 – 24 February, 2015 that included deliberations by 55 participants from various sectors on progress and gaps under the Beijing Platform for Action.

It is expected that the implementation of this Plan will be a shared one that includes CARICOM Secretariat working in conjunction with Member States, the international agencies, civil society and the private sector.

**For ease of reference refer to Annex I for a list of relevant definitions of gender concepts.**

## 2.0 Background

### 2.1 Plan of Action to 2005: Framework for Mainstreaming Gender into Key CARICOM Programmes

In 2003 the CARICOM Secretariat, in conjunction with international partners, developed a *Plan of Action to 2005: Framework for Mainstreaming Gender into Key CARICOM Programmes*. This Plan was established in an effort to “provide a framework for establishing a more constructive approach to mainstreaming gender in CARICOM’s work programme, the conduct of research, and the design and implementation of policies and programmes by governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which share responsibility for working towards gender equality in CARICOM member states.”<sup>1</sup>

The Beijing+5 Follow-up Meeting convened by CARICOM Secretariat in December 2000 considered how the Secretariat, and ultimately Member States, could more effectively mainstream gender into their work. **Priorities of the main agencies, presented in Box 1 below, show that CARICOM was responsible for the focal areas of education, health, and poverty and the economy.**

Box 1: Priorities of the Main Agencies <sup>2</sup>	
AREA	AGENCY
Poverty and the Economy, including implications of implementing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)	CARICOM, UNECLAC, UNIFEM
Violence Against Women	UNIFEM, UNECLAC, UNFPA
	CARICOM, UNIFEM, UNFPA

<sup>1</sup> P. 1

<sup>2</sup> Plan of Action to 2005, p. 5

Health, with a focus on HIV/AIDS	
Institutional Mechanisms/Gender Mainstreaming	UNECLAC, UNFPA
Leadership and Decision-Making	UNIFEM
Education with an emphasis on human capital	CARICOM

**A Gender Audit Report** commissioned by CARICOM Secretariat, released October 2008, called for a strengthening of the Gender Unit with increased capacity and authority to carry out its functions.<sup>3</sup> The Report noted that despite efforts to integrate gender into its programme for the last three decades, including policy documents which speak to mainstreaming of gender, there has been no over-arching strategy or framework. The Report presented a number of recommendations including the relocation of the Gender and Development Programme to the Office of the Deputy Secretary General to allow for a more direct link with Planning, Strategy and Evaluation, as well as, the Statistics Unit.

## 2.2 Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community 2015 – 2019: Repositioning CARICOM

CARICOM Secretariat, as the Principal Administrative Organization of the Caribbean Community, plays a fundamental leadership role in the economic growth and sustainable development of the region. A new *Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community 2015 – 2019: Repositioning CARICOM*, sets out an ambitious agenda for the Region with the eradication of poverty as a central objective. A people-centred approach has been articulated by the Secretariat to promote the welfare and well-being of people; contribute to social inclusion, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

CARICOM Secretariat recognizes that sustainable development can only be achieved when *all* members of society are able to reach their full human potential. The new CARICOM Strategic Plan has, as one of its goal, to ensure sustainable human and social development in the Region through the advancement of human capital development (key skills, education reform and youth development); mainstreaming inclusiveness in public policy; advancing initiatives for health and wellness; and enhancing citizen security and justice. As quoted below, the Plan notes that the existence of several regional social issues can erode the gains achieved in human development.

*These include the continuing prevalence of HIV, notwithstanding the decline in the rate of new infections; the high incidence of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs); obesity; significant levels of poverty especially among women; increasing crime; adolescent pregnancy; drug abuse; violence and injuries; as well as gender-related concerns, such as violence against women and poor participation and performance of males in education. These issues must continue to remain in the forefront of social development strategies in CARICOM.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> UWI, The Centre of Gender and Development Studies, Gender Audit Report for CARICOM Secretariat, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 6

The Secretariat has taken a leadership role through the development of a number of regional plans to address these issues including: The Caribbean Community Action Plan for Social and Development Crime Prevention 2009 - 2013; CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan (CYDAP) 2012 - 2017; Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP) Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework 2014-2018; the Integrated Strategic Framework to Reduce Adolescent Pregnancy in the Caribbean (June 2014); and the Caribbean Community Crime and Security Strategy (2013). **The Gender Equality Strategy aims to harmonize priorities with those plans.**

### 2.3 CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)

The *Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas*, establishing the Caribbean Community including the **CARICOM Single Market**, speaks to the quality of life in the community. Improving the standards of living and work have been noted in Article 6a of the Treaty and Article 17.2d which promotes the “establish [ment of] policies and programmes to promote the development of youth and women in the Community with a view to encouraging and enhancing their participation in social, cultural, political and economic activities”.

With the increasing implementation of the CSME, the CARICOM Secretariat through **the CARICOM Trade and Competitiveness Project (CTCP)**, funded by the Government of Canada, undertook interventions to increase its operational effectiveness. The Gender Component of the Project aimed to examine the gender roles in the development of the CSME and analyze the impact of the trade liberalization regime on men and women. To meet these objectives 11 stand-alone Country Gender Reports were prepared by individual consultants to CARICOM between 2009 and 2014 in the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda; Barbados; Belize; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Jamaica; St. Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Suriname; Trinidad and Tobago. A study, originally slated for St. Vincent and the Grenadines, did not proceed due to challenges in securing a consultant.

During Phase Two of the project a consolidated report was prepared summarizing key findings and recommendations in the five regimes of the CSME and in the areas of decent work, education and training, advancing women’s representation in leadership, and violence against women. In addition a policy paper was prepared that presents priority actions and corresponding gender indicators. The Report noted that despite the existence of a number of social programmes in the Region, access to services and benefits varies within Member States. As quoted in the Report:

*For CARICOM citizens to enjoy the full rights and benefits of the CSME, it behoves member-states to address persisting and prevailing forms of gender inequality in access to movement and labour opportunities, social welfare and social protections, enterprise and entrepreneurial development, credit, productive resources and land, training, education and certification, and decision-making processes which empower people and leads to greater social and economic outcomes.<sup>5</sup>*

Highlights of the preliminary findings were presented at the Twenty Sixth Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) convened in Guyana 14 – 15 May 2014. The

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<sup>5</sup> From Vol. II Regional Gender Analysis of the CSME and its impact, p.5.

establishment of a small Gender and CSME Technical Working Group was recommended to examine recommendations and advise on implementation strategies.

## 3.0 International and Regional Frameworks

Member States have made legally binding commitments as signatories to various conventions and agreements to fulfill obligations related to human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women. This section provides a description of some of the key conventions and frameworks related to gender equality that require monitoring and reporting by Member States. For a fuller list refer to **Annex III**.

### 3.1 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979

The development of principles that comprise human rights law has contributed to the movement for recognition of the equal rights of women. This led to the adoption in 1979 of the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, to which 184 States are now party including 14 of 15 Member States of CARICOM<sup>6</sup>. Article 1 of this Convention states that:

*Discrimination against women shall mean distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.*

CEDAW is an international treaty that is part of the UN human rights' system that provides details on the civil rights and legal status of women and is concerned with human reproduction, as well as, with the impact of cultural values on gender relations. In ratifying CEDAW, States commit themselves to undertake "...all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men".<sup>7</sup>

**Section 5.1 of this document provides further information on the reporting requirements of CEDAW and the status of reporting by Member States.**

### 3.2 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995 and the Beijing +20 Review

Governments further signified their commitment to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women around the world by adopting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) which was the final outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing China

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<sup>6</sup> Montserrat has not as yet been extended the obligation by the UK Government

<sup>7</sup> CEDAW, Article 3

in 1995. **The BPfA obliges governments to address as priorities its Twelve Critical Areas of Concern, as presented in Box 2.** Reporting is required every five years.

**Box 2: Beijing Platform for Action - Twelve Critical Areas of Concern**

- Women and poverty
- Women and education and training
- Women and health
- Violence against women
- Women and armed conflict
- Women and the economy
- Women in power and decision-making
- Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- Human rights of women
- Women and media
- Women and environment
- The girl-child

A review of progress, made 20 years after its adoption, was the focus of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015. Preparation for the session began with country level reviews and preparation of regional reports. The Caribbean Technical Meeting took place the 14 to 15 of November, 2014 in Santiago, Chile which provided a forum for substantive discussion of the draft **Caribbean Synthesis Review and Appraisal Report**. This meeting informed the Broader Latin America and Caribbean Review and Regional Beijing +20 Statement. **The discussions focused on the importance of an accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform under the emerging Post 2015 and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Frameworks.**

### 3.3 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2015

In September 2000, leaders of 189 Member States met in New York at the United Nations General Assembly and endorsed the Millennium Declaration which committed their nations to a global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and build a safer and more equitable world. The Declaration was translated into a road map setting out eight time-bound and measureable goals with a deadline of 2015, that became known as the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs).

The international community recently engaged in a process to elaborate a global development agenda for the post-2015 period, following the deadline for the achievement of the MDGs. **This new global development framework calls for increased impetus to close the gender gap recognizing that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets.** *The Report Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* presents a stand-alone goal, Goal 5 on gender equality and empowerment of women, and provides a cross-cutting approach to gender equality throughout all 17 goals and 169 associated targets. **Refer to Annex II for a description of Goal 5 in the SDGs.**

### 3.4 Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

The year 2014 was declared the *International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)*, highlighting the special concerns of SIDS at the global level. The United Nations convened the Third International Conference on SIDS in Samoa which assessed progress made to date and sought to build on commitments previously made in the *Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA)* adopted in 1994. The world's attention was focused on a group of countries that remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities including small size, climate change and sea-level rise, natural and environmental disasters among others.

This 2014 gathering provided an opportunity to reaffirm hard-won gains related to gender equality, human rights and sustainable development as far back as the Earth Summit in 1992 and through to the Rio+20 Summit, in all areas of women's and girl's human rights. **The resulting outcome document referred to as *The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.O.M.A) Pathways* emphasizes the role of women's empowerment as a driver of economic growth:**

*We recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment, and the full realization of human rights for women and girls, have a transformative and multiplier effect on sustainable development and is a driver of economic growth also in SIDS. Women can be powerful agents of change.*<sup>8</sup>

### 3.5 The Montevideo Consensus for Population and Development

The *Montevideo Consensus for Population and Development* is a regional statement adopted for Latin American and Caribbean governments at the First Regional Conference on Population and Development held in Montevideo, Uruguay, August 2013. The Regional Conference reviewed achievements made in implementing the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Cairo Programme of Action (PoA) and adopted recommendations for the region. This Consensus document is important in promoting sexual and reproductive rights and health without discrimination based on sex, age, ethnicity, HIV status, sexual orientation or gender identity. **It is the first intergovernmental document to recognize sexual rights beyond just women's human rights.** As quoted from the document:

*Embrace the right to a safe and full sexual life, as well as the right to take free, informed, voluntary and responsible decisions about their sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity, without coercion, discrimination or violence, and that guarantee the right to information and the means necessary for their sexual health and reproductive health.*<sup>9</sup>

### 3.6 The Caribbean Joint Statement on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 and SIDS Agenda

The *Caribbean Joint Statement on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 and SIDS Agenda* emerged from a UN Women-supported "Caribbean Forum on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 Agenda" held in Barbados (22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013). It was generated by high level government officials and civil

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<sup>8</sup> UN Outcome Document prepared July 2014 for the meeting in Apia, Samoa 1-4 September 2014, Clause 76, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Montevideo Consensus for Population and Development, Paragraph 34, p. 12



society representatives from CARICOM countries, with inputs from regional inter-governmental bodies and international partners in the Caribbean.

The Joint Statement presents strategies in the areas of Freedom from Violence including Access to Justice; Accessing Capabilities including Education, Health, Food and Nutrition; Economic Empowerment; and Leadership.

**In adopting the Joint Statement, participants committed to an advocacy strategy so as to ensure that the "asks", priorities and perspective contained in the Joint Statement are considered by decision-makers within Post 2015 and SIDS Agendas.**

## 4.0 Strategic Framework

### 4.1 Vision

The CARICOM Gender Equality Strategy will be guided by the Vision of the Caribbean Community articulated in the CARICOM Strategic Plan:

*A Caribbean Community that is integrated, inclusive and resilient; driven by knowledge, excellence, innovation and productivity; a Community where every citizen is secure and has the opportunity to realise his or her potential with guaranteed human rights and social justice; and contributes to, and shares in, its economic, social and cultural prosperity; a Community which is a unified and competitive force in the global arena.<sup>10</sup>*

### 4.2 Mission

The CARICOM Gender Equality Strategy articulates the following mission:

The Caribbean Community is committed to strengthening the promotion and practice of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls to enhance regional integration and sustainable development to benefit *all* people.

### 4.3 Guiding Principles and Commitments

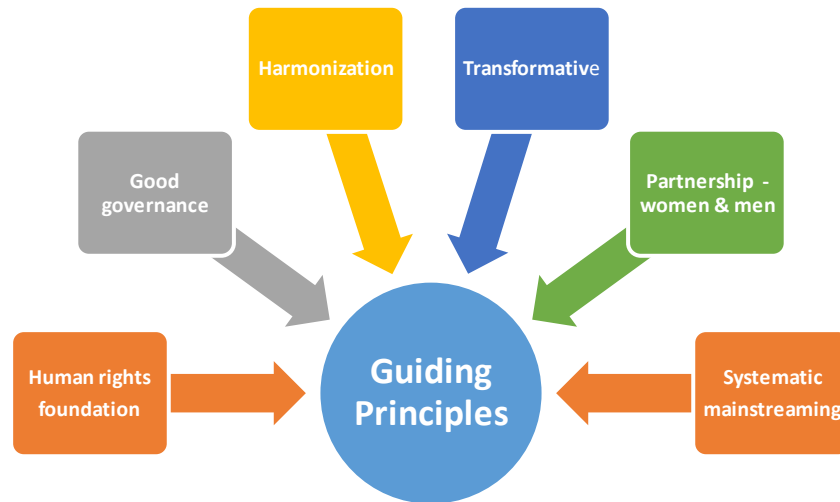
This strategy will be guided by the fundamental principles rooted in international conventions and frameworks such as the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948); CEDAW (1979); the Beijing Declaration (1995); and the SDGs (2015). **These are displayed in Diagram 1 and further articulated below.**

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<sup>10</sup> Vol. 1, The Executive Plan, P. 7



**DIAGRAM 1: GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS**



**Human rights foundation** - A human rights foundation of non-discrimination is central to gender equality. A human rights approach recognizes that everyone has the right to be free from discrimination and violence and we all benefit from living and working in a just and equal society. As well as advancing equality between men and women, a human rights approach recognizes **respect for diversity** and actively supports **social inclusion** of those most vulnerable including persons with disabilities, youth, elderly, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

**Good governance** - Good governance promotes development that recognizes the rights of women and men to equal access and full participation in power and decision-making to enhance leadership and governance. Development strategies are more equitable when they consider the different needs, barriers, opportunities and priorities of both women and men. Inclusive strategies are more **effective** and **sustainable** as they consider equal opportunities, recognition and rewards for *all* members of society.

**Harmonization** - The Secretariat aims to promote strategies that harmonize with and are **accountable** to international commitments including CEDAW and the SDGs. Member States, as signatories, have an obligation to demonstrate achievement of established goals and targets under these and other frameworks. In addition, this approach is essential for meeting donor requirements and for the implementation of the CARICOM Strategic Plan within a **results-based** management system.

**Transformative** – Accelerating the pace toward gender equality requires a transformative approach that recognizes the systemic nature of inequality – rooted in our political, social and economic institutions and perpetuated by social and cultural values, norms and behaviours. The achievement of **substantive equality** becomes the focal point – equal access and equal benefits that can demonstrate results. A transformative approach requires **coordination** of efforts by all sectors in order to bring about significant change.

**Partnership of women and men** – The advancement of gender equality is a shared responsibility of women and men. The promotion of mutually empowering relationships between men and women, boys and girls is key to transforming traditional roles, attitudes and

behaviors that limit human potential and for the promotion of positive and equitable relationships. Increased understanding and engagement of men and boys is necessary to change social norms that impose limited or destructive definitions of masculinity.

**Systematic mainstreaming** - Efforts to effectively mainstream gender must be both systematic and cross-cutting in order to achieve desired impacts that benefit men and women equitably. Mainstreaming gender into policies, planning, project outcomes, monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms of the Secretariat and Member States is critical to accelerating the pace of the regional integration process. A systematic approach also requires allocated human and financial **resources** that build and strengthen the capacity for gender mainstreaming.

#### 4.4 Strategic Goal

The goal of the CARICOM Gender Equality Strategy is to accelerate the effective implementation of priority actions through a regional coordinated approach *to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. **This goal aligns with Goal 5 of the SDG's as articulated in Annex II.**

#### 4.5 Strategic Objectives

As presented in **Diagram 2**, this Strategy includes six thematic areas that align with international frameworks including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs; and the priorities identified in the region including the CARICOM Strategic Plan. The six priority areas are: equality and social inclusion; freedom from violence; economic empowerment; good governance; access to health services; and inclusive quality education.

**DIAGRAM 2: THEMATIC AREAS FOR ACTION**



**The strategic objectives for each priority area are as follows:**

1. Equality and social inclusion      Promote and protect the human rights of women through the full

implementation of CEDAW and other human rights instruments paying close attention to those most vulnerable or marginalized.

2. Freedom from violence      Increase measures to prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence and violence against children and youth.
3. Economic empowerment      Expand equitable access for women and men to decent work, economic opportunities, productive resources, and trade.
4. Good Governance      Strengthen good governance processes in the public and private sectors including women's equal access to and participation in leadership and decision-making at all levels.
5. Access to health services      Take steps to reduce risk factors related to maternal mortality, adolescent pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS particularly through increased access to sexual and reproductive health-care services and information.
6. Inclusive quality education      Improve the quality of and access to education including through human resource development and inclusive and gender responsive learning environments.

#### 4.6 Logic Model Matrix

**Annex IV** presents the relationships between the strategic objectives, the recommended steps or actions described in Section 5, and the expected results. In Section 6 an evaluation framework is included that further links the objectives and results to the SDG targets, indicators and data sources.

### 5.0 Priority Areas – Review and Recommendations

**This section presents the key challenges and opportunities for the region in relation to the six strategic objectives and as encapsulated in the Logic Model Matrix in Annex III.**

The CARICOM Region has experienced some success in the pursuit of gender equality in the 20 years since countries reported to the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. However,

as highlighted through reports and meetings on the review of the Beijing Platform and the MDGs, progress has been slow and for the most part many of the same challenges remain. For example, some **progress** has been made in the areas of:

- new legislation, such as to address gender based violence;
- women's increased participation and achievement at secondary and tertiary levels of education;
- increased representation of women in governments, particularly in the public service;
- reduced maternal mortality and the spread of HIV.

Despite these advances there are **continuing challenges** to:

- women's full participation in paid employment;
- persistent wage discrimination with women earning on average 19 percent less than men<sup>11</sup>;
- governance remains tilted in favour of male leadership in the public and private sectors; and
- gender-based violence continues with great intensity and impacts on the health, social and economic well-being of families, particularly women and children.<sup>12</sup>

**It is expected that the focus on a new world agenda on sustainable development, the SDGs, will create a climate of renewed energy as we move forward to close the gender gap .**

## 5.1 Equality and Social Inclusion

Gender equality is an intrinsic human right and the foundation of democracy and good governance. It is both a core objective and an important instrument for achieving inclusive sustainable development. **Gender inequality intersects with other inequalities, such as those based on disability, age, race, ethnicity, regional location, and sexual orientation, resulting in multiple layers of discrimination.**

Therefore a focus on equality and social inclusion includes strengthening institutional mechanisms to better implement the Beijing Platform for Action, monitor and report on actions to advance gender equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women under CEDAW. It also includes the promotion of inclusion of those considered most marginalized or vulnerable in the Region including women, youth, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples and the elderly.

### 5.1.1 CEDAW Reporting

CEDAW, a very important international instrument, grants legitimacy or a legal basis to women's human rights and promotes women's equality. It brings together in one international human rights treaty, the provisions of other existing UN instruments related to discrimination on the basis of sex. **With the exception of Montserrat, all Member States have signed and ratified this Convention.**

The **Optional Protocol** to CEDAW creates a mechanism for enforcement by allowing individual women or groups of women to submit claims of violations of their rights directly to the CEDAW Committee. It also gives the Committee powers of inquiry into situations of grave or systematic

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<sup>11</sup> Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016, Fact Sheet – Latin America and the Caribbean

<sup>12</sup> ECLAC (2014) Caribbean Synthesis Review and Appraisal Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Prepared for United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

violations of women’s rights.<sup>13</sup> **Only three Member States, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, and St. Kitts and Nevis have signed and ratified the Optional Protocol.**

Under the provisions of CEDAW reporting is required one year after a State has ratified the Convention and **every four years** thereafter or when the CEDAW Committee requests them. Initial reports are expected to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of women in the country or a benchmark. Subsequent national reports detail the countries achievements and obstacles.

**Table 1 below, shows the status of reporting for Member States since their ratification date.** This Table reveals challenges in reporting for a number of countries and the need to support systematic reporting. It is important to recognize that some interruptions in reporting have been caused by extraordinary circumstances, for example, during the period 2006 – 2014 Haiti was impacted by a devastating earthquake that caused considerable human and material losses.

<b>TABLE 1: REPORTING OF MEMBER STATES UNDER CEDAW (NOV. 2015)</b>				
<b>Country</b>	<b>Date Ratified</b>	<b>Report Number(s)</b>	<b>Session No.</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Antigua and Barbuda</b>	01 August 1989	IV	65	<b>2016</b>
		I - III	17	1997
<b>Bahamas</b>	06 October 1993	V	52	<b>2012</b>
		I – I	52	2012
<b>Barbados</b>	16 October 1980	<b>IV</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>	<b>2002</b>
		II - III	13	1994
		I	11	1992
<b>Belize</b>	16 May 1990	III - IV	39	<b>2007</b>
		I - II	21	1999
<b>Dominica</b>	15 September 1980	I	43	<b>2009</b>
<b>Grenada</b>	30 August 1990	I – V	51	<b>2012</b>
<b>Guyana</b>	17 July 1980	VII - VIII	52	<b>2012</b>

		III - VI	33	2005
		II	25	2001
		I	13	1994
<b>Haiti</b>	20 July 1981	VIII - IX	63	<b>2016</b>
		I - VII	43	2009
<b>Jamaica</b>	19 October 1984	VI - VII	52	<b>2012</b>
		V	36	2006
		II - IV	24	2001
		I	7	1988
<b>Montserrat</b>	<b>Does not have reporting status</b>			
<b>Saint Kits and Nevis</b>	25 April 1985	I - IV	27	<b>2002</b>
<b>Saint Lucia</b>	08 October 1882	I - IV	35	<b>2006</b>
<b>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</b>	04 August 1981	IV - VIII	64	<b>2015</b>
		I - III	16	1997
<b>Suriname</b>	15 March 1984	XIII - XV	87	<b>2015</b>
		XI - XII	74	2009
		I - X	64	2004
<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>	12 January 1990	1V-VII	64	<b>2016</b>
		1-III	26	2002

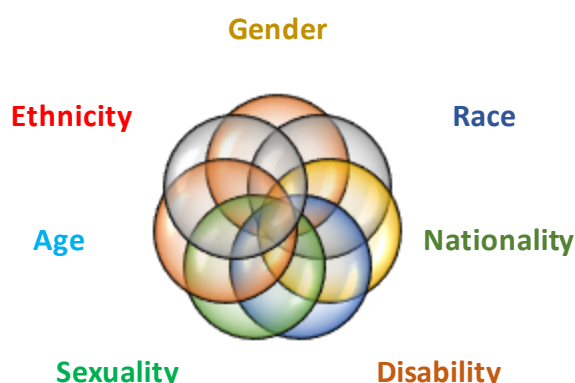
### 5.1.2 Social Inclusion and Intersecting Inequality

Caribbean countries remain challenged by efforts to achieve social inclusion and equality and are vulnerable to discrimination as they continue to grapple with a history of slavery, colonial domination and historical patterns of migration. Therefore, interventions that promote social justice, human rights, and inclusion of all groups of the population are critical to achieving a more equitable society.

**Intersecting inequality, displayed in Diagram 2**, is the **compounding forms of disadvantage** that reinforce and exacerbate each other resulting in certain groups of the population being “left behind”. Disadvantage is created through cultural norms and practices that stereotype, ridicule and trivialize whereby certain groups are deemed as inferior to others on the basis of identity. Studies show that

“Those most likely to be left out of development progress are the groups in the population whose economic deficits intersect with culturally devalued identities, locational disadvantage and lack of political representation”.<sup>14</sup>

## DIAGRAM 2: INTERSECTING INEQUALITIES



**Social inclusion** refers to the process of supporting excluded, marginalized or disadvantaged individuals and groups of people to be fully and equitably involved in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of their society. It is characterized by feelings of belonging and acceptance, the opportunity to engage in society to shape decisions that affect daily life, and recognition as a valued citizen with equal opportunities to benefit from shared prosperity.

The following are some identified groups in the Region where strategies to support social inclusion are important to consider:

- **Indigenous peoples** concentrated in Belize, Dominica, Guyana and Suriname are among those who have experienced historical social exclusion and remain among the most marginalized.
- **Migrants**, whether male, female, adults and children are also reported to face discrimination and limited access to education, health care and social services, particularly undocumented workers. The gender analysis of the CSME revealed levels of mistrust and animosity toward migrants in some countries, a contributing factor to their living and working underground and in informal sectors serving to empower perpetrators of human trafficking.
- **Youth** face tremendous challenges and opportunities in the region which have been well documented in the Report of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development. “Many feel marginalized, alienated and suspicious of the national and regional political process due to the remoteness of the political systems from their daily lives”.<sup>15</sup> There is concern that such feelings of exclusion help predispose youth to participate in alternative structures, including gangs.

<sup>14</sup> ODI (Sept. 2014) Strengthening social justice to address intersecting inequalities post-2015, , p. viii.

<sup>15</sup> Eye on the Future, Investing in Youth Now for Tomorrow’s Community (Jan. 2010),, p. xviii



- **People with disabilities** are receiving increased recognition for their rights with the signing and ratification of the 2006 *International Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* by some countries. There is an increasing awareness of their needs in some sectors, such as those of children in the education system. A concerted effort is still needed to put in place the necessary laws, policies, and interventions to enable people with disabilities to have equitable access to basic services and opportunities.
- **Persons with mental illness** and with mental health problems face a unique set of challenges, particularly in relation to stigma. A WHO Report on gender and mental health states that gender “is important in defining susceptibility and exposure to a number of mental health risks”.<sup>16</sup> The report states that gender “influences the power and control men and women have over the determinants of their mental health, including their socioeconomic position, roles, rank and social status, access to resources and treatment in society”.<sup>17</sup>
- **Elderly** – The increasing life expectancy of both women and men in the Region provides additional pressures on services to meet the growing demands including social protection, medical care and homecare. As in most parts of the world women tend to live longer than men and the gap in male and female life expectancies in the LAC region widened between 1950 and 2010, increasing from a difference of 3.4 years to 6.2 years. This growing disparity reflects declines in female deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth as well as increases in male deaths from violence and accidents and smoking related diseases.<sup>18</sup>

**Key ingredients to address intersecting inequalities** were gleaned from the experiences and successes of seven countries including Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, India, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Nepal.<sup>19</sup> They were described as:

- political change that supports inclusive governments;
- constitutional reform that includes constitutional provisions, legislation and regulations to guarantee the human rights of all citizens;
- increased political participation, such as the presence of strong CSOs and diverse leadership;
- combined universal and targeted or affirmative action programs to ensure access to basic services to all citizens, such as social protection programmes; and
- social mobilization or social movements to ensure the voices of those most marginalized are heard and to advocate for a shift in the political agenda to respond.

## 5.2 Freedom from Violence

### 5.2.1 Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence ranks among the principal threats and obstacles to social and economic development in the Region and impacts citizen security, including the stability and health of a family and community. The term ‘gender-based violence’ is used to emphasize that much violence against

<sup>16</sup> WHO (2002). *Gender Disparities in Mental Health*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> PRB (April 2014). *Today’s Research on Aging, Program and Policy Implications*, Issue 30.

<sup>19</sup> ODI (Sept. 2014) *Strengthening social justice to address intersecting inequalities post-2015*, p. 61

women is rooted in gender inequality and reflected in women's subordinate legal, social or economic status in society.<sup>20</sup> **In the Caribbean Region the most common forms of violence against women include intimate partner violence and other forms of family violence; sexual violence; human trafficking, including forced prostitution and economic exploitation of girls and women; and child early and forced marriage.**

Patterns of violence against women are different from those against men in the Region. Men are more likely to die as a result of violence from other men, interpersonal and strangers; and from suicide. Women are more likely to die at the hands of someone close to them, including husbands and other intimate partners whom they are often emotionally involved with, and economically dependent upon.

A 2013 WHO Report on global and regional estimates of violence against women reported that globally, 35.6% of women (15 years and older) ever experienced either non-partner sexual violence of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or both.<sup>21</sup> The rate for the Americas is reported slightly higher than average at 36.1%.<sup>22</sup>

Physical, mental and sexual and reproductive health effects have been linked with intimate partner violence. As noted in the Report:

*These include adolescent pregnancy, unintended pregnancy in general, miscarriage, stillbirth, intrauterine haemorrhage, nutritional deficiency, abdominal pain and other gastrointestinal problems, neurological disorders, chronic pain, disability, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as noncommunicable diseases such as hypertension, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. In addition, there is evidence linking intimate partner violence with negative child health and development outcomes, but these are not included in this report.*<sup>23</sup>

### **Youth Violence**

High rates of youth violence in the region have raised alarm with risks being associated with high youth unemployment, violence in the home, school drop-out, crime and drug abuse. The UNDP Human Development Report raised the concern of stereotyping male youth as violent. "Stereotyping contributes to the adoption of heavy-handed and rights-violating security responses that foster youth exclusion and unnecessary institutionalization through the criminal justice system."<sup>24</sup> In addition the response to youth crime tends to be punitive rather than rehabilitative, with a lack of a juvenile justice system in the Region.

The Youth at Risk in Latin America and the Caribbean (2008) report identified eight key policy approaches that were successful in reducing high risk behaviours for youth:

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20 UN 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states that Violence against women "means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats to such acts, coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life". Article 1, p. 2

21 WHO (2013) Global and regional estimates of violence against women, p. 16.

22 The Americas includes the Caribbean. Two Caribbean countries, Haiti and Jamaica, were included in the intimate partner survey, while Belize and Jamaica were included in the non-partner sexual violence estimates.

23 WHO (2013) Report P. 21-22

24 P. 63

- investing in early childhood development;
- ensuring youth complete secondary education;
- investing in effective parenting;
- investing in collecting and analyzing data on youth;
- providing youth with financial incentives to avoid risky behaviour;
- integrated investing in high violence communities to make them safe;
- media campaigns to spread anti-violence messages; and
- providing birth certificates to the undocumented.<sup>25</sup>

### 5.2.2 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment compromises safety and equality in workplaces and can raise economic concerns, as well as social, due to increased sickness, job turnover and other issues that impact on a healthy and productive work environment.

Justice Desiree Bernard discussed the issue and consequences of sexual harassment in a 2006 article *Confronting Gender-based Violence in the Caribbean* stated that:

*Sexual harassment in the workplace is a not too unfamiliar scenario in our Region. While victims of sexual harassment can be male or female, women suffer disproportionately. Many young women are exploited and forced into sexual liaisons with their male employers to obtain or retain employment. Sexual favours are the “quid pro quo” for permanent job security or advancement. This type of harassment in the workplace frequently destroys a productive working environment and the self-esteem of those who experience it.<sup>26</sup>*

She went on to note that one of the key factors in sexual harassment is “the authority which the harasser wields over the victim who is usually at a disadvantage owing to her fragile economic position, the current employment being in most cases, her only means of livelihood”. Therefore such abuse often goes unreported as it has financial as well as physical consequences for the victim and often her family as well. **Workplace policies, education programmes and reporting and response mechanisms are critical to enabling victims of sexual harassment to come forward and to change a workplace culture that condones such abuse.**

### 5.2.3 Human Trafficking

**Human Trafficking is a growing problem that takes the form of sex trafficking of men, women and children, trafficking in child labour, trafficking of adult labour and trafficking for domestic servitude.**<sup>27</sup> The region’s trafficking trends include intra-regional flows and extra-regional flows (e.g. movement from South Asia or East Asia to the region). Caribbean countries also can serve as a transit route for trafficking, often destined towards North America and Europe. Additionally, internal trafficking, which occurs within a country’s borders, exists in some Caribbean nations.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cited in Eye on the Future (Jan. 2012). p. 125

<sup>26</sup> Taken from the website of The Integrationist Caribbean, <http://www.theintegrationistcaribbean.org/functional-cooperation/confronting-gender-based-violence-in-the-caribbean/>

<sup>27</sup> Exploratory Assessment of Trafficking in Persons in the Caribbean Region, IOM 2010.

<sup>28</sup> IOM Caribbean Counter-Trafficking Model Legislation and Explanatory Guidelines: A Booklet (Dec. 2008) P.7.

## 5.3 Economic Empowerment

A number of studies, including the **Country Gender Assessments** commissioned by the Caribbean Development Bank and gender analysis of census data on economic activity, have helped to highlight persistent gender inequalities in employment, the continued discrimination against women as a group in the labour market and the limited changes that have occurred in jobs traditionally done by women and men. **Although more women are entering the labour force, occupational stereotyping has persisted for both sexes highlighting the need for more proactive policies and programmes to fulfill commitments to CEDAW and the SDGs to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.**

### 5.3.1 The Global Gender Gap Index

The Global Gender Gap Index introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006, provides a framework for capturing gender-based disparities around the world and tracking their progress. This Index ranks countries in accordance to four categories of indicators including Economic Participation and Opportunity; Educational Attainment; Health and Survival; and Political Empowerment.

**Table 2** provides the rank and scores for seven (7) of the countries of the Region for which data was available for the 2015 Report which is based on 145 countries. The data shows that the average Global Index Score is 71% demonstrating a gender gap of 29%. Seven countries listed have closed the gender gap on the Health and Survival sub-index. The Bahamas and Guyana have also fully closed the gap on Educational Attainment. **No country has closed either the Economic Participation and Opportunity or Political Empowerment gaps.**

Barbados and The Bahamas have made considerable progress in the category of Economic Participation and Opportunity whereby Barbados is considered to be the best performing country of the Region and second in the world on this sub-index. Bahamas is the second best performing country in the Region. However, it is important to note that the Country Gender Assessment Report on Barbados stated that:

*In Barbados, relatively high national income per capita exists alongside a large informal sector and welfare benefits that are less extensive than in some developed countries. Increasing gender equality from an economic standpoint must start from understanding local conditions, not just of production in formal employment settings but of production in the informal economy and of social reproduction and the sexual division of labour with regard to each.<sup>29</sup>*

**TABLE 2: GENDER GAP INDEX 2015<sup>30</sup>**

<sup>29</sup> Synthesis Report, 2015, p. 15

<sup>30</sup> From the Global Gender Gap Report 2015 of the World Economic Forum, p. 8 – 9.

COUNTRY	Global Index		Economic Participation and Opportunity		Educational Attainment		Health and Survival		Political Empowerment	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Barbados	24	0.744	2	0.848	46	0.998	1	0.980	77	0.150
Bahamas	40	0.728	7	0.823	1	1.000	1	0.980	98	0.110
Trinidad and Tobago	46	0.720	53	0.704	59	0.995	1	0.980	56	0.201
Jamaica	65	0.703	64	0.678	42	0.998	1	0.980	75	0.155
Guyana	66	0.702	124	0.569	1	1.000	1	0.980	37	0.261
Suriname	94	0.678	103	0.616	45	0.998	1	0.980	90	0.120
Belize	103	0.668	85	0.651	68	0.994	1	0.980	135	0.048

**Note:** Ranks are out of 145 countries

Scores 1.00 = equality and 0.00 = inequality

**The World Economic Forum notes the importance of public and private collaboration on closing the gender gaps and the role of governments in shaping economic and social policies.** As noted in the 2015 Report:

*The magnitude of national gender gaps is the combined result of various socioeconomic, policy and cultural variables. Governments thus have a leading role to play as the closure or continuation of these gaps is intrinsically connected to the framework of national policies in place. In addition, governments must align their efforts with those of business and civil society to foster growth that includes both men and women.<sup>31</sup>*

One strategy that is being implemented by the World Economic Forum to monitor and reduce the gender gap is the establishment of **Gender Parity Task Forces**. These national level programmes aim to engage leaders from business, government, civil society, academia and media to share best practices and generate innovative approaches to close the gender gap. Mexico, Turkey, Japan and the Republic of Korea have been selected as pilot countries. Another approach suggested is development of multi-stakeholder groups, comprised of 50% women and 50% men, who have pledged personal and organizational commitments toward gender parity.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 5

## 5.4 Good Governance

Good governance generally refers to a process of leadership and decision-making that is participatory, accountable, transparent, effective, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized and the views of minorities and those most vulnerable in society are taken into account in decision-making. Although the position of women in leadership and decision-making has significantly changed since the 1990's, particularly with the presence of a number of women in senior positions in the national public service, governance remains tilted in favour of male leadership in the public and private sectors. In addition to empowering more women and youth to engage in leadership roles a cultural shift must occur to remove structural barriers to enable their full participation

### 5.4.1 Political Office

Despite advances in the representation of women in political decision-making including women succeeding to hold a number of high level posts, most countries, with the exception of Grenada, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, have not yet reached the minimum 30 percent target in the Lower House and the optimum target of parity (50%). Some countries show better results for the Upper House or Senate including Antigua and Barbuda and Belize. **Trinidad and Tobago is the only country that has achieved the 30 percent in both. As evident in Table 3, all countries demonstrate a wide gender parity gap with respect to women's representation in parliaments.**

Guyana's adoption of a quota system is attributed to the increased levels of women in parliament as both governing and opposition parties are required by law to have a minimum of 30 percent of candidates fielded in elections.<sup>32</sup> Haiti has, during the period 2012 – 2014, taken measures to adopt a constitutional amendment, by the National Assembly of a maximum 30 percent quota for women at all levels of national life; and a designation of women to more than 30 percent of ministerial posts.

Other measures to elevate the participation of women in politics and political office include regional activities implemented by the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWIL), an NGO which has been receiving support from UN Women's Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean and other development partners; and national initiatives such as leadership training programmes organized by national NGOs and the University of the West Indies.

TABLE 3: WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS (NOV. 2015)								
LOWER OR SINGLE HOUSE					UPPER HOUSE OR SENATE			
Country	Date of Elections	Total # Seats	# of Women	% of Women	Date of Elections	Total # Seats	# of Women	% of Women

<sup>32</sup> Caribbean Synthesis Review, p. 26.

<b>Antigua and Barbuda</b>	6/2014	18	2	11.1%	6/2014	17	7	41.2%
<b>Bahamas</b>	5/2012	38	5	13.2%	5/2012	16	4	25.0%
<b>Barbados</b>	02/2013	30	5	16.7%	02/2013	21	5	23.8%
<b>Belize</b>	10/2015	31	2	6.5%	3/2012	12	5	38.5%
<b>Dominica</b>	12/2014	32	7	21.9%	---	---	---	---
<b>Grenada</b>	2/2013	15	5	33.3%	3/2013	13	2	15.4%
<b>Guyana</b>	5/2015	69	21	30.4%	---	---	---	---
<b>Haiti</b>	11/2010	95	4	4.2%	11/2010	20	0	0.0%
<b>Jamaica</b>	12/2011	63	8	12.7%	9/2007	21	6	28.6%
<b>Montserrat</b>	09/2014	11	2	18.2%	---	---	---	---
<b>Saint Kits and Nevis</b>	2/2015	15	2	13.3%	---	---	---	---
<b>Saint Lucia</b>	11/2011	18	3	16.7%	1/2012	11	3	27.3%
<b>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</b>	12/2015	15	0	0.0%	---	---	---	---
<b>Suriname</b>	5/2015	51	13	25.5%	---	---	---	---
<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>	9/2015	41	13	31.7%	9/2015	31	10	32.3%

#### 5.4.2 Private Sector

Progress in the private sector appears to be slower and limited data make it difficult to determine the number of men and women in leadership and decision making positions. The Gender Analysis of the



CSME conducted a review of management boards of ten organizations with branches in a number of Caribbean countries. **The review, summarized in Table 4, reveals a high dominance of men compared to women as board members with the exception of Global Brands Limited that shows women and men’s participation as equal.**

<b>TABLE 4: BOARD MEMBERS IN WELL KNOWN CARIBBEAN INSTITUTIONS/COMPANIES<sup>33</sup></b>		
<b>COMPANY</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>MEN</b>
<b>Massy Group<sup>34</sup></b>	1	10
<b>Courts (owned by the Unicomer Group)</b>	0	10
<b>ANSA McAL Group of Companies<sup>35</sup> (Standards, Brydens, Carib Brewery)</b>	2	12
<b>Caribbean Airlines</b>	2	4
<b>Republic Bank</b>	3	14
<b>Global Brands Ltd (Pizza Boys, Church’s Chicken, Rituals, Wok n Roll, Donut Boys, VIP Flyers Club)</b>	3	3
<b>Digicel Group</b>	1	9
<b>First Caribbean International Bank</b>	3	9
<b>The University of the West Indies</b>	6	15
<b>LIAT</b>	1	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>93</b>

### 5.4.3 Civil Society Organizations

It is expected that the SDGs will be driven not primarily by governments, but by evolving partnerships between governments, civil society, and the private sector. UN Women has been instrumental in

<sup>33</sup> Regional Gender Analysis of the CSME and Its Impact, Vol. 1, p.55 - 56

<sup>34</sup> Recently rebranded in 2014 the Massy Group of Companies are involved in food & general merchandise, trading, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, agri & industry chemicals and cigarettes

<sup>35</sup> The ANSA McAL Group have companies involved in Automotive, Beverage, Distribution, Financial Services, Manufacturing, Real Estate, Services, Retail and Media.

supporting the engagement of civil society organizations. On the eve of the adoption by the international community of the new development agenda (Agenda 2030), UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka called for “collective leadership” that will drive change. Regionally, UN Women have demonstrated support for civil society organizations through engagement at regional meetings and in establishing the role of gender advocates recruited from civil society organizations.

**The engagement of young women and men, as important civil society actors and leaders, must be actively pursued to gain their perspectives and support their views.** Their participation can be explored through such avenues as recruitment for staff positions, inclusion as board and committee members; engagement in conferences and public meetings; and supported through leadership training and mentorship programmes.

## 5.5 Access to Health Services

Gender issues related to health are complex as they are impacted by factors outside the health system such as poverty reduction, social protection, and nutrition. The MDGs were successful in placing a number of health challenges at the top of the global agenda which has contributed to the fall in child and maternal mortality in the region. The new SDG agenda recognizes that the global burden of disease has shifted greatly in the past 30 years, increasing the need for a focus on health systems and on non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) is the vehicle through which comprehensive sexuality education is delivered in the Caribbean. The aim of HFLE is to empower adolescents both in and out of school with knowledge and skills to make more informed choices about their health and wellness, inclusive of their sexual well-being.

### 5.5.1 Infant and Child Mortality

The Caribbean region has been able to continuously decrease its infant mortality rate (IMR) and under 5 mortality rate (U5MR) since 1990, primarily because of immunization campaigns, increased access to improved sources of drinking water and lower costs associated with basic health interventions.

Neonatal mortality rates continue to be of concern. The Report Reducing Neonatal Mortality and Morbidity in Latin America and the Caribbean stated that “Neonatal mortality (defined as death in the first 28 days of life) is estimated to be 15 per 1,000 live births, ranging from 14 (South America) to 19 (the Caribbean) per 1000 live births. In the Region, the stillbirth rate approximates the neonatal mortality rate. Newborn mortality accounts for 60% of infant deaths and 36% of under-five mortality, and the majority of these deaths are avoidable.”<sup>36</sup>

The report notes that the causes of neonatal death include infections, asphyxia, prematurity, and congenital malformations as well as poor neonatal health caused by poor maternal health, lack of access to health care, and low percentage of skilled birth attendants, for example. **“Other indirect causes of neonatal mortality include socioeconomic factors such as poverty, poor education—especially maternal education, lack of empowerment, poor access to health services and harmful traditional practices. The rural and urban poor, other marginalized communities and**

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36 P. 44 - 45

**indigenous and Afro-descendant populations experience disproportionately high neonatal mortality.”<sup>37</sup>**

### 5.5.2 Maternal Mortality

Maternal mortality is also reported as a serious problem with ratios in excess of 100 per 100,000 persons reported in Jamaica, Guyana, and Suriname and around 46-43 per 100,000 persons in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Belize, St Vincent and the Grenadines and the Bahamas. The deficiencies in health status reflect inadequacies with respect to human nutrition; disease prevention, treatment and cure; health systems capacity and fiscal constraints on public sector health expenditures. <sup>38</sup>

**The main risk factors noted for maternal mortality include poor access to and utilization of ante-natal care, low level of attendance by skilled health personnel at birth, and one of the highest rates of adolescent births globally.**

### 5.5.3 Sexual and Reproductive Health

According to the UN Development Goal Report for 2012 the birth rate for 15-19 year olds in the Caribbean stood at 69 births per 1,000 women in 2009, 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in the world; with rates reaching as high as 101 births per 1,000 women in the region. A comprehensive study on adolescent health in the Caribbean among nearly 16,000 adolescents of nine countries in the region concludes that 34.1% (22.2% male; 51.9% female) has had sexual intercourse before the age of 19. Of those adolescents responding positively, 63.4% (40.3% male; 78% female) had their sexual debut before the age of 12.<sup>39</sup> A WHO Report of 2003 stated that one third of adolescents who have had intercourse, almost half reported that their first sexual intercourse was forced.

The CARICOM Secretariat is working in partnership with the UNFPA to address the problem of adolescent pregnancy, high rates of early initiation of sex before the age of 15, and sexual abuse and sexual coercion. **An Integrated Regional Strategy for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy** (June 2014) aims to target the home, school, community, youth leaders, media, policy makers, adolescent girls especially the marginalized and high risk and recommends calls for multi-sectoral programmes to include life skills, sexual and reproductive health, education, employment and legislation. The Twenty-Seventh Meeting of COHSOD (Education and Children) convened under the theme: *Safeguarding our Region's Future: Reshaping Education for the Twenty-First Century* held 16 – 17 July 2015 in Georgetown, Guyana received and endorsed the Strategy and urged Member States to put the necessary systems, policies, legislation, resources and mechanism for its effective implementation. It was further agreed that Member States would share a set of standards for the enactment of legislation that can regulate the ages of marriage and consent for sexual intercourse in Member States.

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<sup>37</sup> Reducing Neonatal Mortality and Morbidity in Latin America and the Caribbean, p. 46

<sup>38</sup> Bourne June 2015, p. 11

<sup>39</sup> Cited in An Integrated Regional Strategy for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy and from A Portrait of Adolescent health in the Caribbean, 2000. W.K. Kellogg Foundation, WHO collaborating Centre on Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota

The **Report ICPD Beyond 2014 and the Post 2015 Agenda in the Caribbean** noted that “Global evidence has shown that **achieving gender equality and promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and young people, especially adolescent girls, are central to ending extreme poverty, ensuring social cohesion and the three pillars of sustainability (social, economic and environmental).**”<sup>40</sup>

## 5.6 Inclusive Quality Education

Education is considered to be an area of success for females in the Caribbean Region as their achievement of higher levels of secondary and tertiary certification in most countries continues to surpass that of males. Despite these gains by women, the conversion to employment opportunities has been a slower process that does not reflect the education achievements of women, due in large measure to the structural inequalities of opportunity that tend to maintain women in disciplines that are undervalued and underpaid.

### 5.6.1 Human Resource Development

The social economic development of the Region is dependent on the full utilization of its human resources, including both women and men. The continued marginalization and under-utilization of some groups of people including women can be a major obstacle to sustainable development. **The Dakar Framework for Action Education for All** states that “learning is the cornerstone to sustainable human development” and a holistic approach is important “in order to understand the surrounding environment of the learners and meet their needs and develop their personalities in an integrated and harmonious manner”.<sup>41</sup>

Caribbean countries have made great strides in achieving near universal enrollment at the primary and secondary levels, however low completion rates at the secondary level remain a concern. A **2013 World Bank Report** noted that “Although secondary enrolment is increasing, secondary completion continues to be an issue in many countries as well as the quality of education. The average pass rates for standardized tests in cores subjects such as English and Mathematics are less than 50%, and many students lack basic skills in information and communication technology and other disciplines deemed critical for success in the work place.”<sup>42</sup> In addition attracting and retaining qualified teachers is a major problem and access to higher education remains low, with less than fifteen percent of secondary school graduates going on to post-secondary education.

At the University of the West Indies (UWI), nearly twice as many females are enrolled compared to males, in a trend that has seen an increasing gap in female to male enrolment since the 1940’s (Charles & Stuart, 2011). Although women predominate in the student community and as graduates of UWI, their participation as academic staff has not yet reached parity with male colleagues. Women constituted 44 per cent of the UWI academic staff in 2010; twice the percentage in 20 years before. The majority of positions held by women were in junior ranks and primarily in the Humanities rather than in Natural Sciences and Engineering.

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40 P. 3

41 Adopted by the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26 – 28 April 2000, p. 50.

42 Quality Education Counts for skills and Growth, June 2013, Caribbean Knowledge Series, p. 5.

**The Twenty-Seventh Meeting of COHSOD on Education and Children** examined the economic and social challenges faced by the Region and provided advice to the CARICOM Commission on Human Resource Development on how to better prepare students within the context of global, sustainable development that will make them more employable. The work of the Commission will result in a **Regional Education and Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy** which aims to look at a ‘whole systems’ approach to educational transformation including the architecture and governance of the education system in addition to curriculum content.

It is expected that a direction toward robust and quality educational systems will not only contribute to the retention of children and youth at school, but reduce the risk factors and vulnerabilities associated with low school performance, school drop out, lack of, or deficient social and professional skills and ensuing joblessness.

### 5.6.2 Inclusive/Gender Responsive Learning Environments

Reshaping the education system includes paying attention to the excluded populations in each country and fostering an environment of respect for diversity and inclusion. The Dakar Framework recommended a human rights approach to protect against discrimination considering that “Basic education for all requires assuring access, permanence, quality learning, and full participation and integration of all children and adolescents, particularly for members of indigenous groups, those with disabilities, those who are homeless, those who are workers, those living with HIV/AIDS and others”.<sup>43</sup> **To this end the Framework called upon education systems to act explicitly to remove gender bias and develop attitudes and behaviours that incorporate gender awareness and analysis to support girls’ and boys’ learning within a context of respect, fairness and peace.**

In the Region the under-participation and under-achievement of males has been a focus of some academic research and concern by policy makers including that it contributes to high levels of crime and violence in the region. Despite the higher participation of females at the secondary level adolescent pregnancy continues to impact on the participation of females aged 15 – 19 in continuing their education. It is increasingly recognized that other variables including socio-economic and cultural factors, as well as gender must be considered to strengthen education outcomes.

**The CARICOM Policy Framework for Addressing Gender Differentials in Education** provides strategies to reform the education system *to equalize opportunities for ALL students* and to consider education strategies as part of a multi-sectoral approach to poverty elimination. Strategies articulated in the Framework include:

- working with community-based and interfaith agencies/organisations to create targeted interventions particularly in relation to at-risk youth;
- working within the education system to eliminate gender discrimination and promote mutual respect between girls and boys; and
- developing ‘inclusive’ education systems which explicitly identify, target and respond flexibly to the needs and circumstances of the poorest and the most marginalized.

### 5.6.3 Health and Family Life Education

Several CARICOM Member States have made efforts to incorporate sexuality education in the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) Curriculum. In addition some countries are also working with community based organisations and the private sector, as well as, using modern technologies to provide information on sexuality to out-of-school youth. Challenges in implementation within schools, noted in the *Framework for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy in the Caribbean*, included “the lack of widespread implementation in all schools and inadequate information within the sexuality and sexual health component”.<sup>44</sup>

The Framework stated that, based on a wide range of theory-based research on life skills education, learning takes place by observing others and their behaviours are reinforced by the positive or negative consequences which result during these observations. “The success of skills-based health education is tied to three factors: 1) the recognition of the developmental stages that youth pass through and the skills they need as they progress to adulthood, 2) a participatory and interactive method of pedagogy, and 3) the use of culturally relevant and gender-sensitive learning activities.”<sup>45</sup>

### 5.6.4 Early Childhood Education (ECD)

Considered as the foundation for good human development, early investments in children including access to quality early childhood education, is an increasing area of focus in the Region. Currently, challenges include under-funding and under-regulation. Evaluations of ECD programmes generally (e.g. parent support and enrolment in preschool programmes) show that targeting the children most in need of services will deliver the best results and returns are greatest for the most at-risk children<sup>46</sup> This is due to a strong body of evidence that points to the positive impacts of ECD programmes on cognitive and psychosocial development, school readiness and academic achievement.

### 5.6.5 Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET)

The TVET model, that emphasizes competencies and practical application of knowledge, blending academic and technical skills, is receiving focus as an integral part of the region’s education system to prepare students in the global, modern world. The CVQs were established with the intention of moving towards a standardized certification-system that would promote the free movement of skilled and qualified workers across the Caribbean.<sup>47</sup> **The CARICOM Education for Employment (C-EFE)**

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44 P. 10

45 Framework for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy in the Caribbean (2014), p. 10.

46 UWI (2015). Evaluation of the Pilot of the Early Childhood Outreach Programme in St. Vincent & the Grenadines commissioned by UNICEF office of the Eastern Caribbean

47 CARICOM Regional TVET Strategy for Workforce Development and Economic Competitiveness Skills and Credentials – The New Global Currency, April 2013.

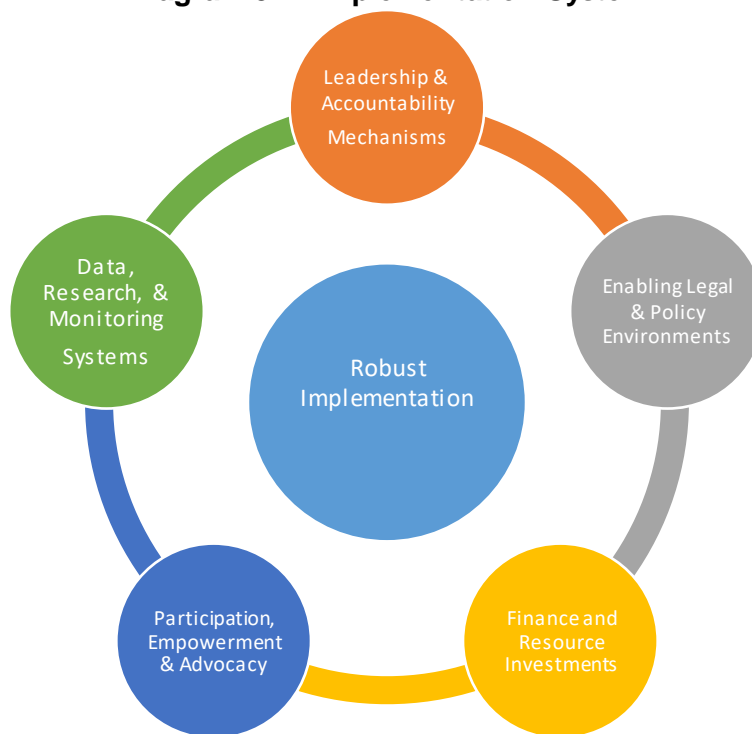
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## 6.0 Implementation

### 6.1 Implementation System

This section outlines some of the key components to enable successful implementation of the CARICOM Gender Equality Strategy. As displayed in **Diagram 3** the key elements include: leadership and accountability mechanisms; enabling legal and policy environments; finance and resource investments; participation, empowerment, and advocacy; and data, research and monitoring systems.

**Diagram 3: Implementation System**



#### 6.1.1 Leadership and accountability mechanisms

The ownership and responsibility of the Strategy must be clear, broad based, structured and managed. High level leadership that can champion the strategy, such as CARICOM Secretariat, and leaders of Member State Governments will be critical to provide legitimacy, authority, influence and momentum for implementation.

#### 6.1.2 Enabling legal and policy environments

The international conventions and agendas obligate Member States to comply through legislation and policy. International agencies have an important role in establishing, enforcing and supporting reporting mechanisms. Governments in turn have a role in building the capacity to do the work and



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harnessing the necessary technical support and resources. 6.1.3 Finance and resource investments

Member states have a central role in establishing budgets, soliciting and allocating funds. The role of the private sector and financial institutions is also deemed critical to support regional, national and community interventions such as research; service/program development and implementation; education campaigns; business development.

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#### 6.1.4 Participation, empowerment and advocacy

Participation must be actively promoted at all levels and attention paid to empowering groups of people who may not otherwise engage or contribute. The role of advocacy must be recognized and supported as an important means of stimulating action and accountability.

#### 6.1.5 Data, research and monitoring systems

All partners must be engaged in the collection and analysis of data to support learning and accountability. Regional and national systems that align with international goals and indicators must be developed to guide and coordinate the work.