

# BEIJING +25 REPORT

TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS



**DEPARTMENT OF GENDER  
AFFAIRS**

Ministry of Education, Youth,  
Cultural, Social and Library  
Services

Turks & Caicos Islands  
Government



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## **Overview of the Turks and Caicos Islands**

### **Geographical Setting**

The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) is located southeast of the Bahamas and around 90 miles north of Haiti. The archipelago consists of two groups of Islands separated by a deep-water channel about 22 miles wide with a depth of over 7000 feet, known as the Turks Island Passage. The Turks Islands lie to the east of the passage and the Caicos Islands to the West. The Turks Islands consist of two inhabited islands, Grand Turk and Salt Cay and six uninhabited Cays while the Caicos Islands consist of six islands, four of which are inhabited, along with two major Cays namely, Parrot Cay and Pine Cay. The Caicos Islands form a bank – the Caicos Bank, with the islands separated from one another by shallow passages. Altogether, TCI have a total land area of 193 square miles (417 square kilometers).

### **Politics**

The Turks and Caicos Islands is a British Overseas Territory with a Governor and a Ministerial System of Government. In August 2009, the Constitution was partially suspended and an Interim Administration was put into place under direct rule from Britain. In November 2012, the Constitution was revised and a new Constitution was issued to the islands. There continues to be a Governor, who is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen, and is the Supreme Executive Representative-Authority of Her Majesty. There is a Deputy Governor, who must be a Belonger and appointed by the Governor; the Cabinet and the House of Assembly. There are two main political parties in the Territory: The People's Democratic Movement (PDM) and the Progressive National Party (PNP) formed in 1975 and 1980 respectively. The ruling party following the November 2016 elections was the PDM winning in a narrow majority.

### **The Population**

The Department of Statistics has estimated that the current population is approximately 42,953, consisting of 21,928 males and 21,029 females. This represents a 36.5 percent increase over the 2012 population of approximately 31,458. Throughout most of its recorded history the population of TCI has varied between 5,000 and 6,000 and it is only since the mid-1970s that there has been a rapid increase. This growth almost exactly parallels the development of the tourism industry.

## **The Economy**

The economy of the Turks and Caicos Islands is highly dependent on the tourism, Real Estate and Financial Intermediation sectors, which has contributed to the rapid development of Providenciales, where the majority of the populace engage in sustainable employment in the tourism sector. Tourism accounts for more than 35 percent of the national gross domestic product (GDP) yearly, and influences the economy in a significant way. The vast majority of tourist originate from the United States, However offshore financial services and fishing (especially conch and lobster) are important components of the country's GDP. There are small areas of crop production. Local production is limited to a small range of products; consequently there is a reliance on imports.

## **General**

The Ministry of Education, Youth, Cultural Library and Social Services, is charged with the responsibility for the Department of Gender Affairs, who has constitutional responsibility and is committed to enhancing the lives of women, by ensuring that the national legislation is compliant with the rights of women as contained in the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and other international commitments.

## **Executive Summary**

In 1999, the Turks and Caicos established the Women's Desk as the national machinery for advancing women's concerns in the country. The impetus to establish the Women's Desk came out of the lobbying and activism by civil society organizations, especially the Women In Development (W.I.D), following the participation of the Turks and Caicos in the 4<sup>th</sup> International Women's Conference in Beijing. The Department of Gender Affairs describes itself as the legal body through which women and men's rights are protected.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action came out of the fourth International Women's Conference in 1995 as a consensus document reflecting the concerns of women the world over, requesting governments to reaffirm and recommit themselves to numerous actions to support a common gender development agenda. It continues to serve as a framework for guiding and reaffirming the commitment of world governments to promoting equal rights and dignity for both men and women.

Following the conference, women continues to lobby with the Government and regional counterparts to recognize the need for establishing a Women's Desk which is outline in the twelve critical areas identified by the Beijing Conference in it Platform For Action document, which serves as a guide to provide direction to women's Bureaus.

In February 1999, the Turks and Caicos saw the appointment of the first Women's Affairs Coordinator. The Women's Desk, now the Department of Gender Affairs, falls within the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Transportation and Communication, was established under the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports. Today, a sit was in beginning, In April 2019 a policy decision was taken to transfer the Department of Gender Affairs, under the Ministry of Education, Youth, Cultural, Social and Library Services. This will come into effect May 8, 2019.

The Department of Gender Affairs, is the National Machinery for advancing the status of women and promoting the achievement of gender equality in the Turks and Caicos Islands, has played a pivotal role in raising awareness at the community level around issues such as poverty, domestic and gender based violence, health and women's access to and participation in decision making. Gender Affairs has advocated for the human rights of women and has been facilitating the developing of policy and legislation for the empowerment of gender equity and gender equality.

## Section 1(A): Priorities, Achievements, Challenges & Setbacks

What has been the most important achievements, challenges and set-back in progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women over the past five years?

### Overview analysis of achievements a 2014 - 2019

- **Legislation Reform**

Since the last submission in 2014, there have been ongoing discussions to review legislative framework and policies across government, updating or establishing new action plans and strategies on gender equality, in collaboration with non-government organization, and civic groups to ensure that the twelve critical areas that emerged from the Beijing Platform of Action (BPFA) are institutionalized.

The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) recognize the critical importance of realizing Gender equality. To effect this, several Bills have been passed since the last reporting period that have had a positive impact on the status of women in the TCI. These Bills and Ordinances are outlined below:

### **The Family Law Legislation 2015**

The former divorce legislation has been repealed and replaced by the **Matrimonial Causes Ordinance**, which makes provision for financial relief for parties to matrimonial proceedings, as well as, the protection and custody of children. In addition, several pieces of key legislations stemming from the TCI's participation in a project with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to reform the law relating to domestic violence and the family were created since the last reporting cycle. They are as follow:

- Adoption Ordinance 2015
- Children (Care and Protection) Ordinance 2015

- Family Law (Guardianship, Custody and Access to Children) Ordinance 2015
- Domestic Violence Ordinance 2015
- Status of Children Ordinance 2019

Although, the Children (Care and Protection) Ordinance, the Domestic Violence Ordinance, and the Status of Children Ordinance 2019 are on the books, they are yet to be brought into force.

Importantly, there is a public outcry regarding human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of women in the TCI. This mainly affects women from the TCI's migrant population. In an effort to address this concern and to give effect to the United Nations Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention) Ordinance 2016 was enacted.

○ **Equality Ordinance**

The Equality Ordinance 2012 and its provisions would act as a deterrent to discrimination based on certain personal characteristics, such as, sex, pregnancy and maternity, and other characteristics. It also requires the exercise of certain functions to be carried out in a manner that would eliminate discrimination. It would amend the law relating to rights and responsibilities in family relationships (e.g. the abolition of a husband's duty to maintain his wife). At present, this Ordinance is not operational.

To support legislation affecting family relationships the Turks & Caicos Islands Government (TCIG) has renovated two existing structures on the islands of Grand Turk and Providenciales. These will be used to as shelters for those persons affected by domestic violence.

Further support is provided to the family law legislation through The Immigration Amendment Bill 2015. An amendment was introduced to remove the phrase 'living with the believer' to protect the status of immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence when the relationship is dissolved.

The Trafficking in Person's Bill 2015 provides more strengthening of family law legislations. This legislation provides a significant level of protection to women who are being exploited for sex or labour. It grants the courts greater latitude to deliver stiff sentences for those involved



in the trafficking trade. In addition, there is the Offences against the Person Ordinance 2014, which provides judges with the power to impose significantly harsher custodial penalties. This is especially so, for the offence of carnally Knowing a Girl under the Age of Thirteen.

There is safeguarding the Children Legislation and Protocols, which stem from the Director and Chairman of the Human Rights Commission attendance at the FCO Human Rights Conference in 2016. Because of the Director's participation in the conference the FCO sponsored Safeguarding the Children project was extended to the TCI. Training for the staff was conducted in 2017 and the project was fully implemented thereafter.

Importantly, The Turks and Caicos Islander Status Ordinance 2015 ensures that children born in the TCI can take on the nationality of either of their parents. This sets the TCI apart from other territories such as Bermuda and the Bahamas where a woman's right to pass on her nationality is still not recognized.

The TCI considers women to be a valuable resource for the country and will continue to introduce legislation and procedures that both protect and raise their profile within our borders.

### **Political and Public Life**

There has been great success of women in political and public roles over the last reporting period. An unprecedented number of women holding key positions across government and private spectrum evidences this. In the 2016 general elections, history was made in the TCI with the election of its first female Premier and the third in the UK territories. There are several women in high-level civil service positions within the TCIG. For example, women occupy the following posts: Deputy Governor (the head of the civil service), the Chief Justice (first woman to be appointed by TCI), Attorney General (first female Queens Counsel of TCI), Director of Public Prosecution, two thirds of Permanent Secretaries in Government Ministries and are the Directors in most of the Departments. This is complemented by women taking up leading roles as doctors, lawyers, educators, managers and entrepreneurs in the private sector.

Overall, women in both the public and private sector are dominating the managerial positions within the Turks and Caicos Islands and have already surpassed the 33% quota set by the BPFA regarding women in politics to 46%, an increase of 13%.

- **Education Digest**

The Ministry of Education recently release it's, the education digest I consist of information on teacher population and qualification student enrollment and nationality examination and financial statistics and tertiary and continuing education. The statistics allow for the monitoring and evaluation of the national education system against regional and international provision. The data is sought by external agencies such as the Caribbean Development Bank, Enesco, Unicef Caricom and the European Union

- **Summer Program**

The Office of the Deputy Governor in collaboration with the Human Resource Management Directorate embarked on a Summer Work Program, providing the opportunity for students to gain work experience during their Summer Vacation.

This opportunity will be available to those who have finished High School and are enrolled in Turks and Caicos Islands Community College, as well as returning students that are studying abroad.

## Section 1(B): Overview analysis of challenges a 2014 – 2019

### ○ **Illegal Migration**

Illegal migration is still a significant problem for the islands because it exposes women to be exploited as cheap labour. It is hoped that legislation in this area will deter many from engaging in offences that violate the human rights of women. For instance, The Employment Ordinance 2009 protects a woman's right to equal pay and provides women who are being exploited as cheap labour recourse to the Courts.

### ○ **Women in Prison**

There has been an increase of women going to prison, women sent to prison rather than given lighter sentences, the prison has upgraded their services. As part of the rehabilitation process, there are ongoing programmes that deter recidivism. Females are exposed to skills training (e.g. hair-dressing, handcraft etc.,) in addition; they also have access to all educational programs available at the prison. Gender Affairs also have also implemented a female-inmate family day outreach programme, where frequent visits/activities are scheduled in partnership with NGO groups outside of the prison environment.

### ○ **Funding and Staffing – Gender Affairs**

In addition, other limiting factors, such as, funding and staffing severely restrict the ability of the Gender Affairs Department to provide comprehensive programming in order to do its work. This is compounded by the following constraints:

- The lack of coordination of the relevant agencies in reporting procedures
- Inadequate manpower/financial resources
- Lack of appropriate data collection tools
- Lack of a National Gender Policy
- Lack of Political Will
- Limited working space

The Beijing Plan of Action does not specify the location for national women's machineries. However, they are expected to have cross-departmental functions and to operate at high levels of governance. At present, the Department of Gender Affairs (the Department) is not operating with sufficient visibility. The frequent movement of the Department across various ministries creates dislocation, loss of focus and undermining of programmes. The failure to treat the Department with significant importance and attribute to it a sense of authority can convey a sense of lessened importance being given to gender issues. Currently, the Department is functionally located within the Ministry of Home Affairs but occupies an office in the Department of Social Services.

The Department is the main mechanism through which the vision and capacities for gender equality in the TCI is to be built. Actions for achieving its objective involve: advancing women's and men issues; promoting the involvement of women and men boy and girls; engaging with policy makers at the highest possible levels; and effectively coordinating activities relevant to gender equality and equity at all levels. Also it seeks to develop, implement, review policy frameworks and guidelines, attitude and behaviours, regulations and operating procedures that will greatly enhance its vision. This will assist the Department in implementing its programs at a higher level that would have a positive impact the lives of young people.

It is the view of the Department, as is complemented by global standards, that gender mainstreaming should be viewed as a development issue. This would influence its development agenda by ensuring that men's and women's needs, priorities and constraints are the focus, as they relate to gender issues. Therefore, the Department design and implement programs to be used as effective mechanisms to address issues, such as, domestic violence, gun/gang violence, sexual offences, break down in family life, teenage pregnancy, anger management, peer pressure, bullying and family planning.

It must be noted that the Department provides the impetus to promote equality, equity and advancement opportunities for women, men and children of the TCI. This is to be achieved through well-informed policy, cogently developed programming and the creation of opportunities to promote social justice and the elimination of prejudice and discrimination in every form.

- **Challenges with the current Domestic Violence Legislation and the need to revert to the updated Legislation of 2015.**

The face of gender-based violence has changed in the last few years, with a marked difference especially in Providenciales with the types of cases that are encountered, the demeanor of clients and the accused. Victims and the accused come with aside problems of their own, health problems, drug and alcohol use, mental illness, obsessive-compulsive behaviors and aggression towards the system and for those who work in the system. When identifying patterns in relationships of persons who seek support, most relationship are bordering on risky, which evolves into turmoil and violence when partners needs are not being met.

Issues of physical stalking, cyber stalking, financial, emotional and verbal abuse has intensified among victims and their perpetrators. Protection Orders are applied for not only through the Department of Gender Affairs or through the Police Department, but in general.

- **Challenges with recruiting a male counterpart for Gender Affairs**

From the inception of the gender desk there has been a stigma, that gender was primarily concern only with providing services for women and the girl child, this has deterred the male form applying. However, throughout the years, this perception has gradually change with the inclusion of program design for engaging men and boys.

## **Section 2: Progress Across the twelve Critical areas of Concern**

**What action has your country take in the last five years to recognize reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and promote work-family conciliation?**

As it currently stands Turks and Caicos has a relatively high percentage of domestic worker coming for neighboring islands e.g. Haiti and the Dominican Republic. They serve, as caretakers, baby sitters, restaurant workers etc. Not only are these people contributing in the home but they are also contributing in the service industry. There is a tendency that the local indigenous females are not incline to seek employment in these areas.

**Top Five Priorities for Accelerating Progress for Women and Girls over the Past Five Years**

- **Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls**

Significant progress has been made during the past five years relative to the protection of women and girls from all forms of violence. The Domestic Violence Bill 2015 has broadened the definition of domestic violence to include stalking, psychological and emotional violence, controlling behaviours and harassment. In addition, this new legislation has been used to protect women in non-marital relationships in the TCI who are the victims of domestic violence. This legislation also provides for quick civil remedies, such as, Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Restraining Orders.

Historically migrant women who suffered from domestic violence were forced to stay in abusive relationship because there were limited legal redress due their immigration status. However, the Immigration Amendment Bill 2015 now provide much needed help to migrant women who are victims of domestic violence, by protecting the legal status of women who are escaping violent and abusive relationships.

There is added protection for girls in TCI through the Offences against the Person Ordinance 2014. Under this legislation, the offence of Carnally Knowing a Girl under the Age of 13 is now punishable with a life sentence. It is important to note the protection of women and girls is exceptionally seriously in the TCI. Therefore, special efforts will be made through legislations and other means to ensure that country remains safe for women and girls.

Alternately, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with other Ministries and stakeholders have strongly advocated for the Second Chance and /or Alternative Education and Training for girls and women. Therefore, the Gender Affairs Department has received their full support in the creation of its Alternative Education Programs. This program provides continuing education as well as work skills training for teenage girls who have to leave school because of early pregnancies. Continuing educational is a sure way to assist vulnerable young girls to fight against domestic violence and abuse. Because it will provide them with the requisite, knowledge and skills needed to stand up to the would-be perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse. Women's achievement in Education in the TCI must not go unnoticed, since women are equal footing as men in education in the country. Therefore, the education Ministry, the Gender Affairs Unit and the Human Rights Commission have targeted the practice of removing pregnant teenagers from schools for elimination. Hence, the practice has been significantly reduced in the TCI. The lack of education regarding sex, sexual health and family has been a fertile breeding ground for domestic violence and abusive relationship. Therefore, the Ministry of Education has introduced a program on sexual health and family in all public schools. This program has afforded girls and women to the opportunity to make more informed choices on sexual activity and family life, which will influence their quality of life.

- **Political Participation and Representation**

Women have made great strides in the TCI as it relates to political participation and representation, over the years. They are given the opportunity to meaningfully advance in the political process as voters, campaigners and candidates, which has translated into an increased number of women holding elected offices. As a result, there is an unprecedented number of women holding key political positions in the TCI. This testimony to the significant and meaning role that women now occupy in the political space of the TCI.

The PDM took ten of the fifteen electoral seats, thus, giving it the political mandate to form the next government. The ruling party following the December 2016 elections was the PDM with a sounding landslide victory of winning ten of the fifteen electoral seats of government, the PNP five electoral seats. As a result of the general elections, we now have eight women in the House of Assembly:

- Premier
- Minister of Education, Youth Cultural and Library Services
- Deputy Leader of the Opposition
- Two Elected Members to the House of Assembly
- Deputy Speaker of the House
- Clerk to the House of Assembly
- Deputy Clerk to the House of Assembly

In addition, women hold the posts of Deputy Governor and Attorney General.

Women achievements and positioning in the political sphere is highly complemented by their achievements and standing in other aspects of public life. For instance, in the civil service two thirds of the Permanent Secretaries are women, the heads of Gender Affairs, Social Development and the Human Rights Commission are all women, and head of the judiciary is a woman, which is the first appointed female Chief Justice in the TCI. In addition, women contribute significantly in other professions as, doctors, lawyers, teachers, business, managers, etc.

Due to the excellent progress that women have made in public and private life there has been an associate increase in women representation of the TCI at forums throughout the world. Therefore, it has become commonplace for women to represent the TCI at local, regional and international events. At these events, women from the TCI on numerous occasions have been granted the prestigious roles of speakers and guest speakers.

Under Hon Cartwright-Robinson, administration the TCI has been undergoing a significant redevelopment process that has impacted positively on the lives of people living in TCI.



- **Reduce eradicate Poverty among Women and Girls**

The Department of Social Development and Gender Affairs provides counseling services to clients for various situations including depression, money management, behavioral problems, probation, parolee etc. Psychological services that cannot be provided by the department are referred to the Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence.

- **National Insurance**

The National Insurance Board continue to assist women with a wide range of benefits these include: maternity benefits, widow's pensions, retirement pensions, sickness benefits, employment injury benefits, old age pensions, invalidity pensions and funeral grants. A very important aspect of social security legislation, in keeping with social and cultural norms, is the provision for payment of benefits to women who are not legally married but who are living in common-law relationships.

National Insurance schemes have therefore enabled all women to improve their financial status. Over the last few years, significant increases were made to the benefit that women receive from following National Insurance scheme. Since the last reporting, the NIB increased Maternity Grant per child from \$550 to \$600. This benefit can also be claimed on a woman's husband.

- **National Health Insurance Plan**

The National Health Insurance (NHIP) program is based on compulsory contributions from the population and small co-payments for all treatment. This programme covers the recently unemployed registered through the Department of Labor and contribution for prisoners. The government makes contribution to indigents and wards of the state. Children are covered under their parent's plan.

- **Social Services/Human Services Programs**

The Ministry of Environment, Home Affairs and Transportation through the Social Enhancement Aid (S.E.A.) programme provides temporary intervention for persons who are

socially and /or economically challenged while facilitating the attainment of sustainable self-sufficiency. These payments are made monthly and include orphans, dependents, children who were abandoned, the elderly, mentally/physically and emotionally challenged and persons with medical conditions.

The Indigent Aid program provides temporary to long-term intervention for children and persons who are unemployed, unemployable, are socially and/or economically challenged to assist them to meet their health needs with access to medical coverage (medication coverage or full Indigent status). Persons who may qualify include orphans, dependents, children who are abandoned, elderly, and dependents of an elderly person.

Home Help Services are designed to provide supplemental care and domestic services to vulnerable persons who may not have immediate relatives to provide adequate care and protection, lacks financial resources to access care, and are deemed unfit to work as determined by a medical practitioner. Categories of applicants include special needs, low-income families, medical conditions, and abandoned, unsupported, elderly citizens.

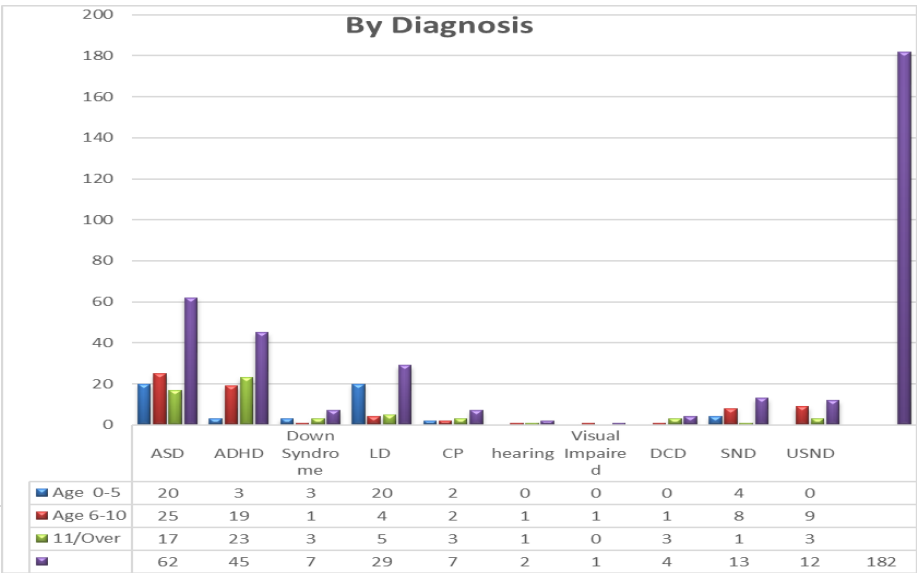
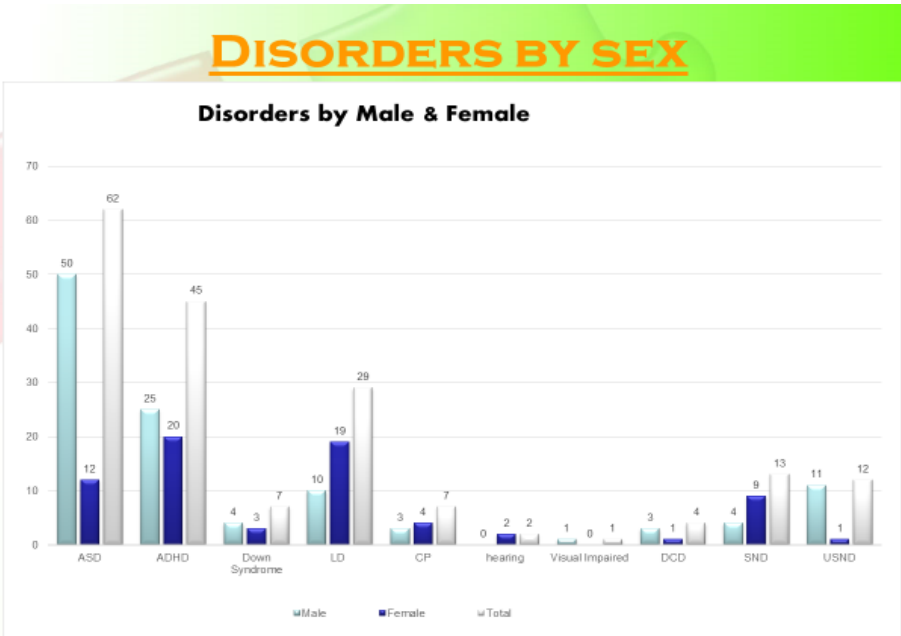
- **Women with Special Needs**

The Special Needs Unit mandated is to improve the quality of life for persons living with special needs through access to dedicated wellness centers, assessment opportunities and specialized learning centres.

Much progress has been accomplished in regards to woman and the girl child with special needs through various programs firstly with the Establishment of a National Registry of Persons with Special Needs where adequate referrals are made to the relevant agencies for assistance: The following has been accomplished

- A newly built 16 bed residential facility providing twenty-four-hour care for the elderly complimenting a unit for young adult with special needs;
- Strengthening of educational and life skills programs at SNAP Center for children and young adults with special needs inclusive of the girl child: recruitment of two Special Ed Teachers, strengthening of the home economic, house-keeping and the gardening/nursery program;

- Launching of the transitioning of school to work program; the first candidate being a female young adult gaining fulltime employment.
- Provision of free audiology assessment and free hearing devices;
- With a focus on early detection and intervention as of November 2014 One hundred and eighty-two children (182) registered of which one hundred and seventy-one children (171) age ranging from three to twenty-one (3-21) has been assessed /diagnose in country with various developmental delays inclusive of Autism, ADHD, Down Syndrome, Language Disorders, Cerebral Palsy, hearing impaired, etc. Girls accounts for 39 % of the one hundred and eighty-two persons with ADHD being the largest category.



## **Access to Health Care, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights**

### **○ Access to Health Care**

Primary health care in TCI is provided by two main hospitals located on the islands of Grand Turk and Providenciales. The Cockburn Town Medical Centre in Grand Turk has 10-bed capacity, while the Cheshire Hall Medical Centre in Providenciales has the capacity for 20 beds. These primary health centers are supported by a number of other clinics that are located in the various islands throughout the TCI. There is a telemedicine system that links the two hospitals with the capabilities to link the other health clinics throughout the islands. All medical facilities within the country falls within the direct supervision of the Ministry of Health.

In addition, the three major private resorts (Beaches and Club Med in Providenciales and Parrot Cay on Parrot Cay) operate their own clinics. These clinics offer their services to workers and guests. Any outbreaks of diseases at are reported to primary care and surveillance unit at the Ministry of Health.

In addition, the access to medical care is complement by five medical clinics, which are all located in Providenciales. These medical facilities provide ambulatory care services with varying capacities for diagnostic, laboratory, operating room and acute care services. Most of the pharmacies are private of which one is in Grand Turk and six in Providenciales. There are no pharmacies in the other the islands. Medications for the clinics on these islands are purchased by the Ministry of Health and distributed to the various clinics by the government pharmacies. If a medication is not, on island, the prescription is fax to a pharmacy and the medication is sent to the island on the same day.

Secondary and tertiary levels care are available on island for some health conditions at both hospitals. Highly specialized care is not available on island and persons are referred to facilities abroad mainly to the neighboring Caribbean islands, USA & UK. The cost to support tertiary care of the island is covered through the National Health Insurance Plan (NHIP), private insurance or out of pocket by the client.

## **Sexual Health**

### **○ HIV/AIDS/ STI prevention Programme**

The Health Promotion and Advocacy Unit, through its HIV/AIDS/ STI prevention programme, continues to focus on reducing the impact of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections on families, communities, and individuals, including women. The unit has conducted a number of community outreach sessions, which have incorporated education on women's sexual health alongside men's sexual health. Demonstrations on the use of female and male condoms are an integral part of the sexual education programme and helps to empower women. The National HIV/AIDS/STI Prevention programme has also implemented several outreach programmes that separately target men and women in the tourism sector, where more than 50% of the working population is employed.

The HIV prevention programme has also led the “One Drop is All It Takes: Get tested know your status” and the “It's Your Business, Know Your Status” nationwide campaigns. These campaigns include women in its messages and directly address the importance of HIV testing and preventing stigma and discrimination. The most recent campaign includes one poster, one public service announcement, periodic one-hour radio shows and a number of social media messages.

HIV education for young people, including girls in and out of school, is also an important focus of the HIV prevention programme. Over 1,384 young persons were reached in 2018 via one on one or group sessions, which addressed proper condom use; delayed sexual initiation; self-esteem; making informed decisions; stigma and discrimination; drugs and HIV/STI education. HIV prevention information is also provided via the unit's social media pages, which saw over 8000 views in 2018. This information is also provided to grade six students throughout TCI. Additionally, the HIV National Debate for high schools, which is in its twentieth year, continues to see young girls addressing issues surrounding HIV. The event is broadcasted to a wide audience via radio. Finally, a radio soap opera show was developed in 2018 and is to be aired in late 2019.

The Gender Affairs Unit works closely with the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Programme that is now housed within the Health Promotion and Advocacy Unit. This collaboration is seen in a number of outreach programmes within communities. This is an effort to curb the increasingly serious spread of HIV/AIDS and to reduce the impact on families, communities, and individuals, specifically women.

The Health Promotion and Advocacy Unit has implemented several initiatives through outreach programs. The Unit has provided via its “Getting to Zero” campaign nationwide the inclusion of woman in messages that directly address stigma and discrimination. The campaign includes posters targeted to adult women and female children in English, Creole and Spanish. The Unit also provides preventative HIV education for young people via its youth arm Rapport. Rapport and Outreach Officers has reached a wide cross section of persons via one on one or group sessions which address proper condom use; delayed sexual initiation; self-esteem; making informed decisions, stigma and discrimination, drugs and HIV/STI information. In addition, information is provided via its website whose views continue to increase. HIV/STI Educational sessions is also offered to all Primary schools in an age appropriate manner.

With the occurrence of the Zika virus in the Turks and Caicos Islands is cause for concern due to the contagious nature of this vector borne illness a Zika plan and communication strategy has been developed to address Zika and other vector borne diseases. Because of the complications of Zika during pregnancies a campaign addressing women has been developed. Pregnant women who access antenatal care within primary health care are given mosquito nets and mosquito repellent along with advice on how to stay safe ensuring a Zika free baby. Posters, PSa’s and commercials have been developed and aired via mass media. Information again is developed in the three prominent languages.

- **Reproductive Health**

All women have access to Primary Health Care services, pregnant women enrolled at the Primary Health Care clinics are seen first by the midwife/PHN who performs an initial clinical assessment, which includes requisition of prenatal laboratory studies and an obstetric ultrasound scan. The client is then referred to the Obstetric clinic at TCI Hospitals for a first

medical assessment by an Obstetrician, this allowing a review of the client's risk profile and the development of a pre-natal care plan for each patient.

- **Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative**

To complement women reproductive health hospitals in TCI are pursuing the WHO and UNICEF Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) certification. They are committed to providing maternity and newborn services that align with the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. Our approach includes but is not limited to full implementation of the package of policies and procedures that support the provision of maternity and newborn services that support breastfeeding. Our strategies are focusing on supporting increased compliance on exclusive breast-feeding and ensure sustainability over the life of our programs.

The TCI has embarked upon this initiative with technical assistance from PAHO and CARPHA. The focus of this initiative is a part of global effort to implement practices that protect, promote and support breastfeeding. Also, included is mother-friendliness care of pregnant women and mothers in the context of HIV emergencies, as well as, expansion towards other type of health facilities and the community. A large part of this focuses on training and sensitizing health care personnel and other personnel working in hospitals on the implementation of this plan.

The Department of Gender Affairs and Social Development provide additional support through counselling and mediation services to teenage mothers. In addition, mothers are provided formula for babies and young infants through our food bank, as well as, clothing. Furthermore, mothers are encouraged to be self-sufficient by seeking out employment and other opportunities.

The conditions of mothers and expectant mothers in TCI are generally good. This is evidenced by a high life expectancy rate, low infant mortality rate and a very low incidence of communicable diseases. To improve the conditions of mothers' maternity leave has been brought in line with international standards. Therefore, mothers are granted 14 weeks maternity leave.

## **Quality of Education, training and life-long learning for women and girls**

### **○ Quality of Education**

In line with international standards such as the right to education, the Ministry of Education, and by extension, the Government of the Turks and Caicos is committed to ensure equal access to education and training of women. The Turks and Caicos Constitution (Schedule 2, Sec. 12) as well as the Education Ordinance (Part III, Sec. 33) clearly outlined the right to education in a non-discriminatory manner for compulsory school-aged individuals. 49% of students in primary schools are girls and they make up 48% of the high school population. All government schools in the TCI are co-education institutions, meaning that there are no ‘All Boys’ or ‘All Girls’ Schools. Hence, all students are given equal opportunity. The ratio of girls to boys at primary and secondary school levels, and targets for enrollment rates for both girls and boys suggest that gender parity exists at primary and secondary school level.

At the levels of tertiary education, reports indicate that females have surpassed males in enrollment levels. 77.2% of the tertiary education scholarships awarded for the 2018/ 2019 academic year were awarded to women. The visibility of women in senior administrative roles, and advances being made by females at tertiary level education in comparison to males are being viewed as achievements for women. This phenomenon is highlighted throughout various report on the state of education within TCI. Now, there is a growing perception that women are ‘doing well’ in comparison to men who are being ‘marginalized’.

Over the years, women have made some significant strides in area the area of education. This has been borne out in an article published in *January 2017 by the BBC entitled ‘Turks and Caicos: Where Women Hold Top Jobs’*. In this article, several indigenous females from the TCI were featured and commended for the significant positions they hold and the outstanding contribution they make to the advancement of the Turks and Caicos Islands and women, specifically. Hence, it may be safe to assume that those women have benefited significantly from the educational experiences and opportunities that they had gained. Thus, effectively equipping to carry out their various roles and functions within the society very efficiently.



- **Training and lifelong education for girls and women**

The Ministry of Education in conjunction with other ministries and stakeholders has been a strong proponent of Second Chance or Alternative Education and Training for girls and women. Therefore, institutions have been formed to render such services to girls and women who express an interest. The Ministry of Education is committed to strengthening Second Chance education programmes across the length and breadth of the TCI as it is the will of the Government to have each person given a fair chance in life to contribute to society in a meaningful way.

Women's achievement in education in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions should not be under stated. One area of support for the foregoing statement is the number of women taking and passing secondary examinations. For example, in June 2018, of the 2056 persons who sat Form 5 CSEC (explain what CSEC is) examinations 55.8% were female with a 56.9% passing rate. These attainment levels are reflected in the increased levels of female participation in the labour force. According to the TCI Labour Survey 2017, females make up 48.6% of the labour force. Women in the Turks and Caicos Island outnumbered men in most graduating classes from college to university.

The Turks and Caicos Islands Community College (TCICC) serves as the local institution for continuing education, where the main college statistics shows that female students pursuing degrees account for a higher percentage than males. The latest figures show 78.5% female enrollment at the College.

- **Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls.**

There have been significant improvements during the last reporting period regarding the protection of women and girls from all forms of violence. The Domestic Violence Bill 2015 has provided a much-improved definition of domestic violence that incorporates stalking, psychological and emotional violence, controlling behaviours and harassment alongside the more traditionally accepted definitions of domestic violence. For the first time in the TCI, the legislation also provides remedy for individuals who are not married. This legislation also provides for civil remedies such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Restraining Orders.

Historically domestic violence perpetrators in the TCI in a relationship with migrant women have used their immigration status against them to force them to stay in abusive relationships; to address this issue the Immigration Amendment Bill 2015 now protects the legal status of women who are escaping violent and abusive relationships. Both the Domestic Violence and Immigration Bills represent the culmination of many years' work in partnership with the Attorney General's Office and Human Rights Commission.

The Department of Gender Affairs, provides counselling, referral, advice and support for women who are experiencing violence in the home , It must be mentioned that from 2014 to 2015 Gender Affairs in collaboration with Human Right Commission (HRC) observed that serious violent offences against women rose by 56.8% and serious sexual offences rose by 150%, although these statistics are indicative of negative attitudes and behavior towards women but more so towards the migrant women, ( 5 Dominican Republic women were found murdered) within the TCI. These figures also represent the increased confidence in women bringing such offences to the attention of the authorities. In this sense, these figures demonstrate the significant improvement in confidence of women in the government organizations with the responsibility for protecting them.

2015 also saw the passage of the Trafficking in Persons Bill 2015 through the House of Assembly, this Bill makes it illegal to engage in people trafficking at any level and is an additional protection for women who may be trafficked into the TCI believing they have legitimate work only to find themselves sexually and economically exploited. This legislation empowers judges to award ten-year custodial sentences for anyone involved in this illegal and Public Protection the Offence against the Person Ordinance 2014 has also improved the protections for the girl child in the TCI and the offence of Carnally Knowing a Girl under the Age of 13 is now punishable with significant custodial sentences.

Additionally, workshops are held with front line workers, key stakeholders, this was done in partnership with, a facilitator from the British Virgin Islands, Police department (BVI).

- **Safeguarding and Public Protection Unit**

In keeping with its commitment to victims of all forms of abuse, the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force has renamed its Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Unit to the

“Safeguarding and Public Protection Unit”. This unit focuses on the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

On 10th December 2018, the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force together with the Departments of Social Development and Gender Affairs and Health and Education embarked upon a new era with the opening of the Ethel Ingham Center in Providenciales making it a Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) with specialized trained safeguarding police officers, social workers and officers from Gender Affairs, with Health and Education working remotely due to limited resources to work under one roof in joint efforts to investigate crimes committed against children and vulnerable adults .

This was made possible as a result of funding by the UK National Crime Agency, UNICEF and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Ethel Ingham Center (EIC) is also considered a one-stop shop as it is equipped with a state of the art video recording interview suite along with a monitoring room and a forensic Medical Examination room.

This facility makes it possible for victims, especially children to have a suitable place where they can give their account by way of video or audio. Victims also no longer have to be taken to a public hospital for a forensic medical examination. This can now be done at the Ethel Ingham Center where there is more privacy and increased confidentiality.

During 2018, police officers and social workers underwent substantive training in victim care and in achieving best evidence; this training was also sponsored and delivered by UK National Crime agency. In every effort for improvement in the service that are delivered to victims, Medical doctors from Turks and Caicos Islands Government Ministry of Health and Inter Health Canada TCI Hospitals are also undergoing training at Saint Mary’s Hospital in the United Kingdom specializing as Forensic and Medical Examiners for Rape and Sexual Assault cases.

There are at present three doctors that are FMERSA trained along with three others who are at present in training making it a total of six specially trained doctors by January 2020. In collaboration with the TCI’s Attorney General’s Chambers, Special Measures legislation are

in draft which will make it easier for victims especially child victims when giving evidence in a court of law.

- **CEDAW and CRC Training**

In 2015, the department also engaged in a CEDAW and CRC national training workshop on CEDAW reporting in collaboration with UN Women. The workshop aimed at bringing about awareness of the reporting guidelines of both conventions. It also reflected upon their achievements and challenges in: implementing such conventions; strengthening institutional capacity, including stakeholders from across section of the public and private sector, on CRC and CEDAW with the development and submissions of its periodic reports.

- **Gender Responsive Budgeting**

In November, the Department of Gender Affairs in collaboration with UN Women, UNICEF, DFID and the OECS Commission hosted a two-day workshop on Child and Gender Responsive Budgeting. The purpose of the national training workshop aimed to help develop skills, which enables governments to integrate the economic and social considerations of national budgets and social protection policies and investments for children, within a gender-based framework. There were a number of social workers, budget officers, and education and health professionals actively engaged in the discussions.

- **Rights to work (e.g. gender pay gaps, occupational segregation career progression)**

The government of the Turks and Caicos Islands remains committed to ensuring that equal employment opportunities exist and are offered to the entire population. The last official data from 2012 reveals an almost equal split between the male and female population with 51% of the population being male and 49% being female. The results also showed that the level of unemployment among women fell below the level of unemployment among men by 3%, with the female unemployment rate at 13% and the male rate at 16%. However, the level of women employed was 66%, which was lower than the male employment level of 71%. The Ministry of Labour and Employment Services manages the National Skills Development Unit, which

offers programmes, courses, certification etc. to the unemployed. Emphasis has been placed in designing programmes associated with women and youth.

#### ○ **Women's entrepreneurship and women's enterprises**

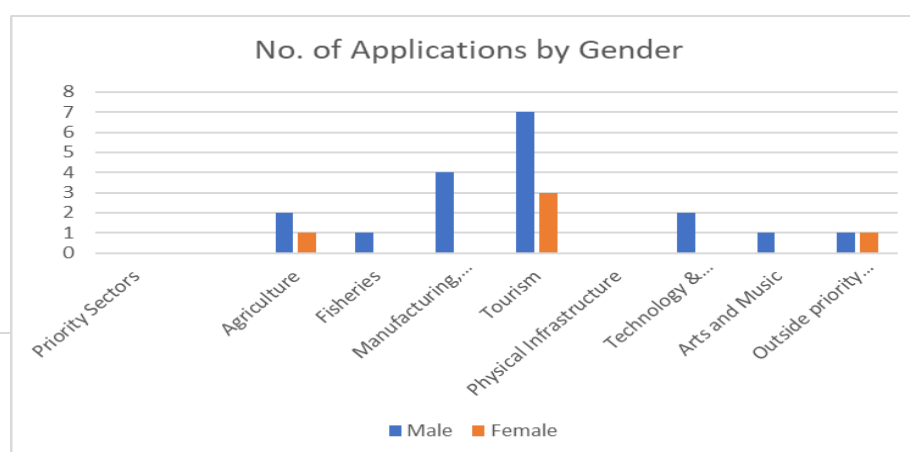
Invest TCI is the Investment Promotion Agency (IPA) for the Turks and Caicos Islands. Its main functions are to attract and facilitate foreign Investment into the Islands; and to support the growth of local businesses.

In 2015, the Micro Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Ordinance came into effect and in April 2016 the MSME programme was launched. The Ordinance makes provision for the Government to provide Concession Orders to qualifying Turks and Caicos Islander owned businesses, which operates in identified priority business sectors. The Concession Orders will permit the company or start-up to specific benefits or reliefs depending on the size of the business.

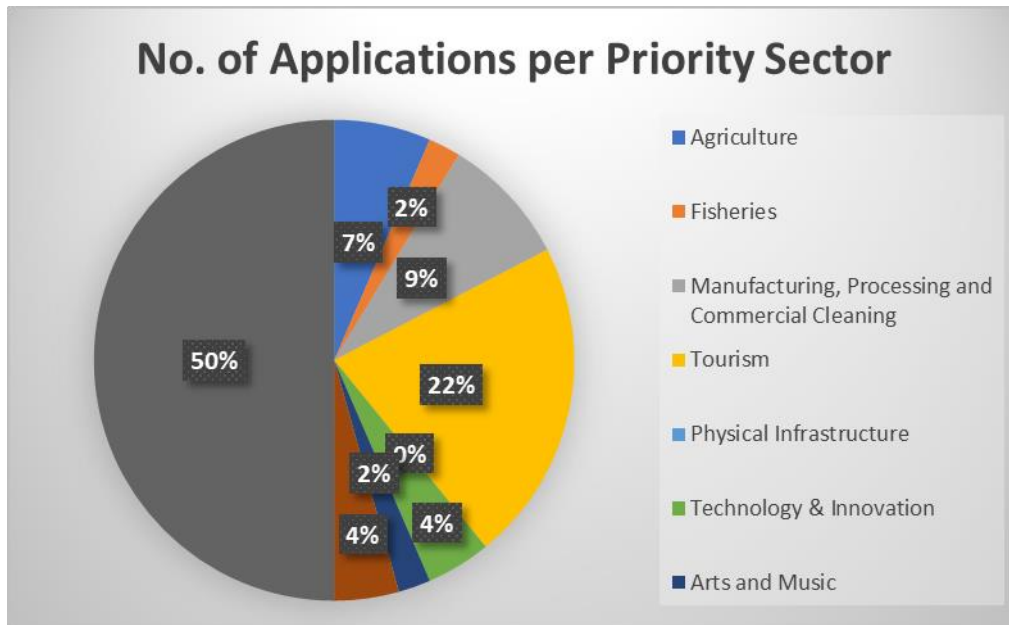
The MSME Ordinance is being managed by Invest Turks and Caicos, who is responsible for assessing eligibility to receive concessions or grants, as well as disbursing the funds upon Cabinet approval. Any eligible small business or start-up can submit a proposal to Invest Turks and Caicos seeking a Concession Order to obtain any or all of three benefits, namely: Customs Duty Reduction, Cash Grant and or Technical Assistance.

In the first nine months (up to December 2016), since the commencement of the MSME Programme, Invest TCI has received 23 applications. The applications were in various priority areas, with 85% of the applicants being classified as Micro enterprise firms with fewer than five (5) employees.

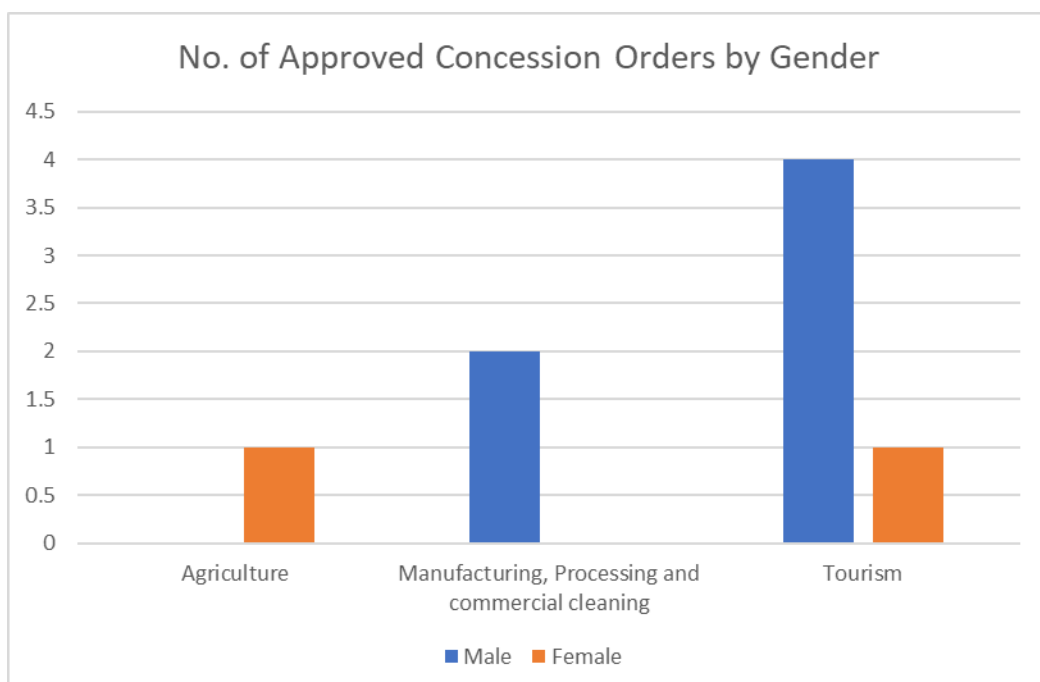
Table 1 below shows tourism services sector has the largest number of applications (10), with manufacturing, agriculture and innovation being the other main sectors with applications. The table also shows applications by gender.



**Chart Showing Number of Applications per Priority Sector**



**Table 2 Showing Number of approved Concession Orders by Gender**



- **Women and the Environment**

One of the mandates of the national Trust is to focus on preserving the traditional skills of the islands and finding avenues to ensure that these are sustained.

As far as preserving some of these skills it is evident that more women, especially older women are involved in areas such as basket weaving, scarp mat making and so on. Over time, however these skills are allowing some women to become small business owners themselves or to carve out supplementary incomes as the products are marketed and are becoming more popular.

The National Trust created avenues for marketing and selling of these locally crafted goods at most of the heritage sites across the islands.

Efforts are being made to have students exposed to these traditional skills. There is an increasing demand from hotels to have demonstrations by these women at hotels and guesthouses. This is a trend that will auger well for women and more visitors seek ‘an authentic’ experience on their holidays.

- **The Department of Environment**

There is a Department of Environment and Coastal Resources within the Government of TCI. Currently this department is being led by a woman. There is an even distribution of women employed within this filed. Although at the technical or functional levels, there are more males involved. There is a higher percentage of males involved as traditionally so in the field of fisheries and conservation. More men are employed in areas where there is a requirement to go out to sea, dive, drive boats etc. There are no women employed in maritime technical areas. Most of the women hold administrative positions and are not involved in areas such as boat captains, maritime officers or conservation officers. They remain traditionally male dominated. There are no laws etc. that prohibit their ....

There is however an increasing amount of young women who are joining the field of environmental protection and conservation at the professional and key decision making levels. A woman is currently at the helm of the department and there are key women involved in mid to higher level positions.

The Department is responsible for the management of National Parks and manages certain vendor/culture markets throughout the islands. These markets provide an avenue for income for many women. Close to 100% of the owners of the booths are women. They retail many local goods, souvenirs etc. to the many tourists that visit the islands.

In addition to the above, many of the women are women who would have either retired, have no formal skills or knowledge and so provides income and a sense of empowerment to these women who would find difficulty finding employment or who need to have avenues to supplement their income. Tourism Industry/Including Cruise: (Data that would provide support of the number of women) There are no prohibitive laws against women in the industry. Women are visible in these areas, small amount as taxi drivers, vendor booths at the cruise port, managing heritage sites and participating overall in its development.

**Has the increasing number of humanitarian crises – caused conflict by extreme weather or other events – affected by the implementation of the BPFA in your country.**

In 2017, the Turks and Caicos Islands experienced the devastating impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria as two of the most powerful and destructive hurricanes ever recorded in the history of the Atlantic basin. Within two weeks, hurricanes Irma and Maria scurried across the territory impacting every island in the Turks and Caicos Islands chain.

Irma's winds with speeds recorded as high as 200 miles per hour, caused catastrophic damage to homes, businesses and 85% of critical infrastructure such as water, electricity and telecommunications and severely impacted Government buildings. Approximately 80% of Government offices were displaced and 13 out of 15 Government Public Schools were also severely impacted.



Despite the widespread damage to homes and critical infrastructure, we are indeed grateful that no lives were lost. We have since made much progress in our Recovery, all schools resumed operations within five weeks of impact, water and electricity restored to 100% of residents within six weeks and the rebuilding of homes, businesses and other critical infrastructure is ongoing.

- **Psychosocial response/intervention to TCI after Irma and Maria**

As part of the response to Hurricane Irma and Maria, Turks and Caicos Island in collaboration with UN Women , provided gender responsive emergency services to women and men and their families, The team of psychosocial consultants were contracted by UN Women to provide expertise on gender responsive mental health intervention, with an emphasis on Gender Based Violence (GBV). The team arrived in the Turks and Caicos Island in April 2018, to conduct the mapping exercise, identify training needs and meet with key stakeholders providing mental health and psychosocial support services, particularly those related to the Hurricane Irma response.

Provide specialized psychosocial support to women and men, including virtual support where applicable. Development of a psychosocial assessment on the situation of vulnerable groups and a plan for the establishment of a referral system to address mental health needs provide professional training and mentorship to key stakeholders and staff based on identified training needs.

The team return in June where several workshops was held in partnership with the department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, person's whom have benefited from this workshop include, civil servants, NGO guidance counsellors, the pastor , NGO groups etc.

**What action has your country taken in the last five years to improve access to Social protection for women and Girls?**

- **Strengthen non- contributory social pensions**

- **Introduced social protection for unemployed women (e.g. unemployment benefits, public social assistance, public works programme)**

In April of 2015 Cabinet granted approval for the increase of payment of social programmes being offered by the Department of Social Development. This increase is vital to programmes including Foster Care payment for orphan children or those placed in care due to abandonment, abuse and neglect; Social Enhancement Aid (S.E.A.) that assist low income families and Home Help that assist persons in need of care at home due to inability to care for themselves or disability. The increase in these programmes made a tremendous impact on the overall well-being and daily survival of clients, as in most cases, some clients are solely dependent on the government's assistance.

- **Social Services/Human Services Programs**

The Department of Social Development (DSD) within the Ministry of Environment and Home Affairs is responsible for the provision of Social Services in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Some of its main objectives are distribution of direct financial assistance to the very poor and destitute through the following programs:

- Social Enhancement Aid (SEA).
- Home help for elderly and disabled persons:
- Legal services

- **Social Enhancement Aid (S.E.A.)**

This service provides temporary intervention for persons who are socially and /or economically challenged while facilitating the attainment of sustainable self-sufficiency. The Social Workers conduct home assessments while collecting supporting documents such as picture identifications, birth certificates and financial receipts. Payments are made monthly. Persons who may qualify include orphans, dependents, children who were abandoned, the elderly, mentally/physically and emotionally challenged and persons with medical conditions. These clients require assistance with his/her basic needs and the parents or guardian earns less than \$600 per month. \$80 per month for one child

\$50 per month per child for two or more children \$150 per month maximum for three or more children

All persons placed on Social Enhancement Aid would be reviewed within six (6) months. All applicants must be a Turks and Caicos Islander and residing in the Turks and Caicos Islands for five (5) consecutive years. Currently one hundred and one (101) clients throughout the TCI are accessing this service with fifty-six (56) being women and children.

- **Indigent Aid**

This program provides temporary to long-term intervention for children and persons who are unemployed, unemployable, are socially and/or economically challenged to assist them to meet their health needs with access to medical coverage (medication coverage or full Indigent status). This program, in some cases, would work in conjunction with the SEA program (but not be limited to). Persons who may qualify include orphans, dependents, children who are abandoned, elderly, and dependents of an elderly person. All persons placed on Indigent Aid Status would be reviewed within six (6) months. All applicants must be a Turks and Caicos Islander and residing in the Turks and Caicos Islands for five (5) consecutive years.

- **Home Help Service Benefit**

This service provides supplemental care and domestic services to vulnerable persons who may not have immediate relatives to provide adequate care and protection, lacks financial resources to access care, and are deemed unfit to work as determined by a medical practitioner. Categories of applicants include special needs, low-income families, medical conditions, and abandoned, unsupported, elderly citizens. All applicants must be a Turks and Caicos Islander and resident of the Turks and Caicos Islands for five (5) consecutive years; placed on for six (6) months then a review is conducted to determine whether the client continues to need the service. Clients are placed on part-time where the family receives \$100 weekly to assist in paying the helper or full-time where the family receives \$200 weekly to assist in paying the helper. Full time helpers are live in helpers, where the client does not have anyone to care for them and usually lives alone. Currently sixty (60) clients are receiving home help throughout the TCI with 40 being women.

Moreover, the Department provides counselling and mediation services in support of teenage mothers and also aiding in providing formula for babies and young infants through our food bank, as well as clothing. Further, the Department of Social Development encourages self-sufficiency for our clients by sourcing opportunities for employment and seeking avenues for continued community support, via NGOs or Churches.

Additionally, the Department provides for School assistance to our clients by providing stipends for uniforms and books yearly for children. Throughout the year, the Department continues to provide advocacy regarding child abuse prevention and facilitating multiple forums and workshops specific to At-Risk Teenage girls. The Department of Social Development also provides for community awareness initiatives throughout the TCI specific to our most vulnerable female populations.

- **National Insurance Program (NIB)**

The National Insurance Board assists women with a wide range of benefits including maternity benefits, widow's pensions, retirement pensions, sickness benefits, employment injury benefits, old age pensions, invalidity pensions and funeral grants. A very important aspect of social security legislation, in keeping with social and cultural norms, is the provision for payment of benefits to women who are not legally married but who are living in common-law relationships. National Insurance schemes have therefore enabled all women to improve their financial status.

Over the last few years, significant increases were made to the following National Insurance benefits;

- Maternity Allowance has increased from 12 weeks to 14 weeks
- Increase of 10% maternity grant per child
- An increase of 10% in Non Contributory Old Age Pension per month
- An increase in the Minimum Retirement and Invalidity Pensions per month
- Increase in Minimum dependents pension (survivors benefit) per month
- An increase in Minimum widow/ widower's pension per month

- **National Health Insurance Plan – NHIP**

The NHIP program is based on compulsory contributions from the population and small co-payments for all treatment. This program covers the recently unemployed registered through the Department of Labour and contribution for prisoners. The government contributes to indigents and wards of the state. Children are covered under their parent's plan.

The Government Health Clinics also provides maternal health for all women: universal access to immunization for children. Life expectancy at birth is currently estimated to be 82 years for women and 77 for men, which are comparable to many developing countries.

- **Mental Health & Substance Dependence**

The Department of Social Development and Gender Affairs provides counseling services to clients for various situations including depression, money management, behavioral problems, probation, parolee etc. Psychological services that cannot be provided by the department are referred to the Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence. Women normally access counseling through initial intake with the Gender Coordinator, who refer clients to the Mental Health and Substance Dependency Department for psychotherapy. The Department of Gender Affairs works with single parents.

The Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence provides services of the highest quality that are accessible to all people regardless of their geographical location, economic status, gender, race, age, social condition, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, religion, HIV/AIDS status, or health status.

People with mental disorders are not subjected to discrimination based on their mental illnesses. Mental health services have parity with general health services.

A variety of timely and appropriate mental health services is available in all health regions of Turks and Caicos Islands to address the mental health needs of the population.

- **Contribution Civic and Faith based Organization**

Most religious organization have outreach programs that cater to the need of the most vulnerable in their church community and the community at large, (feeding, and clothing program, counselling services, mentoring etc.) for individuals and their families.

- The Girl Child

### **Soroptimist International**

Soroptimist International is a vibrant, dynamic organization for today's professional executives. They are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realize aspirations and have an equal voice in creating, peaceful communities worldwide. The Soroptimist works closely with the Gender Unit on issues and opportunities that transform the lives of women and girls.

There three branches of Soroptimist in the Turks and Caicos Islands, all working together in sisterhood. Their commitment to advancing women and girls in the TCI led to a number on initiatives spearheaded by each club. These include a mentoring initiative focusing on girls within the carious school, in addition to making annual donation of personal care items to the local high school, breakfast programs within the primary schools and creating public awareness on the many social ills of women and girls.

### **Section Three: National Institutions and Processes**

#### **What is your country's national Machinery for Gender Equality and the empowerment of women?**

Prior to 2014, the department of Gender Affairs was merged with the Department of Social Development. In 2016, a policy decision was taken to separate the Gender Affairs Arm that came under the department of Social Development to become a separate entity which is now called The Department of Gender Affairs.

This decision has allowed the Department of Gender Affairs, as a separate entity, operating on its own. It will further influence to change process through formal links with sectorial policy initiatives and legislative reforms, creating a greater understanding of gender as a development issue and the ability to influence the development agenda by ensuring that men's and women's needs, priorities and constraints are recognized. Programs are now being designed and implemented to address issues of domestic violence, gun/gang violence, sexual offences, breakdown in family life, teenage pregnancy, anger management, peer pressure, bullying, planned parenthood etc.

As recent as May 8, 2019, a policy decision was taken to place the Office of Gender Affairs under the Ministry of Education Youth Cultural Library and Social Services (MOE). This transition would be advantageous in the following ways;

- Enhance coordination of the various agencies linked to gender affairs
- Encourage Sustainability in monitoring/implementing structured programs/activities
- Greater awareness and sensitization of all stakeholders

The Department of Gender Affairs, has two location which is describe as Zone 1, which covers, South Caicos, Salt Cay and Grand Turk, while Zone 2, covers, Providenciales, North and Middle Caicos and Pine Cay. In Providenciales, Gender affairs shares office accommodation with the Department of Social development, whilst in Grand Turk the office is located in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

**The following Stakeholders participated in the national coordination mechanism ti contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) for Sustainable Development.**

As it related to the development of the Beijing+25 report, agencies form the private and provided information to the report. Information was obtained from questionnaire development by the department and reports submitted previously.

Stakeholders from a cross section of the Turks and Caicos Island were given an opportunity to Make contributions to the development of this report, questionnaires were designed, and distributed online where stakeholders were able to provide a response, in addition, teleconference meetings was held with members of the public/private sphere, including individual meetings with key stakeholders.

- Civil Society
- Faith Based Organisation
- Private Sector
- Women Right Organizations
- TCIG Ministries and Departments

**Are there any mechanism in place to ensure that women and girls from marginalized groups can participate and that their concerns are reflected in these processes?**

There are no barriers, that prohibits women and girls in Turks and Caicos from voicing their concerns on any issue. The Turks and Caicos Islands has established the National Youth Parliament, which allows participation in the political process and preparation for leadership



roles of the youths. The National Youth Tourism Minister is actively involved in the Turks and Caicos Society and has represented the Turks and Caicos Islands internationally on a number of occasions.

- National Youth Department

Work along with the Private Sector has recently been working in collaboration with the Private sector in implementing a number of programs for the youths. These include the Young Entrepreneurs program, the Junior Achievers Award and the young Chefs programs. All of these programs provide training and employment opportunities and is designed towards meeting the basic needs of young people, improving their quality of life, and increasing their contribution to sustainable development.

The youth of the Turks and Caicos Islands is actively involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities that have a direct impact on their daily lives. There is a RAPPORT group is actively involved in designing radio and television commercials as well as other education and communication activities and services which help in educating the public on reproductive and sexual information, including the prevention of early pregnancies, sex education and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. The national advocacy Unit has provided via its “Getting to Zero” campaign nationwide the inclusion of woman in messages that directly address stigma and discrimination.

The campaign includes two posters targeted to adult women and female children in English, Creole and Spanish. The national advocacy also provides preventative HIV education for young people via its youth arm. Rapport has reached over 700 persons for 2013 via one on one or group sessions which address proper condom use; delayed sexual initiation; self-esteem; making informed decisions, stigma and discrimination, drugs and HIV/STI information. Additionally, information is provided via its website which boasts over 9000 views for 2013. HIV Education is also offered on a yearly basis to all grade 6 students via group sessions by HIV Unit personnel to all Primary schools. The Unit ensures that access for children who might need these services and that the rights of children are protected through well-established confidentiality and privacy rules, which are enacted. The Primary Health Care Unit and the

National Drug Unit has established educational programs in favour of life planning skills, healthy lifestyles and active discouragement of substance abuse.

- Human Rights

Since the last reporting cycle, a new **Constitution** has been enacted. Although the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the 2006 Constitution have been maintained; such as, protection from discrimination, the new Constitution expressly provides for equality before the law:

“7. (1) everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.”

Furthermore, section 101 of the Constitution speaks to the Human Rights Commission, whose primary responsibility is “to promote understanding and observance of human rights in the Islands.” The **Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2013** outlines further functions of the Human Rights Commission, such as, working towards the elimination of discrimination; advising and assisting the Government in formulating legislation, which promotes and protects fundamental rights; and promoting an understanding of and compliance with the Equality Ordinance 2012.

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) was established in 2008 and serves as the National Institution vested with the competence and the power to protect and promote human rights. The office of the Human Rights Commission is engaged in promoting human rights with its goals being:

- To foster the development of values and attitudes which up-hold human rights;
- To inform and educate the public;
- To encourage action aimed at defending human rights violations.

The HRC has successfully launched Public Service Announcements increasing awareness on issues of Domestic Violence, Anti-discrimination and the Rights of the Child. Education is fostered through the dissemination of Brochures, leaflets and booklets designed to sensitize the public. The Commission host a bi-monthly Radio Show ‘Human Right and You’ which seek to educate, empower and bring about an awareness of issues such as Domestic Violence, and provide general education on current and relevant issues relating to human rights.

#### **Section four- Data and Statistics**

##### **Question 38**

The TCI has not defined the indicators yet; however, we are currently working on a SDG Committee, which will define a National set of indicators for monitoring progress of the SDGs.

Question 38 – No the TCI has 22 gender specific indicators. Please see Annex 1

##### **Question 40**

- Geographical Location
- Sex
- Age
- Education
- Marital status
- Income
- Race/Ethnicity
- Other characteristics relevant in other context

##### **Question 39**

No. Main challenge is that we are currently in the process of building a committee to define the National set of indicators and decide on which Government Departments and other Agencies will be delegated these indicators. Several attempts have been made to build the committee but due to competing priorities, there was no success. The department of statistics, along with the gender department however, are now getting ready to coordinate a meeting with

the stakeholders to gender specific indicators for the SDG can be identified. The TCI is gearing up for the MICS6, which will allow us to collect much needed data for the SDGs.

#### Question 37

TCI top three priorities for strengthening National Gender Statistics over the next 5 years are:

- We have recently recruited a research-program officer who will be responsible for working along with the computer unit to develop a database on gender statistics ensuring that the different departments within the government would upload their data into the database.
- The department of statistics is taking a cohesive approach in providing data collection and analysis of gender statistics for the TCI.
- We are establishing a committee consisting of Gender, Social Development, Disaster Management, Education, Health, Policing etc. to collect and monitor gender statistics indicators.
- The TCI is currently getting ready to Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), which will collect information on various gender indicators and country Poverty Assessment that will produce national baseline information.

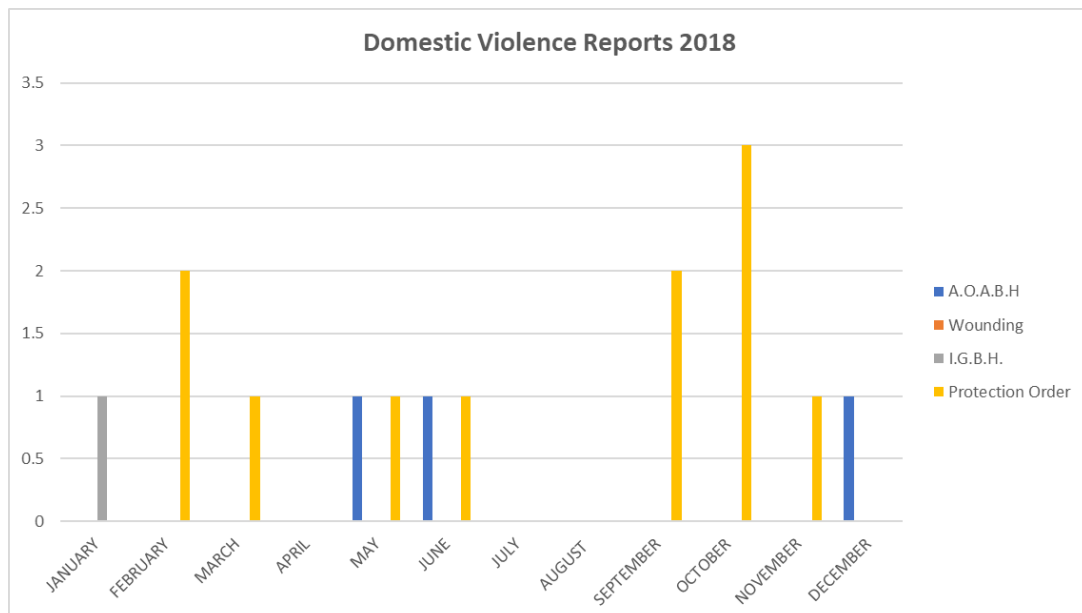
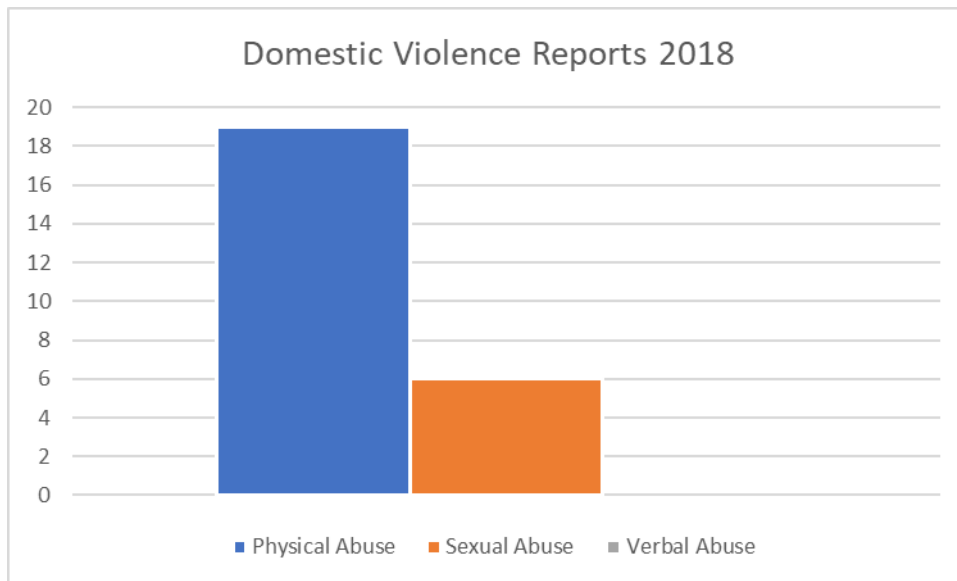
#### Question 36

## Conclusion

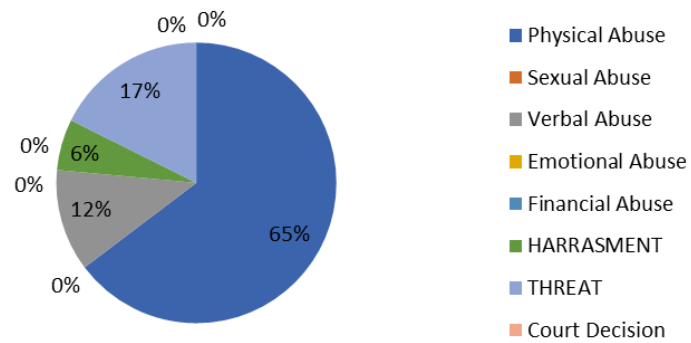
The Department of Gender Affairs, through the Ministry of Education Youth, Cultural Library and Social Services remains committed to the empowerment of women and girls, and despite the significant progress made throughout the years, there remain some areas that the Turks and Caicos Islands are lagging behind. However, forgoing, the government has pledge that more emphasis will be placed on the department, with increase trained and competent staff, so that we do not lag behind in our Regional and International goals. In addition, our aimed is to ensure that women and men ,boys and girls are empowered under all National, Regional and International obligations to which TIGC is signatory.

This report on the Turks and Caicos Island was prepared by the Department of Gender Affairs within the Ministry of Education, Youth Culture Library and Social Services, with contributions from Government Ministries and departments, Private Sector Organization NGO groups to which the report relates. The preparation of the report has enable each organization to become more familiar with the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (BPFA) and to consider the requirement taken to implement its provisions.

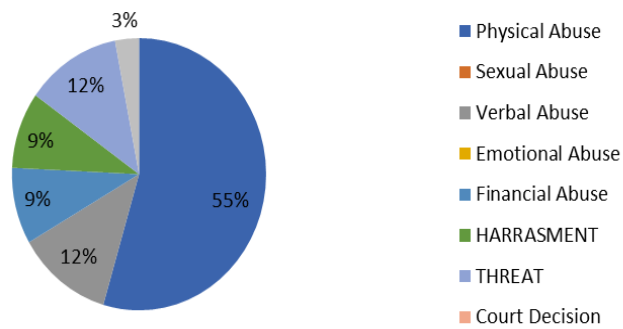
We wish to duly recognized the efforts of all stakeholders who took time out and contributed significantly to this report.



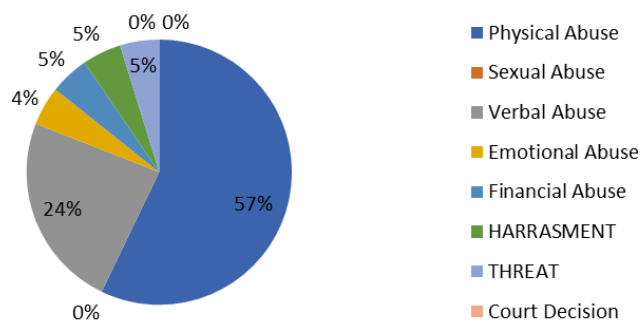
**Pie Chart Showing Domestic Violence  
for JANUARY 2019**



**Pie Chart Showing Domestic Violence for  
FEBRUARY 2019**



**Pie Chart Showing Domestic Violence  
for MARCH 2019**



# ABBREVIATIONS

BVI	British Virgin Islands
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDM	Caribbean Development Bank
DDME	Department of Disaster Management and Emergencies
DV	Domestic Violence
DEPS	Department of Economic Planning and Statistics
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
NHIP	National Health Insurance Programme
NIB	National Insurance Board
PROVO	Providenciales
TCICC	Turks and Caicos Islands Community College
TCI	Turks and Caicos Islands
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund