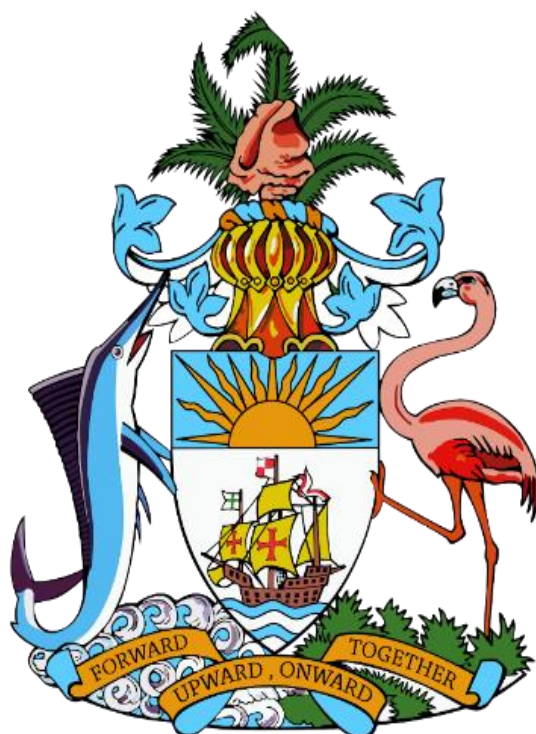




**Twenty-Fifth Anniversary
of the Fourth World Conference on Women
and Adoption of the Beijing Declaration
and Platform for Action (1995)**

National Report

BAHAMAS



BAHAMAS

Beijing +25 NATIONAL REVIEW

**ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

2019

**TWENTY – FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN
AND THE ADOPTION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION
AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

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Hon. Lanisha Tamar Rolle – Minister of Social Services and Urban Development 2017-2018

Hon. Melanie Griffin - Minister of Social Services and Community Development 2012 - 2017

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Executive Summary

In 1999, American astronaut Scott Kelly told the world that, the aquamarine waters surrounding The Bahamas is the most beautiful view from space. The Bahamas celebrate this powerful endorsement of the natural beauty of our islands; however, the task of governance of our vast archipelagic paradise, is enormously grand. Seven hundred (700) islands and cays, 100,000 square miles of sea, 5,300 square miles of land, 380,000 people, 5 hospitals, 61 clinics, 170 schools, 42 airports, and 1650 registered ships comprising one of the largest shipping registries in the world comprise our ominous reality. A reality which mandates that initiatives, resources, projects and programmes listed in the following twelve Beijing Declaration of concerns for women and girls, must be replicated in all major islands and cays of The Bahamas.

Beijing Declaration 12 areas of concerns from the Fourth World Conference on Women

1. Increasing poverty on women lacking employment, housing, food, water and transportation
2. Unequal access to education, training, technology and lifelong learning initiatives
3. Inadequate access to quality health care, related services, health campaigns and research
4. Multiple forms of violence and discrimination committed against women
5. Armed and other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
6. Legislative barriers to access credit for businesses, crown land, and natural resources
7. Insufficient women in parliament, on government boards and with government contracts
8. Limited legislation, quota policies and national projects for the advancement of women
9. Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women
10. Negative Stereotype and limited participation of women in media, construction, science and technology
11. Unequal women participation in the management of natural resources, and the environment
12. Persistent discrimination and violation of the rights of the girl child

From 2014 to 2019, the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action yielded challenges and successes. The Bahamas' pursuit toward achieving equality and empowerment for women and girls included strategic, concerted efforts of so many agencies and stakeholders. This Beijing+25 National Review will reveal that for the past 25 years, The Bahamas has made concerted efforts to implement and achieve the Beijing Platform for Action especially in areas of education, health and social protections. The priority of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, was driven by the political will to fulfil obligations of The Bahamas as a signatory to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the political will to achieve Goal # 5 of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

The top five national priorities for Beijing implementation include: increase women representation in parliament, increase women ownership of land and businesses, increase scientific research, increase laws for rights and protections of marginalized persons and elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girls.

Regionally, The Bahamas, is committed to fulfilling the goals of CARICOM gender equality initiatives for promotion of social justice in education, health, poverty, and the economy. As a member of the Organization of American States/Inter-American Commission on Women (OAS/CIM), The Bahamas is a signatory to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belem do Pará).

Internationally, The Bahamas is obliged to fulfil the goals of several agreements, treaties and conventions which were signed and ratified. Some of these include: The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality, 2005-2015; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ratified in 1993; the Beijing Platform for Action, 1995; the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified in 1991; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed in 2013; and the United Nations 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SECTION ONE: PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES & SETBACKS

1. What has been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women over the past 5 years?

ACHIEVEMENTS 2014 - 2019

1.1 **The Legislative Agenda** of The Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas demonstrates de jure commitment to enhancing the quality of life of all persons within its territory. With respect to women, the Government is making notable efforts to ensure that women are able to participate fully and equally in all aspects of Bahamian life. Some of the Acts passed, Bills tabled and Initiatives accomplished in the past five years which address aspects of protection, access, advancement and acknowledgment of women and girls are:

- i. **Sexual Offences Amendment Act 2014:** An act to provide for a sex offender register and registry. Section 2 of the amendment act inserts sections 26A-26J into the principal Act. To establish a sex offender register and a sex offender registry.
- ii. **Child Protection Amendment Act 2014:** Section 3 of the Amendment allows the insertion of Part XIII A into the principal Act. Part XIII A – establishment of guidelines for mandatory action rescuing children operation.
- iii. **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act 2014:** Section 4 of the Act allows for the establishment of The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities. Section 10 (1) – Functions of the Commission. (1)(b) (ii) to advise the Minister on the provisions of any international treaty or agreement relating to the care of rehabilitation and habitation of persons with disabilities and its benefits to the country (iii) to recommend measures to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities
- iv. **National Tripartite Council Act 2015:** An act to establish a tripartite forum on labour and industrial relations. Section 4 - The functions and powers of the council are (a) to practice and promote tripartism in The Bahamas through cooperation, consultation, negotiation and compromise of the social partners in order to create and shape social and economic policies and programs. (b) To also advise the government on the formulation of national policies and strategies on all aspects of labour, productivity, quality and competition.
- v. **National Health Insurance Act 2016:** The Act repeals the National Health Insurance Act of 2007 and implements a National Health Insurance Plan, to establish a National Health Insurance Authority, for the establishment a National Health insurance fund. The National Health Insurance Plan is to facilitate the provision of accessible, affordable, equitable and quality health care services to all eligible persons.
- vi. **Criminal Evidence (Witness Anonymity) (Amendment) Act, 2018:** The amendment of the criminal evidence (witness anonymity) act now allows for a witness to give testimony and be seen and heard in his (the witness') natural voice only by the Magistrate, the Magistrate Panel or a Judge.
- vii. **Affordable Homes Act, 2018:** The Affordable Homes Act allows for an applicant who purchases a service lot of a government owned subdivision or imports materials to construct a single-family dwelling home, to be entitled to exemption from custom duties and excise tax, on the Minister's approval.
- viii. **Economic Empowerment Zones Act, 2018:** The Economic Empowerment Zones Act allows for a property owner of a dwelling house or business that seeks to renovate or restore the property to be exempt from paying real property taxes, concessions on custom duties and exemption from excise taxes. The Act also allows for there to be a waiver of business licensing fees, exemption of custom duties on business/commercial vehicles and exemption of excise taxes for businesses.
- ix. **Constitution Amendment Act 2018:** allowed for the establishment of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). The insertion of Section 78 (1) into the constitution allowed for the Attorney General to be the principal legal adviser to the Government of The Bahamas; section (2) for him to be responsible for the administration of legal affairs

and legal proceedings for and against the state. Section 78A allowed for the Director of Public Prosecutions to undertake criminal proceedings before a court. The Director of Public Prosecutions shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority except under section 78 (3) where the Attorney General may give direction to the DPP to exercise the DPP's powers.

- x. **Ombudsman Bill 2017**: the establishment of an ombudsman allows for the ombudsman to investigate administrative action of an authority for the purpose of deciding whether there is evidence of maladministration on the part of that authority.
- xi. **Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill 2018**: The Bill was posted on the government's website on 21 February 2019 and it proposes changes to the country's immigration laws in an attempt to amend the anomalies with regard to The Bahamas Nationality Act and the Immigration Act and would also establish provisions for those seeking asylum in The Bahamas. (*Bahamas Government Website. 2019*)

1.2 The Advancement of Women in Education in The Bahamas, during the period under review, has been astoundingly significant.

In 2015, the introduction of the **National High School Diploma** was established as a benchmark for minimum basic education that every child should obtain before leaving the school system and included standards for civics, punctuality, job readiness and community service. This positively affects over 30,348 girls who make up 51% of the total student enrolment in schools.

In 2016, the **Marjorie Davis Institute for Special Education Services** was established in an inner-city constituency for children with mild learning and developmental disabilities. Subsequent governments have focused on programmes that facilitate intervention, training, teaching and research for students with mild to more severe learning challenges.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education commenced its **Universal Pre-school Government sponsored program** for the 2018/2019 academic school year. Over 800 of 11,530 three and four-year olds were enrolled in public and private pre-schools with a \$2000 voucher per child. This initiative is monumental for hundreds of mothers and families who will experience more available income to care for other essential family needs and or available time to pursue employment opportunities.

In 2019, the Ministry of Education spent over 5 million dollars on digital evolution, to install computer labs and E-literacy capabilities in every junior and senior high school in The Bahamas. Considerable efforts have been made during the past five years to incorporate technology in both public and private schools in The Bahamas. The Ministry of Education has implemented training programmes for teachers to ensure that they can teach technology to students and improve achievement levels using this vital teaching tool. (*MOE Website. 2019*)

Table 1 – Types and Numbers of Educational Institutions 2018 *Source: Planning and Research Section, MOEST*

School Type	New Providence	Family Islands	Total
Pre-school	4	5	9
Primary	25	69	94
All-age	0	13	13
Junior High	7	1	8
Senior High	7	0	7
Secondary	1	23	24
Special	8	5	13
Post-secondary/Tertiary	2	0	2
Total	54	116	170

Table No. 2 - Public and Private Student Enrolment by School Type - 2017-2018 School Year.
 Source: Department of Education, Science and Technology

School Type	Public			Independent			Total
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	
Preschool	219	249	468	0	0	0	468
Primary	11919	11389	23308	1606	1691	3297	26605
Junior	3434	3403	6837	37	59	96	6933
Senior	2773	3071	5844	0	0	0	5844
Secondary	3037	2937	5974	686	806	1492	7466
All-Age	517	572	1089	5282	6059	11341	12430
Special School	124	112	236	0	0	0	236
Total	22,023	21,733	43,756	7,611	8,615	16,226	59,982

A review of enrollment, graduation, and attainment data show that females were more likely to enroll in higher education. For the period 2010 to 2017, enrollment of females at the College of The Bahamas (COB) and The Bahamas Baptist Community College was almost three times as large as that of males.

Figure - 1 College / University of The Bahamas - Graduation, by Sex, 2010-2017
 Source: The College of The Bahamas

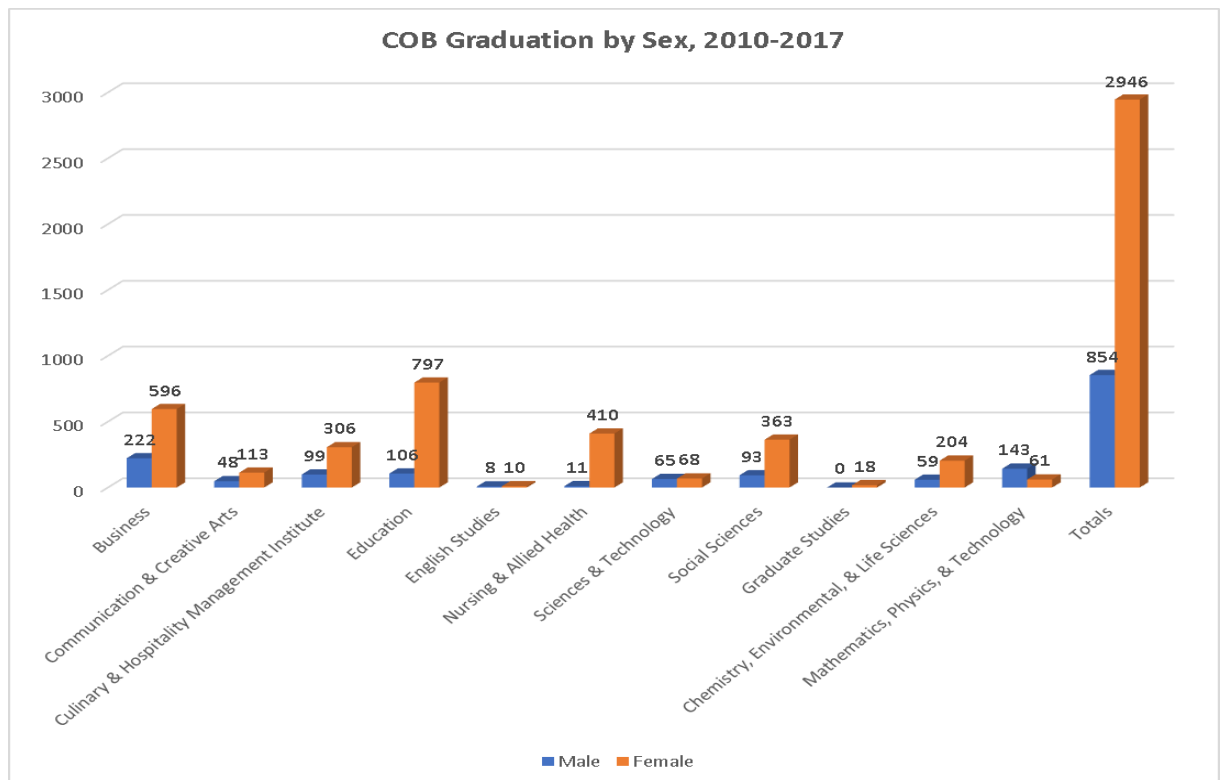


Table 3: BBCC Graduation by Sex, 2010-2017

	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Accounting & Business Management	28	75	103	27%	73%
Biology & Biology/Chemistry	0	18	18	0%	100%
Computer Information System	9	9	18	50%	50%
Early Childhood & Primary Education	1	62	63	2%	98%
Human Resources Management	0	11	11	0%	100%
Law & Criminal Justice	11	23	34	32%	68%
Marketing	0	1	1	0%	100%
Mathematics	0	1	1	0%	100%
Office Administration	0	8	8	0%	100%
Pre-school Auxilliary	0	27	27	0%	100%
Psychology/Sociology	4	9	13	31%	69%
Public Administration	3	2	5	60%	40%
Theology & Biblical Studies	2	10	12	17%	83%
Total	58	256	314	18%	82%

(Source: Department of Statistics- Labour Market Newsletter 2017)

1.3 In 2015, **The Leadership for Women in Politics Course** celebrated its inaugural graduation ceremony, when sixteen women from divergent age groups, backgrounds and political views, became the first certificate recipients of the programme. The College of The Bahamas, in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Services and Community Development, through the Bureau of Women's Affairs developed the six-week course to enlighten, educate and inspire more Bahamian women to pursue political leadership roles. The programme received phenomenal commendations and a second cohort of the course was likewise offered. Representation in the course came from political parties and a full spectrum of age groups. Arinthia Komolafe, leader of the DNA Political Party, is a graduate of this course. The course was designed to cover every aspect of frontline politics. A cross-section of experts served as lecturers and topics included Issues Affecting Women in Politics; Protocol and Etiquette; Transformational Leadership; Parliamentary Procedures; Leadership Dynamics; The Women's Suffrage Movement in The Bahamas; Laws Relating to Women in The Bahamas; Public Speaking: Communications and the Media; Balancing Family and Public Life; and Strategic Campaign Management.

The six-week course was a partial implementation of a commitment made in a report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to take action to increase the number of women in politics. The course was also in response to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that set a 30 per cent target for women in decision-making to be achieved. According to **mapping completed by the inter-Parliamentary Union and UN/Women** on Women in Politics 2015, The Bahamas ranked 43rd for women in ministerial positions (20-24.9 per cent) and 98 for women in parliament (both Upper and Lower Chambers).

In The Bahamas, women made up 53.4% of electorate in the last elections hence it was advocated that a more significant percentage of women should be candidates and offer for parliament and more women must be encouraged to support women candidates and parliamentarians. The United Nations has requested governments to implement a quota system of minimum 30% women candidates by all political parties as (DGFA Annual Report. 2015)

1.4 In 2018, **Women in Politics Mentoring Conclave** was held during National Women's Week, by the Department of Gender and Family Affairs brought together more than twenty-five (25) powerful women in Bahamian politics. The women leaders represented every political party, and the distinguished cadre of women parliamentarians and politicians included Lanisha T. Rolle, Cabinet Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture and President of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association - Free National Movement (FNM); Hon. Katherine Forbes-Smith – President of the Senate (FNM); Hon. Jasmine Dareus - FNM Senator; Jennifer Isaac-Dotson - Senator FNM;

Anafae Ferguson-Knowles - Senator FNM; Jobeth Coleby Davis – Senator PLP; Shonel Ferguson – Member of Parliament FNM; Miriam Emmanuel – Member of Parliament FNM; Arinthia Komolafe - Leader of the Democratic National Alliance (DNA); and S. Ali McIntosh - Leader of The Bahamas Constitution Party, (BCP); Hon. Cynthia Pratt - former Deputy Prime Minister, Progressive Liberal Party (PLP); Dame Hon. Janet Bostwick - the first woman elected to serve in the House of Assembly and first female Attorney General, FNM; Hon. Italia Johnson - first female Speaker of the House of Assembly, FNM; Hon. Melanie Griffin former Cabinet Minister of Social Services, PLP; Gladys Sands – former Senator FNM, Cheryl Bazard - former Senator PLP, Robyn Lynes - former Senator PLP and Dr. Jacinta Higgs – former Senator FNM. Additionally, more than fifteen women political candidates from previous general elections were present.

More than one hundred and fifty women from all political parties, the armed forces, education and health professionals, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the clergy attended the event. Dame Janet Bostwick shared a lived history of women in politics in The Bahamas and called for gender unity, equity, and equality for men and women as was agreed in 1995 in Beijing where 189 countries agreed to promote the 12 concerns for women. It was noted that a national quota system of 30% minimum for all political parties to include women candidates in winnable seats, is necessary for more women to serve alongside men in parliament. It was explained that the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action are actively advancing the international agenda of 50/50 by 2030. (DGFA Annual Report. 2018)

1.5 Establishment of the Department of Gender and Family Affairs (DGFA) in October 2016 marked a significant achievement towards gender equality and the empowerment for women in The Bahamas. In June 1981 a Women's Desk was established. The Desk was renamed the Women's Affairs Unit in September 1987 and renamed the Bureau of Women's Affairs in January 1995. The elevation from the Bureau to Department included an extension of mandate, structure, staffing and budget. As reflected in its new name, DGFA serves to coordinate, advocate and inform policy for and on behalf of women and girls, men and boys. The scope of work of the Department has been expanded to ensure a comprehensive approach to address the country's social challenges, create educational programs, provide training for women and girls and to monitor the implementation of international conventions that impact women, men, boys and girls. In December 2018, The Bahamas **strengthened the DGFA as the National Machinery** for advancement of women, by increasing the staff complement of the Department which now includes a Director, Senior Public Officer, Domestic Violence Specialist, Gender Base Violence Coordinator, Male Programme Coordinator, Education Curriculum Specialist, Records Registrar, Administrative Assistant, Gender Conventions Expert and a Research Specialist. (Gender Based Task Force Strategic Plan. 2015)

1.6 CEDAW Preparations and Appearance serves as a highlight for The Bahamas as it was the pinnacle achievement of years of preparation, countless consultations, and many inter-agency CEDAW committee meetings. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs conducted several awareness-raising initiatives concerning the provisions and articles of the CEDAW Convention.

In 2014, Minister Melanie Griffin led a delegation to the United Nations in New York to present the first through fifth Periodic Reports. Following this significant feat, the **Inter-agency CEDAW Committee** comprising of government ministry representatives, civil society leaders, and non-governmental stakeholders, convened monthly to prepare for The Bahamas' appearance before the CEDAW Committee of Experts for the Sixth Periodic Report.

In May 2015 the Bureau of Women's Affairs disseminated the **CEDAW concluding observations at a Stakeholder's meeting** held in which the following entities were represented: Health and Family Life Unit, Primary Health and Family Life Unit; Department of Education; Adolescent Health Unit; Ministry of Health; Department of Statistics; Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute; Providing Access to Continued Education (PACE) Foundation; Bahamas Bar Association; local office of the Organization of American States (OAS); Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration; Pan-American Health

Organization (PAHO/WHO); Eugene Dupuch Law School; local office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); Caribbean Association For Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA); and Society Against Stigmatization and Hate (SASH); Disability Affairs Division; Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs; Ministry of Social Services and Community Development; Ministry of National Security; the Women's Branch of the Free National Movement (FNM); Department of Social Services; Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF); and the Bureau of Women's Affairs. (BWA. Annual Reports.2014 – 2015)

On 22 September 2016, a **CEDAW education forum** was held in Freeport, Grand Bahama. Males and females representing Government and Non-Governmental organizations and high school students were in attendance.

In November 2017, during National Women's Week, a **CEDAW Town Hall meeting** was held in New Providence. The audience learnt about the sixteen (16) priority articles and the recommendations for implementation.

On 22 June 2018, the National Women's Advisory Council in collaboration with the Department of Gender and Family Affairs, held an **education forum on CEDAW** for a cross-section of Government, Non-Government and Civil Society organizations and the media. A Member of the CEDAW Committee served as the featured speaker. (DGFA Annual Reports. 2016 – 2018). On Monday, 15 October 2018, CEDAW Inter-agency committee members organized a **Mock CEDAW Session held at the University of The Bahamas (UB)**. Over two hundred high school and University of The Bahamas students attended the interactive session with the Minister of Social Services and Urban Development. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs utilized this event to appraise the public on its progress with CEDAW preparations and to survey the thoughts of the attendees regarding the principal articles of CEDAW. Following his address, Minister Campbell responded to many questions posed by UB Students and Civil Society representatives present. (Guardian Supplement. DGFA. 2019)

On 25 October 2018, Honourable Minister Frankie A. Campbell led The Bahamas' delegation which **appeared before the Experts of CEDAW Committee** in United Nation Geneva, Switzerland to engage in the constructive dialogue. The 71st session to review women's rights, held at the UN's Palais des Nations, was formally opened by Ms. Dalia Leinarte, the CEDAW chairperson. Marion Bethel, the first Bahamian female elected expert to serve on the CEDAW Committee in Geneva, warmly greeted The Bahamas' delegation following the session. (DGFA Annual Report.2018)

1.7 Partnerships with Civil Society and NGOs SDG # 17 - In October 2018, the Department of Gender and Family Affairs presented over \$150,000 to several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support programmes, projects and seminars that fulfil aspects of the DGFA mandate which includes the economic, and social advancement of families, men, women, boys and girls. The NGO representatives were reminded to document and submit evidence, including data, of ways their programmes and interventions genuinely empower women and girls to reduce poverty and improve the quality of their lives.

The Bahamas provides annual grants to non-governmental and religious organizations to facilitate their work in support of victims/survivors of violence, including the provision of shelters and counselling services. The Crisis Centre, The Links Safe House, The Salvation Army, Great Commission Ministries and The Bahamas AME Conference are few of the recipients of annual government subventions. (Bahamas National Budget 2014 – 2019)

CHALLENGES

1.8 The geographical archipelagic landscape of The Bahamas means that many islands compete for limited national budgetary resources and continue to present the most significant challenge against the advancements of women and gender equity. From 2014 to 2019, the geographical reality of travelling over 100,000 square miles of water to replicate and distribute social protections, public capital, human resources, infrastructural services, utilities, and vital products in twenty-four (24) islands and several cays is exceptionally costly. The Bahamas made several attempts to enhance efficacy by forging new strategic corporate partnerships and engaging in numerous joint venture initiatives with other inter-agencies and regional National Machineries that promote the advancement of women and girls.

1.9 The need for technical assistance for the implementation of scientific research to gather baseline data and analyses to inform the impact of the many initiatives is a major concern. Efforts are being made to address the lack of technological networking capacity needed to accurately track the clients' access to safety net programmes offered in the MOSS centres. One of the critical CEDAW recommendations was the need for The Bahamas to conduct national scientific research to obtain baseline prevalence data to obtain authentic measurements of success.

1.10 Gender-based violence (GBV) - Intimate Partner Violence, Domestic Violence, and Sexual Assaults remain problematic in The Bahamas. The Royal Bahamas Police Force GBV Crime Statistics 2017, indicate that there have been a recorded 52 instances of rape, a decrease from 2016, which shows 71 recorded instances of rape. Records show that 36 of the 52 instances occurred in 2017 and 57 of the 71 instances in 2016 took place on New Providence alone. In 2018, according to the Royal Bahamas Police Force, all crimes against persons decreased, except for reported rape, which increased from 52 to 55. While the primary victims of homicide are young men, violence against women and children is also a concern. Both intimate partner violence and rape disproportionately affect women and are underreported. No known surveys have been conducted to estimate the national levels of prevalence of either intimate partner violence or sexual violence in The Bahamas

1.11 Insufficient non-reimbursable funding for gender mainstreaming is a critical chronic challenge experienced by The Bahamas with a recorded poverty rate of 12.5% and poverty line per person per year of \$4,247 for 2016; and a national annual average income of B\$37,716, an annual average income for New Providence of B\$40,090 and Grand Bahama B\$38,108. During 2014 – 2019, in various fora, The Bahamas has argued that the per capita GDP should not be the only consideration for non-reimbursable financing. Indeed, The Bahamas remains a developing country, with a high degree of vulnerability and variability in the levels of development. Notwithstanding the relatively high GDP per capita of the country, The Bahamas' geographical location and the scarcity of raw materials have resulted in a specialization of production geared towards services. Tourism is the main activity with a total direct and indirect contribution of 60% of GDP. Financial services follow in importance with a total contribution of under 20% of GDP. The national debt, which was below 40% in 2007, rose to 66.8% of GDP in 2017. This debt burden and associated costs reduced the government's ability to tackle broader issues. (Bahamas VoluntaryNationalReview.PM Minnis.2018)

The Bahamas has been ceremoniously graduated from concessional and non-reimbursable financing with respect to the majority of international financial institutions due to its high per capita GDP. This remains a challenge for The Government of The Bahamas and the DGFA. As we seek international non-reimbursable grants, The Bahamas is reminded of its graduated status and inability to access funding because the annual average income is too high. Meanwhile, the limited annual national budget allocations are being required to fund and implement essential needs such as water, energy, and transportation, as well as, gender-based violence and equality campaigns, programmes, trainings and projects similar to African, Latin American and Caribbean Countries who are receiving regional and international non-reimbursable funding to bolster their gender mainstreaming efforts.

The national average income figure of B\$37,716, New Providence average of B\$40,090 and Grand Bahama average of B\$38,108, misrepresent the lived reality of the majority of Bahamians especially women, many of whom earn income amounts just above minimum wage or are unemployed or whose income fluctuate with the tourism season. The annual average income calculation includes attractive salaries made by a small percentage of real estate agents, hotel managers, private executives, government officials, off shore banking and financial institutions executives within The Bahamas. As their income is added into the national totals the average income figures become grossly skewed. This information is critical as the retardation of the advancement of equality for women and girls in The Bahamas is being crippled by international institutions who have used the national average income to render The Bahamas “rich” and “a graduate of available non-reimbursable funding”. (DGFA Contribution.ECLAC.2019)

SETBACKS

1.12 Measure to Amend the Constitution of The Bahamas to incorporate equality of women and men on the 7 June 2016, proved a considerable setback for the advancement of women’s rights. The Government of The Bahamas held a Constitutional Referendum to address some of the recommendations of the Constitutional Reform Commission to effect constitutional change by seeking to amend specific fundamental rights provisions to promote gender equality generally, and also with particular reference to spousal entitlements and the conferral of Bahamian nationality upon children.

- i. Question 1: A child born outside The Bahamas would become a Bahamian citizen at birth if either its mother or father is a citizen of The Bahamas by birth.”
- ii. Question 2: the foreign spouse of a Bahamian Women citizen would be able to obtain citizenship
- iii. Question 3: A Bahamian father of a child born out of wedlock would be able to pass his citizenship to that child subject to legal proof that he is the father.”
- iv. Question 4: It would be unlawful to discriminate based on sex and sex would be defined as meaning male or female.”

The referendum was unsuccessful, notwithstanding the government’s organizing of information sessions and extensive educational town hall meetings. The electorate, for multiple reasons, determined that it was not in the best interest of the country to affect the proposed amendments at that time. (CEDAW/C/BHS/Q/6/Add.1 9 July 2018).

The table below accounts for the exact Referendum Questions and the corresponding results.

Table No. 4 2016 Referendum Results

Question	<i>For</i>		<i>Against</i>	
	Votes	%	Votes	%
1	32,249	38.73	51,022	61.27
2	24,148	28.79	59,714	71.21
3	28,246	33.98	54,890	66.02
4	17,919	21.43	65,696	78.57

Source: Tribune242 <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2016/jun/10/06102016-edition/>).

An educational campaign was launched before the 2016 referendum. The Education team met with a cross-section of persons including faith-based organizations in New Providence and the Family Islands, as well as television and radio appearances. The Family Islands visited included Grand Bahama, Abaco, Exuma, Cat Island, Long Island and Mayaguana to conduct education fora. The constitutional referendum was clear evidence of democracy being displayed within The Bahamas. The Bahamas has since drafted the Immigration Bill 2017, which is to protect the rights of women by promoting gender and nationality equality in the transferral of citizenship.

2. Which of the following have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country over the past five years through laws, policies and/or programmes?

- ✓ Equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice
- ✓ Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls
 - Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security
- ✓ Eliminating violence against women and girls
 - Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
 - Political participation and representation
 - Right to work and rights at work (e.g. gender pay gap, occupational segregation, career progression)
- ✓ Women's entrepreneurship and women's enterprises
 - Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity or parental leave, care services)
- ✓ Gender-responsive social protection (e.g. universal health coverage, cash transfers, pensions)
- ✓ Basic services and infrastructure (water, sanitation, energy, transport etc.)
 - Strengthening women's participation in ensuring environmental sustainability
 - Gender-responsive budgeting
 - Digital and financial inclusion for women
 - Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience building
 - Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes

2.1 Equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice 2012 and 2016

International Agreements

Efforts have been made to maintain international obligations, as is evident in the accession and ratification of the following additional international agreements:

- i. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (Accession Date: 28 September 2015);
- ii. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children,
- iii. Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (Accession Date: 28 September 2015);
- iv. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Ratification Date: 28 September 2015).

Domestic Legislation

The Bahamas is pleased to report that legislation was drafted and enacted in all of the categories mentioned below:

1. **Justice Protection (Amendment) Act, 2014:** An Act to Amend the Justice Protection Act to create the offence of Obstruction of Justice in order to complete The Bahamas Obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organization Crime, 2000 and for connected purposes.
2. **Early Childhood Care (National Standard) Act, 2014:** An Act to provide a standard for all Early Childhood Care Centres by establishing the requirement to apply for a certificate of registration.
3. **Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2014:** Act to Amend the Sexual Offences Act to provide for a Sex Offenders Register and Registry.
4. **Correctional Services Act, 2014:** An Act to Provide the Modernization of the Law governing the custody and rehabilitation of inmates.
5. **Child Protection (Amendment) Act, 2014:** An Act making provision for the Appointment of a National Committee for Families and Children to implement the obligations under the Convention on the Rights of The Child.
6. **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities), August 2014:** An Act to achieve equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities; to eliminate discrimination based on disabilities; to provide rights and rehabilitation and habilitation of persons with disabilities; to establish the National Commission for persons with disabilities; and for connected purposes.
7. **Bahamas Protected Areas Fund Act, 2014:** This Act provides for the establishment and regulation of a protected areas fund. The purpose of the fund is to ensure there is financing

- for the management of protected areas in The Bahamas, the management of activities under the Caribbean Challenge Initiative, ensure objectives are carried out under the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund – used for scientific and policy research and education and other matters.
8. **Rehabilitation of Offenders (Amendment) Act, 2015:** An Act to amend the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act to provide for applications for Early Rehabilitation and the establishment of a Rehabilitation of Offenders Committee.
 9. **Immigration (Amendment) Act, 2015:** An Act to amend the Immigration Act to provide for the publication of a policy on the exercise of Ministerial discretion; the establishment of an Immigration Reserve Corps; the establishment of a Detention Centre and for connected matters.
 10. **Evidence (Amendment) Act, 2015:** This Act allows an expert to give evidence by way of a live television link in criminal proceedings where the court is satisfied that the expert witness is on an island or place where proceedings are held, or where the expert witness is on an island within the jurisdiction of The Bahamas
 11. **Rehabilitation of Offenders (Amendment) Act, 2015:** Section 10 of the amended Act allows for an application of early rehabilitation. It states that where a young offender or first-time offender, after five years for an indictable offence or two years for a summary offence, or other exemptions specified in the Act, can apply to the rehabilitation of offenders committee for the removal of a spent conviction and may be granted early rehabilitation.
 12. **Child Protection (Marco Alert) Regulations, 2016 :** Makes provision that if there is reasonable belief that a child is missing or abducted or a child is in danger of serious bodily injury or death, and there is descriptive information about the child that will assist in the recovery of the child, an alert is issued immediately by the Commissioner of Police.
 13. **Real Property Tax (Waiver of Tax) Act, 2016:** This was enacted to waive real property tax arrears and accumulated surcharges for:
 - a. owner-occupied property with an assessed value of two-hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) or less classified as owner-occupied for the past five years; or
 - b. purchased or renovated dilapidated buildings used for commercial, community or educational purposes.
 14. **The Constituency Capital Grant Act, 2017:** allows for the allocation of constituency capital grants to Ministers for the partial development of a constituency, the maintenance of roads, parks or public facilities in the constituency, the beautification of the constituency's environment, or any other work the Member of Parliament finds as appropriate development.

A Family Court System Committee - Concerning the recommendations on establishing a Family Court, a Task Force was appointed to review over twenty (20) pieces of legislation, and the Rules promulgated thereunder, that relate to family matters, with a mandate to streamline and treat family matters with urgency and in a family-friendly way. Presently, there is a court dedicated to family matters with a Judge trained in matters related to divorce, adoption and international child abduction. (Universal Periodic Review. Statement. Bethel. 2019)

Eugene Dupuch Legal Aid Clinic - provides legal advice for the benefit of underprivileged persons requiring legal assistance and representation within the jurisdiction of The Bahamas. The Clinic is managed by a veteran Attorney who serves as Director and supported by trained attorneys and retired justices who oversee the initiation and progress of actual cases with the direct involvement of final year students. Cases involving protecting the rights and privileges of women and children are treated as a priority. Data for 2016, shows that Female clients outnumber males almost 2:1 as there were 132 male clients and 242 female clients. In 2017, there were 117 male clients and 240 female clients.

Swift Justice Initiative - The establishment of the "Swift Justice" Initiative has and continues to provide substantial benefits to The Bahamas' Criminal Justice System. The initiative serves a critical role to proactively identify and respond to the lack of performance or weaknesses in the justice system, as well as strengthen transparency. In 2015, 232 matters were disposed before the Supreme Court resulting in 114 more cases than in 2012. There has been a doubling in the

rate of convictions compared to 31% in 2012, to 67% in 2016. The conviction rate for murder was 72%. The time for the presentation of the Voluntary Bill of Indictment decreased from 344 days in 2012 to 68 days in 2016. Seven murder matters were concluded in one year of charge in 2015, and 40 matters were resolved in the same year as the accused was charged. In 2015 there was a decrease in the number of applications for bail.

In 2015, **A Backlog Task Force** was established to carefully review all outstanding cases and make determinations on how they should proceed. Since 2012, the OAG has seen a consistent increase in the number of matters resolved per year, due, in part to an **increase in the number of criminal courts from six (6) to twelve (12)** and an increase in staffing. All the courts have internet and video conferencing capacity, along with improved information technology equipment which is beneficial for court reporting, thus rendering more timely transcripts for adjudicating matters. There are specific Magistrate Courts and Supreme Courts assigned to address family matters. Women can access these courts with or without legal representation. The types of matters heard in the Magistrate Courts include, among other things, Child Maintenance and Custody and Domestic Violence Protection Orders. The type of matters heard in the Supreme Courts include Divorce, Guardianship and Adoptions. Due to these two factors, the OAG has seen a resolution rate of 230 matters per year compared to 118 in 2012. The Justice system and stakeholders are collaborating in new ways through the Swift Justice Team (Office of the Attorney-General, Royal Bahamas Police Force, Bahamas Department of Corrections, Public Hospitals Authority and Department of Social Services), which meets weekly to effectively communicate on any matters or actions needed to be taken to meet the prosecutorial needs of the Crown.

On 19 January 2017, The Bahamas established the **Public Defender's Office**, an independent non-profit entity governed by a Board of Directors. The Office, is dedicated to defending the accused, and easing the reliance on the crown brief system. The DPP Office assures defendants the protection of the law and equal access to justice and reduces the delay caused by the inability of defendants to secure counsel.

2.2 Gender-responsive social protection (e.g. universal health coverage, cash transfers, pensions)

From 2014 to 2017, **Renewing, Inspiring, Sustaining, and Empowering (RISE) Programme** was operational. RISE is a poverty alleviation and empowerment conditional cash transfer pilot initiative implemented, by the Ministry of Social Services, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education. RISE was launched as a new social safety net program with funding provided by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The RISE Programme revolutionized how the vulnerable in our society received social assistance. The IDB concluded the Programme in August 2017. **The Bank of The Bahamas (BOB) Pre-Paid VISA Card** continued to be used as a remnant component of RISE. Additionally, there is a Food Assistance Programme conducted by Social Services, which includes a cash transfer card system, thereby affording the clients to receive food assistance with a degree of dignity.

The **conditional cash transfer program** aimed to reduce the number of Bahamians living at or below the poverty level - the number of which rose from 9.3 % to 12.8 % from 2001 to 2013. The program dispensed a pre-paid card to clients that would allow them to purchase food, products from pharmacies, clothes, books and gas at approved vendors. From March to May of 2016, 382 households had enrolled in the program which was of great benefit mostly to women who made up 72.16% of DOSS clients. (Status quo survey.2013) The Department of Statistics in the Household Expenditure Survey (2013) found that women represented 51.83% of the poor. (CEDAW 6th Periodic Report. 2017)

The Bahamas is also committed to **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**, which is defined by the World Health Organization, as “ensuring that all people can access the promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also

ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship". The **National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA)** has been established to oversee the implementation of NHI Bahamas which is being rolled out in phases. Bahamians and legal residents of all income status, age, place of residence and health status began registering for the National Health Insurance program in January 2016. Enrollment for NHI Bahamas began in 2017 and is ongoing. Beginning in May 2017, Bahamians began receiving primary care services under NHI Bahamas. In October 2018, the NHI Authority produced a consultation paper on the new way forward for NHI, which include expanded benefits coverage for the future. Persons enrolled in the Programme are receiving Primary Care services at no cost at the point of care.

2.3 Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls

During the period under review, The Bahamas has witnessed dramatic improvements in the quality of education, training and life-long learning for women and girls. From primary school to tertiary learning, women and girls have a far higher percentage in educational achievements than their male counterparts. Officials are now finding the need to do affirmative action quotas for males within the educational sectors.

Within the **legislative framework of the Education Act**, (Sections 22, 23, 25) the compulsory schooling of all children, ages five through sixteen is still mandated for all within the borders. The **Child Protection Act, Section 5 also enforces the Right to Education**.

In the 2017-2018 school year, **480 scholarships** awarded in the categories of Merit, Academic, Technical and Grants were received by 63% female students.

Table No. 5 - Scholarships awarded by gender 2010-2017 - Source: Ministry of Education Scholarship Division

Scholarship	2010			2011			2012			2013		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Merit	4	4	8	5	12	17	8	12	20	3	5	8
Academic	4	6	10	7	7	14	11	13	24	7	11	18
Technical	11	1	12	9	9	18	9	10	19	15	5	20
Grant	77	165	242	141	235	376	158	314	472	160	319	479
Total			272			425			535			525

Scholarship	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Merit	7	9	16	10	12	22	5	19	24	7	8	15
Academic	5	13	18	4	4	8	5	4	9	4	11	15
Technical	9	3	12	7	4	11	8	5	13	20	21	41
Grant	158	325	483	205	387	592	280	481	761	147	262	409
Total			529			633			807			480

2.4 Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience building

From 2014 to 2019, NEMA response team provided appropriate gender sensitivity training. A new effort undertaken by the Government of The Bahamas is the implementation of **Gender and Family Sensitive Shelters for victims** of natural disasters. During Hurricane Irma, the government conducted a massive evacuation of all southern islands in The Bahamas. In many of

those islands, the majority of the population included older women. During the Evacuation, most of the women and their families were placed in safe shelters with full engagement and supervision by Defence Force Officers, Police Officers, Nurses, Social Workers, Red Cross and National Emergency Officers who provided protection, support and assurance of safety. Social Media, PSAs, town meetings and general public and school education campaigns are used to increase public awareness and preparations for hurricanes. All of the family (rural) islands and cays are equipped with satellite phones to ensure continuity of communication during and after hurricanes.

In 2015 The Bahamas Government adopted the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030** to provide resources and implement gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes to empower women for disaster preparedness and recovery.

In February 2017, The Department of Gender and Family Affairs staff and Rehabilitative Centre Psychologist, accompanied the UN Women representative, to Andros and Grand Bahama to conduct a **Post-Hurricane Matthew Assessment**. The assessments were intended to determine the degree to which women and girls, particularly those residing in severely affected settlements, were impacted by Hurricane Matthew. The representative met with administrators, social workers, health care professionals, leaders of the community and faith-based organisations, teachers and administrators and young women and men.

In 2018, twenty-two (22) persons were trained in shelter management by the **National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)**, an intersectoral Committee comprising government, ministries, private sectors, Red Cross, BASRA, Arawak Development Port, Civil Society and Corporations. They meet monthly, yearlong for preparation and training. As part of the preparation, various agencies from the Family Islands were brought into the Capital City to receive Disaster Preparedness and Resilience Management for the process of rebuilding the settlement and communities following the hurricanes. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs is a part of the NEMA steering committee in order to ensure adequate representation for women's and gender issues when addressing national responses to natural disasters. Additionally, other women serve as equal partners on the NEMA response team.

In 2019, three staff members of the DGFA participated in the **National Interagency disaster preparedness emergency training and mock exercise** by NEMA and the United States Northern Command. One completed the shelter management training and shelter inspections and two participated in a national disaster preparedness baseline assessment seminar organised by NEMA and the Pacific Disaster Center (PDC) Global.

2.5 Basic services and infrastructure (water, sanitation, hygiene, energy, transport, communication, etc.)

Basic Energy Services - The Bahamas is making strides in **implementing renewable energy strategies** intended to reduce electricity bills for Bahamians. These savings would lead to more disposable income for Bahamians, as the Government's plan to invest up to \$170 million in a solarized project throughout The Bahamas. Plans are being made to expand small scale solar production in New Providence. The goal is to capitalize on the makeup of the archipelago of islands by generating a substantial amount of **solar energy on the Family Islands**, which has ample land and relatively low populations. The Government spent \$761 million in oil imports for local consumption, which will reduce with solar energy resulting in a significant impact on family islands. The solar energy systems will reduce the cost of electricity nationwide, as the level of effective subsidies to those islands by BPL will decrease when smaller generating plants with limited economies of scale, will be utilized less. The Bahamas is confident this project will improve the standard of living on the Family Islands and rural cays and reduce our carbon footprints and vulnerability as a small island developing state. (Jones Bahamas.2019).

The Residential Energy Self Generation programme, which will allow homes and businesses to use solar generating systems to connect to the grid under a net billing framework with BPL, is currently before URCA for its review and finalization. The Bahamas continue to be, committed to policies that deliver positive change.

The Bahamas National Energy Policy 2013 -2033, seeks to create linkages between the energy sector and economic sectors to use renewable energy in as many areas nationwide as possible. Policies outlined in The Bahamas Energy Policy pave the way toward achieving renewable energy targets for 2033 including use of renewable energy in:

- a. **Transport:** discouragement of inefficient motor vehicles, lowering import duties on electric and hybrid cars, encouragement of carpooling, and implementation of “effective mass public transit transport system” among other initiatives.
- b. **Construction:** housing, offices and hotels: energy-efficiency building code standards which include the use of efficient lighting, sustainable materials, energy-efficient building code standards. Considerations for providing incentives for constructing carbon-neutral buildings.
- c. **Finance:** Finance ministry to develop and implement incentive programmes and fiscal measures to support investment in modern facilities, infrastructure in the energy sector. (VNR.PMMinnis.2018)

In 2014, at the **United Nations Third International Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference**, The Bahamas signed **SIDS-DOCK**; a treaty designed to help finance the energy sectors of small island developing states in order to achieve energy and emissions targets. The treaty aims to transform island states from fossil-fuel dependent to renewable energy-based. Key targets include Twenty-five (25) per cent increase in energy efficiency. Generation of a minimum for 50 per cent of electric power from renewable energy resources. Twenty-five (25) per cent decrease in conventional transportation fuel use. SIDS DOCK ultimately provides access to funding, allowing the investment and deployment of renewable energy technologies. Advancements in energy sector reform for The Bahamas focus on photovoltaic systems and solar water heaters.

In December 2014, **Carbon War Room’s Ten Island Challenge** was signed by The Bahamas to reduce dependency on fossil fuels. The Carbon War Room (CWR) is an international NGO and think tank committed to preventing market-barriers to sustainable policy development and finding market-based solutions to climate issues. Support gained through a partnership with the CRW allows The Bahamas to work towards achieving several milestones. Ongoing projects include: Developing more than 20 megawatts of solar PV generation across the family islands. Bringing energy efficiency and solar solutions to Anatol Rodgers High School. Performing a nationwide LED retrofit for street lights. Implementing a thorough process designed to transition The Bahamas off fossil fuels and document best practices. (VNR.2018)

In 2015, the **Electricity Amendment Act** allowed for renewable energy generating systems and interconnection to the grid as well as established the regulator for the electricity sector- the Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (URCA).

In 2018, **The Bahamas launched, Sustainable Nassau Action Project** with a preliminary investment of some \$7 million to be pumped into the project that focuses on bridging different communities such as the Over the Hill community with Downtown. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) introduced an **Urban Planning Concept** that included two areas of the city; Downtown waterfront with possibilities to improve mobility, accessibility, the quality of the space, and increase economic and employment opportunities. The Over the Hill project provides practical and vital opportunities for the Urban upgrade. The priorities of the Sustainable Nassau Action Plan, include mobility, sanitation, solid waste management and households at risk to natural disasters. The action plan project hopes to foster more neighbourhood communities as it will also look at creating more community spaces with parks. **Sustainable Nassau Project** also

includes actions in restoring and protecting coastal ecosystems, improving disaster planning and preparedness and adapting greener infrastructure, housing and improving water supply. The Sustainable Nassau Action plan's total investment will amount to \$450 million as it will embrace the UN Climate protocols associated with threats such as rising sea levels, depleted fish stocks, and the frequency and intensity of hurricanes. Considerable diligence will be placed on renewable energy and energy efficiency from the sun, wind, the oceans, rivers and lakes. As a low-lying nation chain, our development strategies must be smart and sustainable, as a one-meter rise in the sea level threatens eighty per cent of the landmass in The Bahamas.

In 2018, the Ministry of Environment received a grant from the **Italian Government for the retrofitting of T.G. Glover Primary School**, which has 730 registered students and is a magnet school for students with learning disabilities. The project includes the installation of a 136.2kw photovoltaic battery backup system or PVBBS, the construction of a greenhouse for a pilot horticulture curriculum study, the establishing of a pilot recycling program to investigate suitable solid waste management strategies for educational institutions, and the rehabilitation of sensitive wetland located on the school's property.

In 2019, a 925kw solar system was installed at the Thomas A. Robinson National Stadium. It is the single largest, and most structurally **sound solar canopy installation** in the region, to date. (Romauld Ferreira. Budget Communication. 2019)

The Bahamas Climate Change Unit within the Ministry of the Environment has been providing leadership in combating climate change through many initiatives. The Bahamas has passed legislation, advanced policies and programmes to ensure that the country is doing its part to reduce emissions. The Bahamas has reduced tariffs on solar systems and energy-efficient appliances to encourage a move to the consumption of clean energy.

Basic Water Services - The International Development Bank (IDB) has estimated that only 38% of properties in New Providence regularly use water provided by the Water and Sewage Corporation (WSC), a wholly-owned Government organization entrusted with managing, maintaining, distributing and developing the water resources of The Bahamas. Many households and businesses use their well water and wastewater treatment facilities. Well water is often untreated and contaminated to some degree due to the high prevalence of septic tanks and saltwater intrusion. Many citizens use private well water for washing and purchase bottled water for cooking and drinking. The WSC has made investments to reduce water losses and reports that it will save an estimated 10 billion gallons over its 10-year implementation.

In November 2016, the WSC commenced a series of projects to extend water supply to various locations and the **construction of wastewater treatment plans** and pumping stations.

In 2018, the **Water and Sewerage Corporation** announced a \$75 million project to expand the sewerage system to cover over two-thirds of the Over the Hill households.

In January 2019, the Water and Sewerage Corporation continued to execute a Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) **Water Improvement Project** by improving access, reliability and the quality of water supply systems in Long Island and Crooked Island. The project received a \$28.33 million loan from CDB and \$13.3 million in counterpart funding from The Bahamas Government. Water pipe laying works have commenced in Long Island, Andros, San Salvador, New Providence (Pinewood Gardens Phase B and Coral Lakes/Boatswain Hill). These projects will provide piped potable water supply to more than one thousand homes and businesses for the first time. (Llonella Gilbert.BIS.2019)

In 2018, Essential Sanitation Services - Through the Over the Hill Project, the Government of The Bahamas initiated the **Water for All Strategy** for the area zone. This project aims to ensure modern indoor sanitation and access to piped water to all residents of the Zone by 2025. The

project includes refurbishment of standpipes to acceptable standards, retrofitting homes for indoor plumbing and the design of a household prepaid smart metering system for water resources. (VNR.2018)

3. Over the past five years, have you taken specific measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination?

- ✓ **Women living in remote and rural areas**
 - Indigenous women
 - Racial, ethnic or religious minority women
- ✓ **Women living with disabilities**
- ✓ **Women living with HIV/AIDS**
 - Women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities
- ✓ **Younger women**
- ✓ **Older women**
 - Migrant women
- ✓ **Refugee and internally displaced women**
- ✓ **Women in humanitarian settings**

3.1 Women living in remote and rural areas

Women living in Family Islands within The Bahamas - hold 57% representation in Local Government Councils on Family Islands (rural communities). Family Island Women have access to social services, education and health care facilities. Women on all Family Islands have access to medical services. Doctors are in post on all except three of the Family Islands. In the case of the latter, these islands have visiting doctors. Concerning essential social services, the Department of Social Services assists women of The Bahamas, including financial, health, temporary accommodation and food. Referrals are made to legal aid services on behalf of rural women who are unable to afford the services of a lawyer. Magistrates Court services exist on the major Family Islands, including Grand Bahama, Abaco, Eleuthera and Exuma. In cases of the other Family Islands, the Family Island Administrator provides legal services.

In 2014, in observance of **National Women's Week**, The Bahamas facilitated meetings on the islands of Eleuthera, Grand Bahama and Abaco to share with the women of the Family Islands the proposed constitutional amendments. Promoting the theme "**Equality for Women is Progress for All**" the visit allowed the Family Island women to screen the video documentary of the Suffrage Movement in The Bahamas, the discussion on the constitutional amendments and dispelling misperceptions associated with women's empowerment and equality.

In June 2015, The Department of Gender and Family Affairs travelled to San Salvador for an information-sharing initiative. The initiative educated persons about the **CEDAW Convention** and included the viewing of "**The Suffrage Movement**" documentary. Additional information on the services of the Department of Gender and Family, Trafficking in Persons, UWI distance education programs and The Beijing Platform for Action twelve critical areas were shared with the women and others in the audience.

In July 2015, a forum was held with senior government officials on the **CEDAW Convention**. The audience received information on the convention, and an interactive discussion took place on the concluding observations and the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendations.

In November 2015, the Bureau of Women's Affairs facilitated a **women's backyard farming workshop** on the Island of Exuma in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Exuma Foundation and The Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation (BAIC). The Bahamas has made progress toward rural women's participation in development planning.

In February 2018, the Department of Gender and Family Affairs surveyed the needs and challenges of women and girls in rural communities identified throughout the major Family Islands. Information gathered provided useful data about the situation of women who live in rural communities. As a result of the survey analysis, the DGFA organized several craft and fruit

preservative projects to equip rural women along with women leaders in the Family Islands rural communities with entrepreneurial skills.

On 8 March 2018 INTERNATIONAL **WOMEN'S DAY** was celebrated. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs held a forum at the Harry C. Moore Library, University of The Bahamas, featuring a panel discussion. The theme was: "**Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving Gender Equality and Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls**".

In September 2018, the DGFA met with twenty-five (25) rural women in the South Andros community and hosted a **workshop for making jam preservatives**. The focus was on making guava preserves but, the processes taught applies to other native fruits, such as mango, sea grapes and sapodilla. The women were grateful to preserve and professionally package the bottles of jam for sale. Information about the Convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was discussed and disseminated to the women.

In September 2018, the DGFA visited both Crooked Island and Acklins and sponsored **straw plaiting workshops**. For some, it was introductory, and for others, it was improving existing skills to make their products more viable for the market. In Crooked Island, thirty (30) women and men participated while in Acklins, forty (40) women, five (5) Urban Renewal Staff and twenty-five (25) school students participated. All expressed appreciation for the classes.

In an attempt to advance the economic status of Rural Women, and in commemoration of **International Day of Rural Women on 15 October**, the Department of Gender and Family Affairs donated eight (8) generators and eight (8) water tanks to assist eight (8) female farmers in Cat Island so that they may access water for their farms during drought periods.

3.2 Women with Disabilities

In 2014, The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act was enacted to:

- a. Achieve opportunities for persons with disabilities;
- b. Eliminate discrimination on the basis of disabilities;
- c. Provide rights and rehabilitation and habitation of persons with disabilities;
- d. Establish the national commission for person with disabilities

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act, 2014 speaks to all areas of discrimination and in particular – Rights of Persons with Disabilities as it relates to Employment; Vocational Training skills, development and training programmes; Discrimination by employers is prohibited; Rights to Healthcare services; Housing; Accessibility and mobility to Public Buildings and Parking; Public Transportation; Service animals, Auxiliary Social Services; Sports and recreation and Voting.

Under Section 24 of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act, 2014, the Minister responsible for Social Services shall ensure that persons with disabilities who are in vulnerable situations are encouraged to function and participate in community affairs by assisting with:

- a. the acquisition of prosthetic devices, assistive or adaptive devices and medical intervention. Disability Affairs Division continues to provide assistive devices and financial support for medical intervention to women with disabilities;
- b. specialized training activities designed to improve the functioning of persons with disabilities with respect to their communication skills. In the Fall of 2017, the National Training Agency, a state body, for the first time admitted persons who are deaf, many of whom were young women, into one of their training programmes;
- c. the development among persons with disabilities of a positive self-image through the provision of counselling, orientation and mobility in order to strengthen their daily living capability.

The Government partners with the NGO **Disability Training Center** to provide extended training and orientation of persons with disabilities in the areas of self-development, soft skills and employability skills training.

Family care services facilitate the capability of families to respond to the needs of their relatives with disabilities. Disability Affairs Division offers several orientation and training sessions for families of persons with disabilities. The Bahamas continues a very vibrant partnership with disability-related NGOs in the provision of services, support and training for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Substitute family care services and facilities for abandoned, neglected, abused and unattached persons with disabilities who need an alternative form of care based on their individual needs. The Bahamas continues to provide subvention and technical support to many NGO operated facilities which provide care to children and the elderly with disabilities. Many of the facilities have a large percentage of girls and women with disabilities. The Bahamas Association for the Physically Disabled, Nazareth Centre for Children and Unity House for seniors are three examples.

Family after-care and follow-up services are also provided for the continued rehabilitation in a community-based setting of persons with disabilities discharged from residential care or rehabilitation centres. The Bahamas, through its Department of Rehabilitative Welfare Services, provides some after-care and follow-up services.

In 2015, The Bahamas ratified the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. Currently, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Committee is reviewing the General Recommendations from the United Nations to respond via a national report to the list of issues, by October 2019.

In 2017, the **National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)** spearheaded a **public education campaign** to produce and distribute brochures, articles and other information on The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act. The Commission visited businesses, non-governmental organisations, schools and churches, appeared on radio shows, attended both public and private fora and disseminated information via websites and social media. The Secretariat of NCPD is preparing a 'condensed and easy to read' version of the Act, and other informational and promotional material. (Disabilities Commission Annual Report 2017).

In 2017, the first **Persons with Disabilities Conference** was held to raise awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities Act 2014) and the administration of the law. The Law Department and Law Society of the University of The Bahamas (UB) sponsored the conference in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development. The conference demonstrated political will and the commitment of Bahamians and institutions to acknowledge and include the disabled community as a group equally entitled to the protection of the right of non-discrimination as outlined in the Constitution. The passage of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act and the full provisions of the legislation make it inarguably one of the essential pieces of human rights, social justice and anti-discrimination legislation in our modern Bahamas. The core purpose of the Disability Act is to achieve the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities and to eliminate discrimination based on disabilities.

The **National Commission for Persons with Disabilities** engages with more than 30 disability-related non-governmental organisations inclusive of the media, law enforcement, medical,

aviation and tertiary educational institutions to engage in a comprehensive dialogue of the Act and the convention. The discussions between the Commission and the NGOs result in town hall meetings and annual training workshops. **The Commission and its Secretariat:** within the MOSSUD along with DGFA has a responsibility for the protection and advancement of the rights of women and girls, and vulnerable groups (mainly persons with disabilities) to continue public education and awareness efforts to further sensitise the Bahamian society as to the tenets of the Persons With Disability Act and the work of the Commission. The Commission will also provide an education and awareness programme to cover:

- a. visits to agencies and institutions that provide services and advocacy for Persons with Disabilities.
- b. use of the broadcast and print media to disseminate information via radio Public Service Announcements (PSA's), newspaper advertisements, and Radio and Television Talk-show appearances;
- c. production and dissemination of literature inclusive of brochures and other information;
- d. visits to all schools throughout the Bahama Islands, along with other community associations and programmes;
- e. visits to more of the islands, inclusive of Eleuthera, Exuma and Long Island. Grand Bahama and Abaco occurred during the previous year. During these visits, the Commission interfaces with many stakeholders including Government departments, Schools, NGO's and business and community representatives.

The Disability Affairs Division assists persons with disabilities throughout The Bahamas, to develop to their maximum potential and improve their lifestyles employing integration, mainstreaming, education, training and economic empowerment. For persons with intersecting forms of marginalisation such as indigent, unemployed, single parent women with disabilities, the Department of Social Services provides financial allowances for and to their care workers, in addition to providing food, rent, utility, and medical assistance. Financial assistance is provided to assist with the purchase of prosthetics, hearing-aids, wheelchairs, among other things. Additionally, an allowance is provided to children with disabilities, until they attain the age of sixteen (16) years when they can apply to the National Insurance Board (NIB) for Disability Allowance. The Disability Affairs Division also works in conjunction with the Commissions for Persons with Disabilities to ensure that the rights of persons and children with disabilities are protected, according to The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act.

In 2018, The Government engaged with **REACH**, a local autism spectrum education NGO, on conducting a full study of the autism spectrum in The Bahamas, and ways families can be better supported. The study is in collaboration with the global NGO, Autism Speaks

3.3 Women living with HIV/AIDS

Several provisions speak to the protection and privacy of persons living with HIV/AIDS. Chapter 321 of the Employment Act, Section 6 of the Health Services Act, the Venereal Diseases Act, and sections 8 and 16 of the Sexual Offences Act all address HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

The **Princess Margaret Hospital has two HIV Clinics including an Adult and a Women/Children HIV Clinics.** Both clinics assist women and girls. These centres provide consistent training for their staff and require all staff to sign an annual **Anti-Discrimination Policy**. The centre reaches out to key populations like commercial sex workers, persons with disabilities, men who have sex with men community, LGBT and other communities. The centre conducts about 40 outreach programmes and initiatives per year and has reached an estimate of six thousand persons annually.

Data from the Voluntary National Review Report found that the national adult HIV prevalence is at a rate of 3.3%, the highest in the Caribbean. It also found that there is a challenge with the under-reporting of HIV transmission through injected drug use. Rates of HIV infections among pregnant women has remained stable. In the years between 2003 – 2013, there were no reports of any child being born infected with HIV when mothers had received and adhered to appropriate Prevention of Mother – To-Child Transmission ARV treatment. A “Treat All” People Living with HIV Strategy was launched to have anti-retroviral medication available to anyone despite their CD4 count or clinical stage. Home-based care and referral support are also offered.

In The Bahamas, prostitution is a criminal offence and there are non-governmental organisations that ensure sex workers receive essential services. **The Bahamas Urban Youth Development Centre** provides services for students engaged in transactional sex and promotes safe sex and HIV/AIDS prevention practices among young persons in the sex work profession. (CEDAW 6th Periodic Report.2017).

Cooperation on Communicable Diseases (CDs) aims to: (1) increase the number of persons on HIV/AIDS anti-retroviral treatment, document programme impact for reducing mother to child HIV/AIDS/syphilis transmission, strengthen HIV/AIDS/Tuberculosis programmes linkages, access key populations to target HIV prevention; (2) reduce occurrence of vector-borne disease, strengthen clinical management and surveillance, build capacity for insecticide resistance testing and arboviruses laboratory diagnosis; (3) maintain immunisation programme, address under-immunised groups; (4) implement a national multi-sectoral strategic antimicrobial resistance plan. These actions align with SDG # 1 - Access to services; SDG # 3 - Good health and well-being (Targets - ending epidemics of AIDS/ tuberculosis/other CDs and reduce maternal and infant mortality); SDG # 5 – Gender equity and empowerment of women and girls (Targets of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights); SDG # 6 – component on sanitation (with targets of preventing disease).

3.4 Younger Women and Girls’ Initiatives

In 2018, The Bahamas celebrated the **Cooperative Youth Entrepreneur Empowerment Seminar (YEES)** and exhibition where twenty-nine (29) young women and men participants in the program displayed an array of craft and preservatives. The impressive tapestry of products provided evidence and a strong indication that The Bahamas is capable of producing a steady flow of products, much of which are imported. The Ministry of Agriculture’s goal is to increase entrepreneurs who, with proper guidance, training, funding and mentorship, will succeed. The Government expressed commitment to ensuring positive growth and development of small and medium-sized Cooperative enterprises.

In 2018, the **Office of the First Spouse of the Prime Minister** conducted a robust school and community educational programme. The visitations allowed the First Spouse to deliver motivational speeches to junior high school adolescent girls. These speeches encouraged the girls to delay pregnancy, complete high school, attend tertiary education and become productive citizens in society. The program was launched in commemoration of the **United Nations International Day of the Girl Child** where the girls also received information on gender-based violence. Mrs. Patricia Minnis (spouse of the Prime Minister), is a staunch supporter of women, girls and initiatives that encourage positive adolescent development. In 2008, she co-founded the **Lady’s Chamber**, women and girls’ entrepreneurial mentoring programme in her community of Gambier that seeks to improve self-image and outlook of teenaged girls.

In 2019, Mrs. Patricia Minnis was awarded, for her commitment to mentoring girls throughout the Commonwealth of The Bahamas at a SPARKS “Flames of Inspiration and Commitment Grand Gala” at the Mark C. Marin Center in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, July 20, 2019. The grand celebration officially recognized 25 years of SPARKS -- Students Promoting Awareness, Responsibility, Knowledge and Service. The gala was hosted by SPARKS Founder Ms. Judy M. Gomez, former Senator and member of the US Virgin Island’s Board of Education.

The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, in association with the House of Assembly, undertakes to execute an annual **Youth Mock Parliament** to provide a platform for youth from across the country to share their views and concerns regarding critical issues of national concern. Now in its 20th sitting, the National Youth Parliament has been the birthplace of several current political leaders and has provided the impetus for the inclusion of youthful views and ideas, dreams and aspirations on matters of national development. National Youth Month Celebrations observed during October each year, coincides with **National Youth Parliament** and its associated training exercises. Nominees for participation in Youth Parliament must be age 16 - 25 years. Nominees must be articulate, and able to debate and speak in public fora. Participants receive training on speech techniques, Robert's Rules, and Parliamentary and House of Assembly Procedures.

The **Torch Bearers Youth Association (TYA)** – is the Youth Affiliate Organization of the **Free National Movement (FNM) political party**. The group was established as the Torchbearers Association in 1972 to embrace positive social and political activities among Bahamian youth. The aim and objectives of TYA are to strengthen the political, social, cultural and economic aspirations of the youth of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas and to help elect, establish and maintain a government that will do the same. TYA affirms and preserves principles of democracy and strives to promote programs and policies of the FNM as outlined in the Manifesto. TYA liaise with leaders of the Party to provide feedback on current policy issues from a youth perspective while grooming young, future leaders of the Party and Country. The main focus of the TYA National Executive is to get young people throughout The Bahamas engaged and active in the political process at the community and constituency levels. (TYA.facebook.2019)

The **Progressive Young Liberals (PYL)** is the Youth Affiliate Organization of the **Progressive Liberal Party (PLP)**. Founded by former prime minister Sir Lynden Pindling in the early 80s, the Young Liberals have been at the core of the political development of the PLP throughout its governance of The Bahamas in two separate administrations and while the Party roamed in opposition. As a thriving organization of young men and women, PYL is dedicated to empowering young people through education, opportunity and action in order to strengthen its influence in politics, national development and community building that affect the nation especially the younger generation. The Progressive Young Liberals was founded as the youth arm of the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) with the special mandate as expressed in the Party's constitution to foster the civic, social and political awareness in the youth of the Party and that of our nation. Striving to ensure balanced representation, the PYL aims to create an inclusive but national political community in which young Bahamians ages thirteen (13) through thirty-five (35) can participate. (PYL.facebook.2019)

STRAW (Strengthening, Transforming, Restoring, Affirming young Women) Incorporated Center for Young Women© is a non-profit community-based learning facility which has been providing safe, positive and structured mentoring, advocacy and intervention programs for adolescent girls, teen girls and young women in The Bahamas since March 2004. The Executive Director and Founder is Ms. Therenia A. Cunningham.

Bahamas Crisis Centre is a registered, non-profit organization that provides services to people who are the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The Centre was opened in 1982 by Dr. Sandra Dean-Patterson, who saw an urgent need in the community for such a facility. The Centre's extensive efforts include radio shows, newspaper articles, workshops, school talks, and presentations to churches and civic organizations.

Teen Life Skills Services Organization is an NGO created for young parents in the Bahamian community. TLS assists young parents between the ages of 14 to 25. TLS assists young parents with baby items if they are facing hardship or fighting for a fresh start. Felicia Carey is the Founder and CEO of Teen Life Skills Services (TLS).

Bahamas Girl Guide Association has been inspiring girls and young females, preparing them to lead respectful, civil, meaningful lives as empowered women growing from strength to strength even as they help colleagues, peers, families and a nation grow. Approximately 2190 girls and

131 leaders form membership throughout The Bahamas. Girls and leaders explore opportunities for international exposure through participation in sessions at the World Centres and attendance at regional and international camps. lore

GirlCON is the brainchild of President of the Senate, Senator Katherine Forbes-Smith, and is a mentorship program for young women, designed to encourage professional women in The Bahamas to help the new generation to succeed. GirlCon is a non-profit organization, which prepares high school girls to enter womanhood, university, and the workplace. The annual mega-conference occurs in Freeport for hundreds of young women from high schools on Grand Bahama and New Providence, who gather together for a day of inspiration, motivation, and empowerment.

Pilot Club Bahamas mission is to influence positive change in communities throughout the world. Members gather in friendship and provide an outlet for service. In 1952, Pilot began to recruit youth members through the establishment of Anchor Clubs, a volunteer service organization for young people. Through fundraising and hands-on service work, local Pilot and Anchor Clubs provide support and resources and training for Caregivers in their communities. Since 1992, Pilot International has focused on brain safety & fitness.

The Bahamas Debutante Foundation was launched in 1997 by Cristina Johnson, a veteran educator, who saw first-hand how overwhelming life could be for an adolescent on the verge of adulthood. More than 1500 Bahamian grade 12 young ladies have benefitted since its inception in 1997. Debutantes need grade point averages (GPA) of 3.00 or above and are active in their schools and communities.

Parchomas (Parents Choice Bahamas), founded in 2014 by Jasadette Hepburn, is a non-profit organization which hosts training seminars for pregnant families and aspires to equip mothers with safe and realistic skills for their motherhood experience. Parchomas informs and prepares parents about the legal, social, biological, spiritual and psychological aspects of parenting. Fun, creative and educational expos are used to engage participants.

Governor General Youth Award (GGYA) is an exciting self-development program available to all young people throughout The Bahamas. The program aims to equip them with life skills to make a difference to themselves, their communities and their country. During the period under review, the percentage of girls increased to fifty-one per cent of the membership of GGYA. (Director Mortimer. 2018)

FOAM (Families of All Murdered Victims) is a grass root, community, non-profit organization FOAM seeking to help the children who parent / parents were murdered. Established by Khandi Gibson in 2012 and is committed to helping bridge the gap between law enforcement and the public with families and young children who have lost loved ones to violence. F.O.A.M primary objective is to get professional counselling, financial assistance, food, clothing, shelter, job placements, care packages, meals and school supplies to surviving children and families of murdered relatives.

4. Has the increasing number of humanitarian crises—caused by conflict, extreme weather or other events—affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country?

YES

Whenever focus, funding and resources are diverted to rebuilding an island following a catastrophic hurricane, the national budget allocations for BPfA initiatives and programmes understandably diminish.

The greatest threat to The Bahamas is its vulnerability to climate change and sea-level rise. The country has experienced for three successive years, three major hurricanes of category 3 or higher at a total cost of \$678 million or 5% GDP. The low elevation of The Bahamas, with over 80% of landmass within one metre of sea level, coupled with the reality that the majority of the country's settlements and development occur near the coast, means that the country is vulnerable to flooding. Essential infrastructure, located near coastlines, such as energy facilities, air and

seaports, hotels, major roads and government agencies, will, therefore, be at high risk to these effects. Sea level rise threatens 36% of major tourism properties, 38% of airports, 14% of road networks and 90% of seaports. Natural disasters reconstruction continues to put financial constraints on the Bahamian government and will have significant impacts on core industries. (National Voluntary Review. 2018)

In 2016 The Bahamas estimated the damage caused by Hurricane Matthew at half a billion dollars. The government passed a resolution in Parliament to borrow up to \$150 million to help cover the cost of relief efforts related to Hurricanes Matthew and Joaquin. Hurricane Matthew caused “unmeasured personal loss” and considerable damage to government buildings, airport facilities and roads. The projected combined loss of Hurricanes Matthew and Joaquin, would be some \$800 million. In 2016, Prime Minister Christie noted that the final damage assessments were incomplete. Hurricane Joaquin was initially estimated to have caused \$100 million in damage. Noting that the reconstruction efforts since Joaquin were ongoing, the Ministry of Works awarded around \$68 million in road and bridge repair contracts and another \$6.8 million in contracts were awarded, without taking into account the cost of home repairs and reconstruction, repairs to seawalls, assisting the agricultural and fisheries industries, and then tax reductions. (Royston Jones.Guardian.2016)

In 2017, the destruction wrought by Hurricane Irma on tiny Ragged Island in The Bahamas rendered it uninhabitable. The Prime Minister, members of Cabinet, Opposition leaders, officials of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the media visited Ragged Island, Acklins and Crooked Island immediately following the hurricane and expressed shocked. Many exclaimed that it was the worst disaster they had ever seen. No home was left untouched by the Category 5 hurricane. Many of the homes had no roof, windows or doors. Other homes were destroyed, with only rubble remaining on the foundation. The power lines were down. The roof of the clinic, school and administrator’s office were gone. There was no light, no water. (Cartwright-Carroll. Nassau Guardian.2019) The Bahamas committed to transforming Ragged Island into the first “fully green island” in the region. Out of the devastation and the destruction, a new Ragged Island will emerge including stronger building codes, improved zoning, and strategies to mitigate against Climate Change and rising sea levels Ragged Island will be rebuilt with private institutions, international agencies and foreign partners to create a more sustainable island-community. (Prime Minister Minnis.2019)

5. Which of the following does your country consider to be the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country for the coming five years through laws, policies and programmes?

- ✓ **Equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice**
 - Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls
 - Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security
- ✓ **Eliminating violence against women and girls**
 - Access to affordable quality health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
- ✓ **Political participation and representation**
 - Right to work and rights at work (e.g. gender pay gap, occupational segregation, career progression)
- ✓ **Women’s entrepreneurship and women’s enterprises**
 - Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity or parental leave, care services)
 - Gender-responsive social protection (e.g. universal health coverage, cash transfers, pensions)
 - Basic services and infrastructure (water, sanitation, hygiene, energy, transport, communication, etc.)
 - Strengthening women’s participation in ensuring environmental sustainability
 - Gender-responsive budgeting
 - Digital and financial inclusion for women

- Gender-responsive disaster risk prevention, reduction and resilience building
- ✓ **Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes**
- Other

5.1 Equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice

The DGFA engaged a consultation committee comprised of experts from The Bahamas and United Nations Women agency to develop a National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP) document which will strengthen sound policies and advance legislation for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment for women and girls at all levels. The NGEP was distributed for a comprehensive consultation, and following final review and acceptance by our NGO, Civil Society, Trade Unions and Media partners, the document will be presented to Cabinet in August 2019, for review and approval.

In 2017, the Ombudsman Bill was tabled before Parliament. The Government of The Bahamas is seeking to **implement a National Human Rights Institute** (NHRI) through the establishment of the **Office of the Ombudsman**. The Ombudsman is one of six models of NHRIs that exist across the world today and accounts for more than one-third of NHRIs

In 2018, during The Bahamas' bid for election to the Human Rights Council, a commitment was made to establish the Office of the Ombudsman in compliance with the Paris Principles. In this regard, we can confirm that the Office of the Attorney-General is actively reviewing the Ombudsman Bill to ensure that it is compliant with international standards to protect the rights of all citizens of The Bahamas and to prevent discrimination on all grounds. (Universal Periodic Review.2019)

In 2018, Mr. Garvin Gaskin, was appointed as the independent, Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), toward the advancement of good governance and democracy in The Bahamas. The ceremony marked the creation of more civil society and witnessed the very first successfully implemented amendment to the Nation's Constitution. Expectantly, the DPP will affect the removal of political influence over the commencement, or conduct of public prosecutions, by the Executive arm of Government. The Constitution of The Bahamas now requires that any policy directives given by the Attorney-General to the Director of Public Prosecutions must be in writing and published in the Gazette. This appointment is indeed a significant step toward access to justice for all.

In 2019 The DGFA was invited to participate in a five-year project with the United Nations Women Agency in Canada to review all laws within The Bahamas with the intent of amending and introducing laws that will advance equality of women and girls. A concept paper is being prepared for the Cabinet of The Bahamas regarding same.

5.2 Eliminating violence against women and girls

In 2015, the Task Force produced an exemplary National Strategic Plan to End Gender Based Violence via ten programmes at a projected cost of \$9.5 million. The suggested programmes included:

- a) National GBV Community Awareness Programme
- b) Reclaiming our Boys Project
- c) Creation of a Family Court System
- d) Continue Early Intervention Programme for Children exposed to violence
- e) Male mentoring Project
- f) Family Island Coordinating Councils
- g) Sexual Assault Response Team Project
- h) Intervention for Perpetrators
- i) Domestic Violence Fatality Team Project

j) Establish the Department of Gender and Family Affairs

In 2016, the Government of The Bahamas approved the **Strategic Plan to Address Gender-Based Violence** (Year One Implementation Plan) along with partial funding for its implementation. The first-year implementation of the strategic plan calls for the rollout of several gender-based violence prevention, response and accountability projects and activities. The Department facilitated the implementation of the following four low hanging fruits:

- a. The establishment of Department of Gender and Family Affairs
- b. Reclaiming Our Boys Project – Phase One Training
- c. National Gender Based Violence Campaign
- d. National Early Intervention Programme for Children Exposed to Violence

A plan of action draft for the next five years include implementation of:

- a) National GBV Community, School & Media Awareness Programme
- b) Reclaiming our Boys Project - Programme
- c) Early Intervention Programme for Children exposed to violence
- e) Male mentoring Project, and Men Alliance
- f) Family Island Coordinating Councils
- g) Sexual Assault Response Team Project
- h) Training and Intervention for Perpetrators
- i) Domestic Violence Fatality Team Project

5.3 Political participation and representation

Women of The Bahamas continue to strive to have their voices heard and to attain political decision-making positions. Among the challenges, however, are social barriers and ideologies which are reinforced by primary and secondary institutions. Women, including young women, have rights and roles in national development and should be encouraged and supported in becoming transformational leaders in all spheres of society. Some of the issues that have hindered women’s advancement and equality in Bahamian politics are entrenched gender notions that stereotype women and men in rigid, separate roles.

In comparison, Belize and Trinidad and Tobago are ranked at 89 and 73 respectively on this index. The Bahamas, 21.8 per cent of parliamentary seats held by women, was one of the critical areas contributing to the rank of 75 for The Bahamas. (*United Nations Development Programme - Human Development Reports.2017*) Table 6 below illustrates that The Bahamas has a **Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.340, ranking it 75 out of 160 countries in the 2017 index.**

	GII value	GII Rank	Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Female seats in parliament (%)	Population with at least some secondary education (%)		Labour force participation rate (%)	
						Female	Male	Female	Male
Bahamas	0.340	75	80	26.7	21.8	87.4	87.6	70.0	82.0
Belize	0.386	89	28	63.5	11.1	78.9	78.4	53.2	81.3
Trinidad and Tobago	0.324	73	63	30.1	30.1	74.4	69.1	51.0	73.7
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.386	—	67	61.5	28.8	59.5	59.1	51.6	77.5
Very high HDI	0.170	—	15	15.9	26.7	88.8	89.5	52.9	68.9

Maternal mortality ratio is expressed in number of deaths per 100,000 live births and adolescent birth rate is expressed in number of births per 1,000 women ages 15-19.

From 1962 to 2012, research reveals that within 50 years, there were only 12 female Cabinet Ministers in The Bahamas. In the 2012 General Election, 95,351 (55.4 per cent of all registered voters were females.) Statistics further reveal that 21 per cent of the 38 candidates were females; out of this number, five women were elected.

A mapping of women in politics indicates that there are fluctuating degrees with which women are represented in parliament, but there is enthusiastic participation in political and public life. In 2018, data currently indicated that there is 1 (5%) Cabinet Minister, 5 (12%) Parliamentarians and 7 (43%) Senators that are female. Women hold several public office positions like the Governor-General, President of the Court of Appeal, Justices of the Supreme Court, President of the Senate and several Permanent Secretaries.

Comparisons of general election data for candidates for 2012 and 2017 reveal that in 2012, 113 male and 21 female candidates ran compared to 132 males and 43 females in 2017. The 13.2 per cent of women elected to the lower house in 2012 dropped by one per cent to 12.8 per cent in 2017. The number of women elected as Members of Parliament in 2012 did not change in 2017, however, the increase in constituencies led to the approximate one per cent decrease which places the Commonwealth of The Bahamas approximately 17 per cent short of the recommended 30 per cent target aspired to by members of the Commonwealth and the international communities for women in decision-making positions. (Commonwealth Observer Group.2017)

Statistics highlighting the last three general elections in The Bahamas show disparity in women in leadership in tables 7 and 8 below.

Table 7: Women in Top Political Leadership Positions, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017 - Source: Cabinet Office

	2002		2007		2012		2017	
	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women
Members of the Senate	16	44	16	56	16	31	16	43
Members of Parliament	40	20	41	12	38	13	39	12
Members of Cabinet	16	25	20	10	31	19	18	5

Table 8: The Bahamas held general elections on May 2017. According to The Parliamentary Commissioner Report, those elections comprised of the following data:

Political Parties Or Groups	# of Candidates	# of Men	# of Women	% of Women
Free National Movement	39	35 men	4 women	10%
Progressive Liberal Party	39	32 men	7 women	18%
Democratic National Alliance	35	22 men	13 women	37%
Bahamas Constitution Party	21	16 men	5 women	24%
The People’s Movement	19	16 men	3 women	16%
Bahamas National Coalition Party	20	16 men	4 women	20%
Independent candidates	21	17 men	4 women	19%
TOTAL CANDIDATES	194	154 men	40 women	21%
CANDIDATES ELECTED	39	34 men	5 women	12%

According to the Commonwealth Observer Group of the 2017 General Elections, there were 181,543 registered persons in 2017, with a turnout of 77.4 percent. For these elections, according to the final voters list, 100,704 women registered to vote, representing 55 percent of eligible voters. Thirty-four men and 5 women were elected to hold parliamentary seats in The Bahamas Parliament - 4 women belonged to the FNM and 1 to the PLP. Its recommendation stated: *Broadly, to increase the representation of women in political and public life, we recommend that consideration be given to the introduction of special measures for achieving a gender balance in decision-making structures and processes.* The prevailing special measure is to introduce a Quota System which stipulates the minimum number of women candidates in every national general election.

In 2017, women continued to be poorly represented in government, as shown above. Inequality was also evident in the leadership of trade unions. As of May 2012, only 5 per cent of women served as heads in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas Trade Union Congress (TUC), and 26 per cent served as heads of the National Congress of Trade Unions in The Bahamas.

Statistics reveal the need to convince the public that an equitable number of women should be elected as representatives of the people and appointed to top-level decision-making positions. Collaborative efforts of individuals, community, and the state can change the gender-biased notions that define the profile of the leader and those elected to govern. Champions from the various sectors are powerful and necessary to effect change concerning women and leadership.

The National Gender Equality and Equity Policy for The Bahamas represent another step in progress towards equality between the sexes in governance and leadership.

5.4 Women’s entrepreneurship and women’s enterprises

Human Development Index (HDI) 2018 Update includes colour-coded dashboards on five (5) topics:

- i. quality of human development
- ii. life-course gender gap,
- iii. women’s empowerment,
 - i. environmental sustainability and
 - ii. socioeconomic sustainability.

The dashboards allow partial grouping of countries by indicator—rather than complete grouping by a composite measure. The six indicators on economic sustainability are adjusted net savings, total debt service, gross capital formation, skilled labour force, export concentration index, and research and development expenditure. The four indicators on social sustainability are a military expenditure, ratio of education and health expenditure to military expenditure, change in an overall loss in HDI value due to inequality, change in Gender Inequality Index value and change in income quintile ratio. Overall in the category of economic and social sustainability, The Bahamas missed 5 of 10 indicators. For the next five years, The Bahamas will work on policies, programmes and initiatives to improve the performance on economic and social sustainability for women and girls. **Table 9 below illustrates Dashboard 5, which contains ten indicators that**

	Economic sustainability (6 indicators)			Social sustainability (4 indicators)			Overall (10 indicators)			Missing indicators
	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	
	Number of indicators									
Bahamas	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	2	5
Belize	0	2	3	2	1	0	2	3	3	2
Trinidad and Tobago	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	2	3	5

cover economic and social sustainability. (Human Development Indices and Indicators.2018. Statistical Update)

Dashboard 3 below, contains 13 woman-specific empowerment indicators that allow empowerment to be compared across three dimensions: reproductive health and family planning, violence against girls and women, and socioeconomic empowerment. The six indicators on reproductive health and family planning are coverage of at least one antenatal care visit, the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, maternal mortality ratio, adolescent birth rate, contraceptive prevalence (any method) and unmet need for family planning. The three indicators on violence against girls and women are women married by age 18, violence against

women ever experienced from an intimate partner and violence against women ever experienced from a non-intimate partner. The four indicators on socioeconomic empowerment are the female share of graduates in science, mathematics, engineering, manufacturing and construction at tertiary level; female share of employment in senior and middle management; women with an account at a financial institution or with mobile money-service provider; and mandatory paid maternity leave. (Human Development Indices and Indicators.2018. Statistical Update)

Table 10 below illustrates the selection of 13 woman-specific empowerment indicators that allows empowerment to be compared across three dimensions and the scores: reproductive health and family planning - 4 of 6 indicators; violence against girls and women – 0 of 3 indicators; and socioeconomic empowerment – 1 of 4 indicators. Overall in the category of Women’s empowerment, The Bahamas missed 8 of 13 indicators. For the next five years, The Bahamas will work on policies, programmes and initiatives to improve the performance on women’s empowerment.

	Reproductive health and family planning (6 indicators)			Violence against girls and women (3 indicators)			Socioeconomic empowerment (4 indicators)			Overall (13 indicators)			Missing indicators
	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	
	Number of indicators												
Bahamas	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	3	0	8
Belize	0	5	1	0	1	0	1	3	0	1	9	1	2
Trinidad and Tobago	1	4	1	1	0	2	0	2	0	2	6	3	2

5.5 Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes

The Department of Gender and Family Affairs is cognisant of its role in eliminating stereotypical portrayals of gender and envisages the draft gender policy's successful implementation comprehensive strategy to address negative stereotyping and harmful practices. The **proposed National Equality and Equity Policy Action Plan (NEEPAP)** will address negative stereotyping in the areas of family, politics, society, labour, education and health.

Currently, the Ministry of Education's Health and Family Life Education Curriculum has a gender stereotype component for students from grade 3 level and above. It explores roles, responsibilities and biases or stereotyping related to gender roles of men and women. In 2017, 9,834 female and 9705 male students were taught Health and Family Life Education, which is inadequate if prevailing negative stereotypes are to be corrected.

Lessons about stereotypes start early, and they have lifelong consequences. A new study in the Journal of Adolescent Health found that many norms around gender expectations for boys and girls, have become entrenched in adolescence and have negative impacts that carry into adulthood. Existing research shows that gender roles can harm both sexes. However, the Global Early Adolescent Study — which looked at girls and boys between 10-14 years old in 15 countries with varying income levels — found many of these stereotypes are universal, and they become entrenched before ten years old. Among consequences that the study noted when girls conform to gender stereotypes:

- i. Depression
- ii. Child marriage
- iii. Leaving school early
- iv. Exposure to violence

Moreover, consequences when boys conform to gender stereotypes:

- i. Engaging in physical violence to a much greater extent than girls
- ii. Dying more frequently from unintentional injuries

- iii. Being more prone to substance abuse and suicide
- iv. Having a shorter life expectancy than women

(Kristin Mmari. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.2017)

In 2014, a study conducted by the Crisis Centre and compiled by COB reported the attitudes and actions on relationships with the opposite sex of 1,002 grades 10 and 12 students in New Providence. Girls were more likely than boys to use aggressive behaviours in teen relationships. Some of the behaviours noted in teen relationships informed expectations of marital relationships, such as restricted access to friends of the opposite sex. The students endorsed several sex-related stereotypes, such as a man being the head of the household. Both male and female students indicated that it was acceptable for men to control their wives. Participation in aggressive and controlling behaviours by teens points to the need to educate students about how to develop more respectful relationships. The fact that domestic violence is promoted between generations was very evident from the responses. According to their findings, 15.9 per cent of the males polled believed that a woman who dresses too sexy deserves to get hit by her partner; 58.1 per cent of the boys believed that some women were responsible for the licks they get from their partners. The findings suggest that women if beaten by men, are the cause of the problem. (International Journal of Bahamian Studies.2014)

This study informed the dialogue towards the appreciation of the nature of relationships between teenagers in The Bahamas. Both boys and girls subject each other and are subjected to, controlling behaviours and violence in their relationships, with girls being no less aggressive than boys. The study indicates that teenagers expect males to be controlling partners in adult relationships and that women should conform to the stereotype of a housewife. Interventions at school can be useful in attempting to alter teenage relationships so that peer-on-peer abuse is reduced. However, culturally sensitive training can only be implemented once there is an understanding of the nature of these relationships, and the expectations of teenagers for their adult relationships. Further research is required to determine the sources of teenage attitudes towards relationships and the impact of gender norms.

The Bahamas knows the cultural, social and economic factors that influence stereotypes across the gender divide. Violence resulting in morbidity and mortality, particularly among males, remains a significant concern. National statistics bear out that gender emphasis and targeted interventions are required to curb violence perpetrated by males against females; males against males; females against females. Though ongoing, there is a need for greater intersectoral collaboration and innovation in ensuring and devising strategies for developing and implementing K – 12 curricula resources and time on the schools' timetables to address the many longstanding gender stereotypes which plague the behaviour of Bahamians. The Bahamas recognizes the need to advance policies and introduce strategic nation-wide teachings and campaigns so that appropriate and adequate training, interventions and programmes may be implemented to improve gender stereotype attitudes and discrimination.

SECTION TWO: PROGRESS ACROSS THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

6. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to advance gender equality in relation to women's role in paid work and employment?

- ✓ **Strengthened/enforced laws and workplace policies and practices that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, and equal pay legislation**
- Introduced/strengthened gender-responsive active labour market policies
- ✓ **Taken measures to prevent sexual harassment, including in the workplace**
- ✓ **Strengthened land rights and tenure security**
- ✓ **Improved financial inclusion and access to credit, including for self-employed women**
- Improved access to modern technologies (climate-smart technologies), infrastructure and services (agricultural extension)

- ✓ **Supported the transition from informal to formal work, including legal and policy measures that benefit women in informal employment**
- Devised mechanisms for women's equal participation in economic decision-making bodies (in ministries of trade and finance, central banks, national economic commissions)
- Other

6.1 Strengthened / enforced laws and workplace policies and practices that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, and equal pay legislation

The Employment Act (2001) shows no discrimination based on a person's sex. From 2001, The Bahamas enacted the Employment Act that makes it illegal for any employer to discriminate in recruitment and employment practices based on a person's sex. Accordingly, both men and women have the right to equal employment opportunities.

The Employment Act, 2001, Part I, Section 6, states that:

- a. No employer or person acting on behalf of an employer shall discriminate against an employee or applicant for employment on the basis of race, creed, sex, marital status, political opinion, age or HIV/AIDS status.
- b. Paying him at a rate of pay less than the rate of pay of another employee for substantially the same kind of work or for work of equal value performed in the same establishment, the performance of which requires substantially the same skill, effort and responsibility and which is performed under similar working conditions ...

The **National Tripartite Council has a mandate for reform of the Employment Act**. It is anticipated that section 6 of the Employment Act (2001) which does not give full legislative expression to the principle of 'equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value' will be addressed. The term 'remuneration' includes the ordinary, basic or minimum wage salary and any additional emoluments whatsoever payable directly or indirectly, whether in cash or kind, by the employer to the worker and arising out of the worker's employment.

The Minimum Wage Order (2015) - The Bahamas has a government-mandated minimum wage, and no worker in The Bahamas can be paid less than this mandatory minimum rate of pay. Employers in The Bahamas who fail to pay the Minimum Wage may be subject to punishment by The Bahamas' Government. The Bahamas' Minimum Wage is the lowest amount a worker can be legally paid for his work. During the period under review, the Government increased the national minimum wage by 40% - i.e. from a minimum of \$150/week, \$30/day, \$4/hour to \$210/week, \$42/day, and \$5.25/hour. (Department of Labour CEDAW Report.2018)

It is noted that the legislation should allow for the comparison, not only of jobs in the same establishment and requiring substantially the same skill, effort and responsibility, and performed under similar working conditions, but also of work of an entirely different nature which is nevertheless of equal value, and provides for a broad definition of "remuneration" as set out in Article 1(a) of ILO Convention 100. In addition to enacting the legislation mentioned above, **The Bahamas has ratified 35 ILO Conventions**, including eight of the core ones which particularly address protections of the rights of women and children in the workplace. The Bahamas continues to work on the implementation of these rights.

As of 2016 – **New Providence Employees** within the Accommodations and Food Service Activities Industry \$407 Women / \$433 Men. Current statistics have unfortunately confirmed that this is still very prevalent practice of unequal pay between genders. The directive increases awareness and aims to change the mindsets within the inspectorate to better protect the public from this form of discrimination. These issues and action plans will be developed, inclusive of education initiatives to raise public awareness.

In 2017, the **Analysis of Wage Gender Discrimination** in Connection with Higher Education in The Bahamas Journal Article found that, regardless of education factors, when gender is the only predictor, females make about \$123 less than males annually. The male wages were found to be higher than that of females across all educational levels.

Statistics have confirmed that the principle of equal pay for equal work though enshrined in Bahamian law is not always enforced. Some employers use salary scales which tend to adhere to the principle. There is still more that needs to be done to create a greater awareness of the issues surrounding the principle. (Source: Department of Statistics- Labour Market Newsletter 2017) With a few exceptions, men garner higher wages than women in spite of their lower educational attainment. However, professional women in some fields attract higher wages as seen in **Table 11 Occupational Weekly Wage, New Providence, 2011-2016** below.

	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Managers	890	741	914	756	489	539	902	757	907	749	882	782
Professionals	602	566	597	599	542	550	650	722	834	778	941	769
Technicians & associate professionals	536	543	504	496	427	487	544	509	608	537	629	590
Elementary occupations	238	224	238	224	248	224	353	232	261	230	266	237
Plant & machine operators & assemblers	338	294	348	292	352	293	339	301	348	293	344	296
Skilled agriculture forestry & fishery wor	333	411	346	419	355	397	493	460	436	465	450	503
Crafts & related trades workers	435	379	450	393	447	365	452	389	438	423	444	432
Service & sales workers	290	300	290	307	295	304	305	316	340	333	352	347
Clerical support workers	435	415	394	401	376	396	406	405	495	458	491	464

Statistics reveal that women dominate the clerical, professional, technicians, associate professional, and service and sales categories; while men dominate the craft and related trades, plant and machine operators and assemblers' categories.

In January 2019, The Bahamas reaffirmed its commitment to abiding by the spirit of the **International Labour Organization's (ILO's)** constitution as the organization celebrated its 100th Anniversary. In fulfilling that mandate, the Ministry of Labour, along with the National Tripartite Council, the ILO's Decent Work Team and Country Office for the Caribbean Region and Social partners, hosted a symposium. The symposium explored the work the ILO has done in the country as well as the continued dialogue for the 2019-2021 strategic goals as set out by the National Tripartite Council.

The **International Labour Organization Decent Work Team & Country Office for the Caribbean Region**, aided The Bahamas with providing support in amalgamation of the two Employers Umbrella organizations to create The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employers Confederation; consultation on amendments of Industrial Relations Act, Employment Act, Health & Safety Work Act, National Tripartite Council Act, and the Minimum Wage Act; establishment of the National Productivity Council and Draft Productivity Legislation; establishment of a National Policy on Child Labour and the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour; providing multiple education and training opportunities for members of our Social Partners in the region as well as the ILO Training Facility in Turin, Italy. Regional Director of the ILO, Claudia Coenjaerts, recognized the steps The Bahamas has taken towards the Decent Work Agenda, a key pillar to the 2030 agenda of fair globalization and poverty reduction. (Jones Bahamas.2019)

The national average income figure of B\$37,716, New Providence average of B\$40,090 and Grand Bahama average of B\$38,108, misrepresent the lived reality of the majority of Bahamians especially women, many of whom earn income amounts just above minimum wage. The annual average income calculation includes exorbitant salaries made by a small percentage of government officials, real estate agents, hotel managers, private executives and those who work

in off shore private banking and financial institutions within The Bahamas. As their income is added into the national totals the average income figures become grossly skewed.

In May 2017, **Figures 2 and 3** represent a snapshot of the educational attainment of employed and unemployed men and women in The Bahamas, as found in the **Labour Force Survey**. Of the employed labour force, 5 percent of men had no schooling or had a primary education as opposed to 3 percent of women. About the same percentage of men and women (58 percent and 59 percent, respectively) completed their secondary education. The picture changes drastically for university education. Twenty-six percent (26) of women as opposed to 16 percent of men completed university education. This explains why more women are found in the category labelled “professionals, managers, technicians and associate professionals.” Moreover, 11 percent of men received their education from other tertiary institutions, compared to 8 percent of women.

Of the unemployed labour force, men and women without schooling represented 7 and 6 percent, respectively. Of those who completed their secondary education, 68 percent of women and 66 percent of men were unemployed, respectively. Of those who completed university education, 10 percent of women and 4 percent of men, respectively were unemployed. This shows that even when women have higher education, it is more difficult for them to obtain employment.

Figure 2. Employed Labour Force by Educational Attainment and Sex, All Bahamas, May 2017;

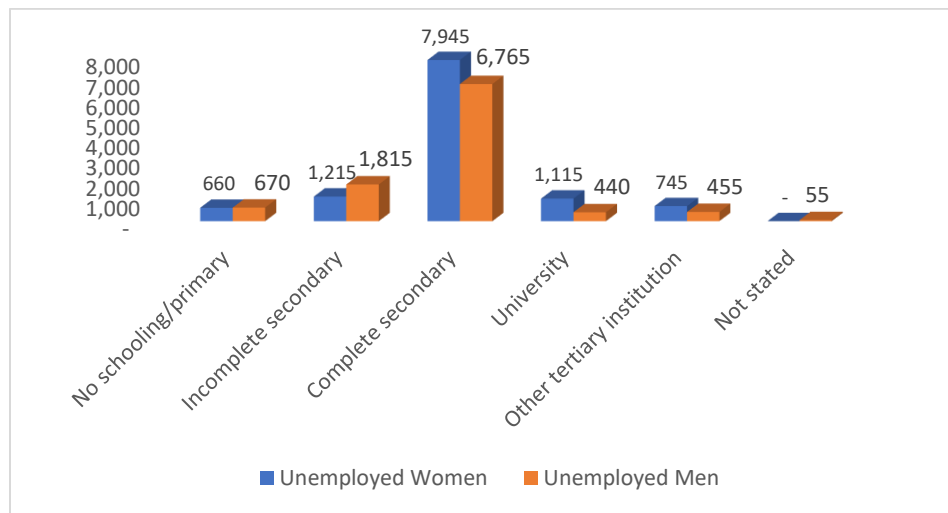
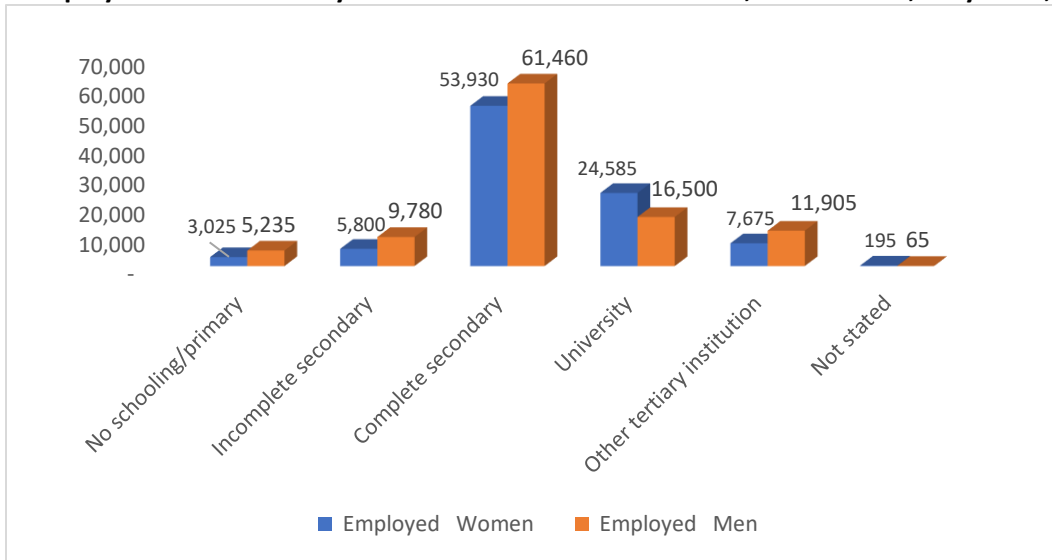


Figure 3. Unemployed Labour Force by Educational Attainment and Sex, All Bahamas, May 2017;

The **Employment and Vulnerable 2012-2018 Table 12** found in the *Preliminary Results Labour Survey; May 2018* shows that more women enjoyed permanent employment. This may due to their need to provide for their families consistently and/ or their choice of profession in sectors (such as the government sector) that provide relatively lower income compared to private but generates more stable employment.

ISLAND AND SEX	TOTAL DISCOURAGED WORKERS	WORKED BEFORE	NEVER WORKED
ALL BAHAMAS			
TOTAL	2,175	1,370	805
MEN	975	625	350
WOMEN	1,200	745	455
NEW PROVIDENCE			
TOTAL	1,325	915	410
MEN	490	340	150
WOMEN	835	575	260
GRAND BAHAMA			
TOTAL	205	125	80
MEN	105	55	50
WOMEN	100	70	30
ABACO			
TOTAL	190	95	95
MEN	40	30	10
WOMEN	150	65	85

Table 13 below illustrates the Labour Force and its Components May 2018:

ISLAND	SEX	TOTAL LABOUR FORCE	EMPLOYED LABOUR FORCE	UNEMPLOYED LABOUR FORCE	LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
ALL BAHAMAS	TOTAL	231,445	208,255	23,190	82.5%	10.0%
	WOMEN	111,540	100,440	11,100	76.1%	10.0%
	MEN	119,905	107,815	12,090	85.0%	10.1%
NEW PROVIDENCE	TOTAL	161,330	145,205	16,125	76.3%	10.0%
	WOMEN	78,865	71,165	7,700	73.9%	9.8%
	MEN	82,465	74,040	8,425	80.2%	10.2%
GRAND BAHAMA	TOTAL	31,920	27,965	3,955	69.5%	12.4%
	WOMEN	15,685	14,015	1,670	65.1%	10.6%
	MEN	16,235	13,950	2,285	75.6%	14.1%
ABACO	TOTAL	13,645	12,180	1,465	78.9%	10.7%
	WOMEN	5,800	5,015	785	72.1%	13.5%
	MEN	7,845	7,165	680	86.2%	8.7%

6.2 Improved financial inclusion and access to credit, including for self-employed women

Social progress goes hand-in-hand with increased economic freedom, and this requires that women in The Bahamas have more opportunities to create their jobs and to be more competitive in the private sector. The Government is the primary employer today; however, a healthy, vibrant economy, driven by innovation and job creation are achieved by the private sector – entrepreneurs, small businesses and mature industries.

In 2018, The Bahamas provided financial support toward the advancement of women and men interested in business developments. The focused **Recurrent Expenditure initiatives of the 2018.2019 national budget** were targeted at promoting enhanced growth and skills development, and included \$5 million for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, \$4 million for college student recruitment, \$2.6 million for BTVI vocational scholarships and \$5 million for inclusive growth in heritage or foundation communities. The Government also promoted the diversification of the economy through both the digital economy and the blue economy; to enhance trade opportunities through membership in the World Trade Organization, and provided growth-supportive public infrastructure investments. (Deputy Prime Minister Turnquest.2018)

The government of The Bahamas has created the **Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) Policy** to provide a framework for development of the sector. The “Seven Pillars of MSME Sector Policy” call for improvement in the enabling business environment for small business; increasing direct financing to the MSME sector; enhancing both business and development support for MSMEs through innovative programmes; supporting entrepreneurship and MSME development within marginalized groups; fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation; removing or minimizing political interference within MSME enabling agencies, and promoting linkages between Bahamian MSMEs and the international export segments of the economy. Table 14 shows The Bahamas’ permanent and vulnerable employment from 2012-2018.

EMPLOYMENT: PERMANENT AND VULNERABLE: 2012 - 2018

TABLE IV

ITEMS	May-12			May-13			May-14			May-15			May-16			May-17			May-18			
	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	
Total Employed Labour Force																						
All Bahamas	160,650	80,450	80,200	163,995	80,835	83,160	171,275	84,400	86,875	183,915	89,915	94,000	188,360	89,660	98,700	200,155	95,210	104,945	208,255	100,440	107,815	
New Providence	121,410	61,590	59,820	122,155	61,030	61,125	120,400	60,820	59,580	130,750	64,760	65,990	138,365	64,100	69,265	140,740	67,730	73,010	145,205	71,165	74,040	
Grand Bahama	20,635	10,335	10,300	20,215	9,745	10,470	23,235	10,730	12,505	24,400	12,050	12,350	24,500	11,785	12,715	26,180	12,335	13,825	27,965	14,015	13,950	
Permanent Employment																						
All Bahamas	145,880	73,500	72,380	150,220	74,700	75,520	159,210	78,995	80,215	168,925	84,285	84,640	172,270	83,085	89,185	183,785	88,615	95,170	193,515	93,965	99,550	
New Providence	112,945	57,595	55,350	112,215	56,540	55,675	113,885	57,620	56,265	119,195	60,415	58,720	121,560	58,825	62,735	131,890	63,725	68,105	135,185	68,745	68,440	
Grand Bahama	17,960	9,075	8,885	18,305	8,945	9,360	21,325	10,095	11,230	23,175	11,590	11,585	23,035	11,660	11,375	22,105	11,045	11,060	26,465	13,565	12,900	
Vulnerable Employment (1)																						
All Bahamas	14,770	6,950	7,820	13,775	6,135	7,640	12,065	5,405	6,660	14,990	5,630	9,360	16,090	6,575	9,515	16,370	6,595	9,775	14,740	6,475	8,265	
New Providence	8,465	3,995	4,470	9,940	4,490	5,450	6,515	3,200	3,315	11,615	4,345	7,270	11,805	5,275	6,530	8,910	4,005	4,905	10,020	4,420	5,600	
Grand Bahama	2,675	1,260	1,415	1,910	800	1,110	1,110	635	1,275	1,225	460	765	1,465	125	1,340	4,055	1,290	2,765	1,500	450	1,050	

(1) Employment with contract or agreement with limited duration

Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI) was allocated \$2.6 million worth of investment in scholarships for the cost of skills training and certification for Bahamians seeking to increase their personal and entrepreneurial competitiveness.

In 2018 **Ministry of Tourism and Aviation (MOTA)** and **The Bahamas Development Bank** hosted a two-day ‘Tourist Money Never Done’ Workshop, aimed at spurring greater entrepreneurial opportunities in the tourism-related business sector. The Bahamas Development Bank presented at the workshop, which focused on capturing the imagination of budding entrepreneurs who already have an inkling to start a tourism-related business and needed guidance and funding. Up to \$50,000 was made available from The Bahamas Development Bank for participants, depending on the project and its potential. Technical and management support for the workshop was provided by officials from the Small Business Development Centre (SBDC), the Tourism Development Corporation (TDC), and the Grand Bahama Port Authority. (Minister of Tourism and Aviation, Hon. Dionisio D’Aguilar. 2018)

In 2019, the **Small Business Development Centre (SBDC)** was allocated \$8 million to support small and medium-sized businesses, providing entrepreneurs with the incentives and assistance needed to survive and thrive. These funds provided direct financing for small businesses. Additionally, support for market research and financial management, and other business support is available. The SBDC is the product of a tripartite arrangement between the Government, through the Ministry of Finance, University of The Bahamas (UB) and The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employer’s Confederation (BCCEC). The Centre will work to guide the development, funding, growth and evolution of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (“MSMEs”) in The Bahamas. (Minister of Finance DPM Turnquest.2018)

In 2019 the Government continues to make good on the Prime Minister’s commitment of \$25 million to **support Bahamian entrepreneurs and small businesses** over five years. The Bahamas believes that entrepreneurship is a critical pillar to spurring sustainable economic growth. The micro, small, and medium-sized businesses make up the majority of the country’s private sector entities, which provide needed jobs. The Bahamas’ commitment and efforts toward the Small Business Development Centre (SBDC) are so crucial to advancing micro, small and medium-sized businesses in order to support the level of productivity needed to propel the

economy to a sustainable level of growth. Apart from receiving capital, these companies would have received adequate advice from business advisors to ensure that their businesses are ready for operation.

In 2019, approximately 500 small, **new and existing businesses/individuals across The Bahamas** registered with the SBDC which invested over 67,000 hours in advising, training, courses, and research and site visits to date. Sixty-one companies are in the developmental stages of receiving advice and taking courses, for eligibility for funding estimated \$8 million. In six months of 2019, the SBDC is expected to generate through its development of small businesses, approximately 43 jobs, inclusive of new, part-time, and retain jobs, nearly \$145,000 in salaries, and \$197,000 in revenue, through VAT, Business License, Customs Duty, and NIB payments. Every dollar invested in the SBDC creates an extra \$5.58 in real dollars on account of the economic activity it creates through the businesses it would have helped. The Bahamas' commitment to micro, small and medium-sized businesses will have to extend beyond the activities of the SBDC, to include, efforts to enhance the ease of doing business, starting a business and staying in business. (DPM Turnquest.2019/20 Budget Debate)

The **Department of Cooperatives**, in the execution of its mandate to develop Cooperatives, has been in active collaboration with the following agencies: The Bahamas Cooperative League Limited; The Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions; The World Council of Credit Unions; The Departments of Agriculture and Marine Resources; The Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Society (BAIC); The InterAmerican Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); The Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bahamas; and the Embassy of the United States of America. Additionally, the Government provides an annual grant (subvention) through the Department of The Bahamas Cooperative League of \$50,000 to assist in the development of Cooperatives, particularly for training. Women have been an integral part of all other Cooperatives registered in The Bahamas since 1975 and have held executive posts. Each of these agencies is legally constituted and registered with Articles of Association and Memoranda of Association.

The **National Women's Cooperative Credit Union** Limited (January 10, 1975) was the first registered rural women Cooperative. Historically, there has been several women sponsored Cooperatives. This Cooperative educated its members in self-help methods and encouraged women to set aside savings toward the 'down' (initial) payment for a home. The Cooperative had five hundred members, and several low-cost houses were constructed for members. The North Long Island Cooperative Society Limited (April 17, 1978), for example, served as a multi-purpose marketing Cooperative which sought to empower women and provide economic opportunities by marketing its members' agricultural products such as Yuma Rum and various rum products such as cakes. The Cooperatives also produced and marketed straw work (products) for its members.

The Department of Cooperatives reports that rural women are taking a renewed interest in Cooperatives. There are several groups finalizing registration, including, for example, The **Bahamas Rural Women's Cooperative Society Limited**, which is based on Grand Bahama, and 'The Young Bahamian Women Agri-Business Cooperative Society Limited. The Bahamas Rural Women's Cooperative Society Limited seeks to help develop and enhance Agri-Business in The Bahamas. Its mandate is to help women benefit from sustainable economic opportunities. Its purpose statement is to empower women financially; educate its members on how to operate their businesses in collaboration with other members and for economies of scales to purchase merchandise, inputs and market their produce.

The **Young Bahamian Women Agri-Business Entrepreneur Cooperative Society Limited** is multi-purposed and focuses on the Agri-Business sector while concentrating on financial security, shared equity and food security for its members. Its purpose is to facilitate economic development, improve economic, social and conditional standards of production in socially challenged areas, and to collaborate with other entities geared towards the development and empowerment of women. In the area of Producer/Service Cooperatives, efforts to increase the availability of

training for women to become entrepreneurs and better-skilled craft persons have been encouraged through the access to grants for training and resources.

The Government of The Bahamas believes in investing in young people and improving the quality of life through the combined efforts of hard work and dedication, a solid vision, and a helping hand. **The Self-Starter Programme** is a government-funded grant-based programme to empower young Bahamian citizens, 18 – 30 years, seeking to establish or expand small businesses. It will provide aspiring entrepreneurs with a valid small business idea, self-employed and unemployed, with funding from BS\$1000 to BS\$5000 to acquire tools and supplies for their businesses. Funds are paid directly to the supplier. The programme is managed by the Department of Youth, with an independent selection committee responsible for the selection process.

6.3 Supported the transition from informal to formal work, including legal and policy measures that benefit women in informal employment

The **Public Employment Exchange ("PES") Unit** within the Department of Labour – "Labour on the Blocks" is an initiative to bring potential employees to employers in efforts to decrease general unemployment rates. A significant percentage of women attend these initiatives.

The **Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation**, in collaboration with The **Bahamas National Crafts Association**, offers training to help enhance the talents of women in the production of hand-and-craft items and other Bahamian products. The BAIC also facilitates the local produce exchanges throughout the country. During January – March 2016, the BAIC indicated that 58% of farmers who were receiving payments for produce brought for sale into the Packing Houses were female. This data is representative of five islands with Packing Houses in operation.

In 2014, **The Bahamas Network for Rural Women Producers** was launched to improve the standard of living of rural women producers through training, cultural exchange, networking and the promotion of regional and international trade. Members are involved in products from designer clothing to straw and sisal handbags, jewellery, livestock, agricultural produce, teas, pepper sauce, jams, and jellies, and recycling.

In 2015, the Bureau of Women's Affairs in partnership with The Bahamas Network for Rural Women Producers and the **Huairou Commission produced a video documentary showcasing female farmers** in their agricultural and other entrepreneurial pursuits.

In 2018, the **Department of Gender and Family surveyed 332 women and girls on their employment status**. The results revealed that 42% were employed full time, 11% were unemployed, 11% were temporary workers, 7% were self-employed, 7% were retired, 3% were seasonal workers, 4% did not respond, and 16% were students. It was also indicated that 34% had easy access to banking and financial services, 19% noted that banking and financial access were not easy, 20% explained that banking and financial access were modestly easy and 27% did not respond. As a result of the responses, DGFA facilitated several Family Island projects.

In 2018, the Department of Gender and Family Affairs partnered with several civil society organizations to sponsor **Family Islands' Empowerment Initiatives** for women and girls including training sessions about CEDAW and Personal Leadership.

In 2018, the **South Andros Handicraft and Manufacturers Association (SAHMA) Preserves Production**. The project will encourage entrepreneurs to use organically grown fruits to enhance their local cottage industries;

In 2018, a partnership with The Bahamas Network of Rural Women Producers (BAHNROP) in conducting a **Straw Plaiting Project for persons in Acklins and Crooked Islands**. The project is expected to become an income-generating one for the participants;

In 2018, the Department of Gender and Family Affairs partnered with the **Cat Island Farmers' Association** and provided water tanks and generator equipment to farmers to eight female farmers.

The Ministry of Agriculture annually hosts the **Bahamas National Agri-Business Expo** to showcase farmers, processors, craftsmen, artisans, Agri and marine business people to the consuming public as well as to offer opportunities for them to learn, enhance and grow their businesses. Oftentimes, fifty per cent or more of the exhibitors are women.

In 2019, at the National Agri-Business Expo, **three Female Farmers were honoured** for their farming successes in The Bahamas. Unfortunately, The Bahamas remains in the unsustainable position of being an overwhelming consumer of goods farmed and produced in other countries. The ministry's goal to make a meaningful change in favour of Bahamian goods and products is achievable due to the potential production on farms in Abaco, Eleuthera, Exuma and Andros. Consideration is being made to introduce policies for farmers to increase production, use new techniques, and employ younger farmers into the effort. Farmers have the potential to create new wealth in The Bahamas, as seen in fishing communities, such as Spanish Wells, often believed to be the most prosperous community in The Bahamas.

In 2019, the **Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute**, (CARDI), was featured at Expo as a host of a plant clinic, where professional and backyard farmers, submitted plant samples in a Ziploc bag for analysis. Information on hot peppers, sweet potato, small ruminants and forages was provided to the public, in addition to exposure to the regional coconut improvement project which CARDI leads.

7. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and promote work-family conciliation?

- Included unpaid care and domestic work in national statistics and accounting (e.g. time-use surveys, valuation exercises, satellite accounts)
- ✓ **Expanded childcare services or made existing services more affordable**
- ✓ **Expanded support for frail elderly persons and others needing intense forms of care**
- ✓ **Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave**
- Invested in time- and labour-saving infrastructure, such as public transport, electricity, water and sanitation, to reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women
- Promoted decent work for paid care workers, including migrant workers
- Conducted campaigns or awareness raising activities to encourage the participation of men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work
- Introduced legal changes regarding the division of marital assets or pension entitlements after divorce that acknowledge women's unpaid contribution to the family during marriage
- Other

7.1 Expanded childcare services or made existing services more affordable

In 2018, The Bahamas expanded childcare services and made existing services more affordable for women and families. The Government of The Bahamas is a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and The Inter American Education Agenda. These two entities are seeking to ensure that all boys and girls have access to quality early education, developmental care and pre-primary education by 2030. For these reasons, the Ministry of Education (MOE) implemented Universal Pre-Primary Education as one of its key initiatives. The **Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU)** is monitoring this initiative. The Bahamas 2010 Census revealed that less than half of Bahamian students ages three to four were enrolled in preschool. Therefore, by introducing Universal Pre-Primary Education, The Bahamas should be able to meet the United Nations' stipulations by providing all pre-schoolers with pre-primary education by 2030. The process includes enrolling 1000 three-and-four-year-olds in a pre-primary programme each year, beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, so that The Bahamas can achieve Universal Pre-Primary Education within five years. Several public and private preschools throughout The Bahama Islands signed the Ministry of Education's (ME) **Early Childhood Education Universal Pre-Primary Education Initiative Private Preschool Partnership (PPP)**.

Over 300 pre-schoolers enrolled in government schools, and 500 pre-schoolers enrolled in private schools through a voucher system covering up to \$2,000.00 per child. This money is for the cost of tuition and learning materials for children in approved private preschools. Ministry officials propose to conduct visits to nine Family Islands, including Andros, Cat Island, Eleuthera, Long Island, Grand Bahama, Abaco, the Berry Islands, Exuma, and Rum Cay to conduct monitoring and assessment at both public and private preschools in pursuit of expansion of the Private Preschool Programme, (PPP), on those islands.

7.2 Expanded support for frail elderly persons and others needing intense forms of care

In 2017, the **Senior Citizens Division** (SCD) draft of the Older Persons Bill was reviewed by the Office of the Attorney General. Subsequently, since 2018, the SCD has been in the process of collaborating with other stakeholders and the AG's Office to amend the draft Older Persons Bill in adherence to human rights initiatives for older persons.

The **Council on Older Persons** meets monthly and is the mechanism to ensure that the Rights of Older Persons are protected by laws, policies and practices established in The Bahamas. Department of Social Services provides secure facilities for the aged through which they can access counselling, psycho-social and medical services. The services include prescription drugs and medical devices. For senior citizens not living in care communities, DOSS provides food and rent assistance to these persons, where local, national benefits may not exist.

For the period under review, the SCD has observed the month of October as **Older Persons Month**. In 2018, among the activities held were a church service, luncheon, and the Annual National Builders Ceremony at Government House. Additionally, the division has been facilitating ongoing internal training for the staff and caregivers of the group homes.

The **Senior Citizens Division** of the Department of Social Services seeks to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all senior citizens in The Bahamas by assisting with accommodations and other necessary miscellaneous services, particularly if they reside alone. This division has oversight of the Yellow Elder Day Care Centre and Demetrius Centre, residential facilities for eligible seniors. Additionally, there are partnerships with privately operated homes and Day Care Centres.

Food Assistance for Older Persons service is intended to assist indigent senior citizens that are 60 years or older and are experiencing hardship in fulfilling their basic needs such as food.

Home Placement for Older Persons service is intended to assist indigent senior citizens that are 60 years or older with suitable living conditions.

Home Care Services for Older Persons is intended to assist senior citizens who reside alone and are unable to maintain good housekeeping standards.

Family Support Services is intended to assist senior citizens that are 60 years or older to live in harmony with family members/neighbours.

House Repair Assistance for Older Persons is intended to assist indigent senior citizens that are 60 years or older with the necessary repairs to their homes.

Travel Assistance for Older Persons is intended to provide travel assistance to indigent senior citizens who are 60 years or older and are travelling from and returning to the Family Islands, primarily for medical reasons.

Financial Assistance for Payment of Utilities and Purchase of Basic Household Items service is intended to assist indigent senior citizens that are 60 years or older with necessary items needed to enhance their level of functioning. The items covered under this financial assistance include: payment of water and electricity, purchase of a bed, refrigerator, stove, LP

gas tank and or refill, eyeglasses, hearing aids, disposable undergarments, and medication not included in the National Insurance Drug Plan.

MedCard Assistance provides a means for older and indigent persons to access medication and medical services. A MedCard provides the bearer with BS\$100.00 daily allowance in services - namely for medication, x-rays, blood works; over BS\$100.00. Medical Cards may be used at all satellite clinics under the Department of Public Health inclusive of the Family Islands' Clinics. If the applicant does not qualify for the MedCard, he/she may qualify to receive financial assistance or emergency financial assistance.

7.3 Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave

Maternity Grant is a one-time payment of \$430 (as of July, 2010) made to a woman whose pregnancy results in the birth of a live infant. It is paid in respect of each live infant. Payments for the weeks of pre-confinement, the week of confinement, and the weeks following, for a total of 13 weeks. It is paid at a weekly rate of 66.66 per cent of the woman's average insured income. Where an illness arises out of the confinement that results in further incapacity, the Maternity Benefit period may be extended up to six weeks.

Paternity Leave is provided for in accordance with section 20 of the Employment Act Ch321. The leave is unpaid, however, many employers are providing paid leave to their male employees.

- (1) An employee who has been employed for at least six months is entitled to family leave without pay for a period not exceeding one week per annum following
 - (a) the birth of a child; or
 - (b) the death or illness of a child, spouse or parent.
- (2) Every employee shall be required to provide to the satisfaction of his employer evidence of birth, death or illness, as the case may be.

In 2019, **Bahamas Telecommunications Company (BTC) implemented a new policy extending paid maternity and paternity leave for its employees.** The policy increases paid maternity leave to 16 weeks and paid leave for fathers to eight weeks. The company's updated parental leave policy now provides more time off for mothers and fathers. It is applicable whether employees become parents biologically, via surrogacy or through adoption. The positive changes are indicative of the company's dedication to the well-being of its employees and its desire to make parents working for BTC feel supported economically and emotionally. The benefits of parental leave will allow parents to have more time to build stronger connections with their newborns, which impacts an organization's ability to retain and attract new talent and foster a more engaged workforce.

8. Has your country introduced austerity/fiscal consolidation measures, such as cuts in public expenditure or public sector downsizing, over the past five years?

✓ **Yes**

No

In 2015, The Bahamas introduced a 7.5% Value Added Tax (VAT). Up to 2015, there was virtually no tax on individuals or companies. Government revenue was raised mainly through a range of excise duties and fees.

In 2018, to help meet a projected budget deficit, the Government instituted a 4.5% increase to the 7.5% value-added tax (VAT), thus rendering a 12% VAT in The Bahamas. This VAT is a broadly-based consumption tax charge on the value added to goods and services. It applies to almost all goods and services that are imported, bought and sold for use or consumption. Conversely, goods exported, supplied to customers abroad are exempted or zero-rated.

In 2018, essential food items became zero-rated to help soften the effects of the VAT increase. The Government re-shaped the breadbasket list of items, in concert with a public education

exercise, which was designed to provide some “cushion for the indigent”. The Government of The Bahamas ensured that breadbasket items, including baby food items, and vegetables are value-added tax-free during the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 national budget allocations. Additionally, certain items were exempted including:

1. All breadbasket items except for sugar, with such items comprising: butter, mayonnaise, corned beef, baby formula, baby cereal, mustard, soaps, soups, broths and other assortments of small food and personal care items;
2. VAT exemptions on medicines;
3. Residential property insurance will be exempt from VAT; and
4. Residential electricity bills at or under \$100 and water bills at or under \$50 will also be exempt from VAT.

Additionally, The Bahamas insured many other exemptions and waivers to coincide and offset the VAT increase including:

1. An increase in the customs duty personal travel exemption from \$300 to \$500 per person;
2. VAT zero-rating of fund-raising activities held by charitable organizations;
3. An assortment of concessions in respect of real property tax, customs duties, excise duties, business licence fees and stamp tax in favour of designated economic empowerment zones, beginning with the inner cities;
4. A waiver of duty on clothing and shoe imports upon application by importers and retailers of same.
5. Duty-free entry for goods for use in the commercial printing industry, as well as for processing and garment manufacturing equipment without the need to apply for specific concessions as before;
6. Extending for one year both the City of Nassau Revitalization Act and the Family Island Development Encouragement Act;
7. Extending for five years, the first-time homeowners stamp tax exemption;
8. Extending for two years the duty exemption on materials used for the renovation, repair and upgrade of dilapidated buildings;
9. The elimination of duties on a number of food products, including the whole salmon; frozen fish fillets; bread spreads; potato products; tofu; and prepared and preserved tomatoes;
10. The elimination of duties on solar kits upon application to the ministry of finance to supplement the already existing duty-free exemption on solar panels;
11. A reduction of duties on floor tiles and fabric softener;
12. The extension of the 0.75 per cent business license fee rate, currently applicable to hotels with turnover over \$400 million, to all hotels with ten rooms;
13. Providing an exemption from business licence fees for all schools that are registered with the Ministry of Education.

The Bahamas notes that these measures are in part to coincide with the need for The Bahamas to have accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The Bahamas is the only country in the Caribbean except for Cuba that is not a member of the WTO. In so doing, the increase in VAT with a simultaneous lowering of customs duties and other exemptions were at the focal point of the policy decision making for this budget year for a target date for WTO accession in 2019.

The Consumer Protection Commission and the Price Control Commission have a vital role to play in ensuring the various tax exemptions are passed on to the consumers, vulnerable and the neglected, particularly with these price-controlled items.

9. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

- ✓ **Promoted poor women’s access to decent work through active labour market policies (e.g. job training, skills, employment subsidies, etc.) and targeted measures**

- ✓ Broadened access to land, housing, finance, technology and/or agricultural extension services
- ✓ Supported women's entrepreneurship and business development activities
- ✓ Introduced or strengthened social protection programmes for women and girls (e.g. cash transfers for women with children, public works/employment guarantee schemes for women of working-age, pensions for older women)
- ✓ Introduced/strengthened low-cost legal services for women living in poverty
- Other

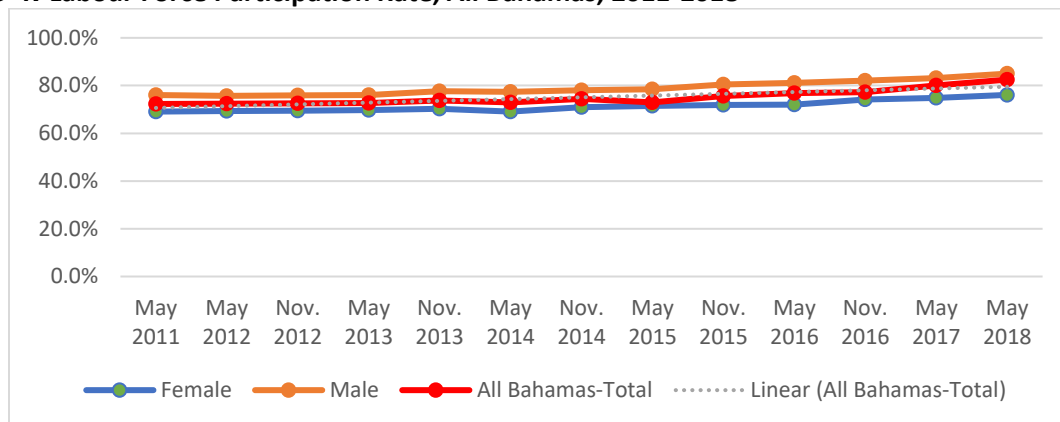
9.1 Promoted poor women's access to decent work through active labour market policies (e.g. job training, skills, employment subsidies, etc.) and targeted measures

From a gender perspective, the collective findings from **The Bahamas Living Condition Survey (BLCS)** and **Bahamas Household Expenditure Survey (BHES)**, labour force surveys, and occupational wage reports revealed:

- a. Greater male participation in the labour force
- b. Higher unemployment among females
- c. More significant numbers of unemployed females-headed households
- d. A higher standard of living of self-employed males
- e. Females tend to be employed in higher numbers than men in the retail sector
- f. Males work longer hours than females
- g. Females are more educated than men
- h. Females headed higher numbers of poor households
- i. Female-headed households tend to be large, poor, and have more dependents.

The Preliminary Results Labour Survey, May 2018 report indicates that of the 101,190 households surveyed, 59 per cent were headed by men. The charts provided in the next section show the glaring disparities between men and women in the labour market.

Figure 4: Labour Force Participation Rate, All Bahamas, 2011-2018



In 2016, **National Training Agency** celebrated the following international certifications, in the various disciplines achieved by the trainees: Food & Beverage Services, 220 certifications; Housekeeping, 200 certifications; Food Preparation, 150 certifications; Butler Services, 60 certifications; Allied Health Care Patient Care Technician, 150 certifications; Retail Knowledge, 80 certifications and Office Procedures, 70 certifications. Additionally, the following local certifications were achieved: Auto Service & Care, 100 certifications; Auto Body & Collision, 10 certifications, Quick Books, 30 certifications and Boat & Safety Maintenance, 30 certifications. (Gibson.BudgetSpeech.2016)

In 2017, The Ministry of Education, **Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI)** and private sector companies instituted a **paid internship programme, offering professional certificates** in the areas of construction, home maintenance, plumbing, electrical installation, hospitality, fashion design, business, law, customer service and information technology. BTVI provides additional **workforce readiness training** and a 22-week internship with independent professionals.

In 2018, **The Bahamas fortified job training skills** when the Ministry of National Security signed a contract with the National Training Agency (NTA) to provide training for hundreds of young, unemployed Bahamians. The Ministry of National Security applied portion of the \$20 million IDB loan to contract the NTA to focus on the development of soft skills, such as responsibility, commitment, teamwork building, persistence, self-control, and remedial education in literacy and numeracy. The final eight weeks will involve comprehensive on-site employment training with particular emphasis on hospitality and retail sectors. **The Citizen Security Justice Programme** represents a holistic approach to reducing crime and violence in The Bahamas. A key objective of the Programme is to increase employability and employment among the vulnerable youth population in New Providence by collaborating with ministries and agencies to support meaningful opportunities.

In 2019, five graduates, three of whom were women, became the first to receive certifications from the **National Training Agency (NTA)** since its approval as an **Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) City & Guilds Centre**. City & Guilds work with governments, businesses and education centres to help people, organizations and economies build human skills for productivity and growth through work-based learning. The National Training Agency (NTA) provides participants with soft skills and hospitality training.

In 2019, hundreds of participants in the Government's **52-Week National Job Creation Skills Empowerment Programme** were re-engaged for the second year of the employment initiative. More than One thousand (1,000) participants (63% females) benefitted from the initiative to date. The Bahamas provides short-term job initiative, for single mothers and those unemployed persons between the ages of 19 years to 30 years with hands-on skills to find gainful employment based on the training received. A direct result of the National Job Creation and Skills Enhancement Programme is that many participants have been offered full-time employment in the private sector, and government ministries and departments, including the Water and Sewerage Corporation and the National Insurance Board. Programme participants were placed in the public and private sector in New Providence, Grand Bahama and all of the Family Islands. (Oswald Brown. Chronicle.2019)

The **Community Affairs Division offers childcare community-based services** through three Family Life Centres and other organizations; such as Homework Centres, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Summer Programmes for grade school students. These free childcare services for children from 3 to 5 pm during the weekdays, serve as **employment subsidies** as they allow mothers to work until 5 pm without having to be concerned about where to place the children. Special services offered include: Computer Programmes, Adult Literacy Programmes, Senior Citizens Association meetings, Family Community Forums, Male Empowerment Programmes, Female Upliftment programmes and others.

During 2014 – 2019, The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture continued many youth initiatives including the **BE Inspired Programme**, which introduced training, monitoring and evaluation components for youth operated micro businesses. The objectives of the Programme are to create a cohort of professional, knowledgeable and capable entrepreneurs; decrease the number of premature closings of micro-businesses throughout The Bahamas; increase mentorship and training for new and existing grant recipients, and facilitate the development of Bahamian businesses and products. The training sessions are conducted in New Providence and Eleuthera. Forthcoming training will be carried out in Exuma, Abaco and Andros.

9.2 Broadened access to land, housing, finance, technology and/or agricultural extension services

In 2018, the **Sunset Close Subdivision Extension** comprising 56,237 square feet was conveyed by a grant from the Treasurer of The Bahamas to the Minister Responsible for Housing, for further development. The extension comprised 10 lots of approximately 4,000-5,000 square feet each in addition to 16 lots previously granted. The hallmarks of this initiative are land and

homeownership, equity choice, and flexibility, all of which will be aided by duty-free concessions. The programme provided prospective homeowners who purchased one of the serviced lots with access to customs duties and excise tax exemption on materials necessary to construct a single-family home. Purchasers secured a mortgage and were given two years to complete construction of a single-family dwelling home. Purchasers were also allowed to take full responsibility for the design of their own home, engagement of contractors and others. (Prime Minister Minnis.2018)

In 2019, The Bahamas is making efforts to ensure that all Bahamians have access to and the opportunity to own land. Efforts are ongoing concerning the regularization of **Bahamas Government to Grant Crown Land** leases and grants. The Land and Surveys Department is currently engaged in an extensive exercise, to enable the government to better manage the process, particularly outstanding approvals. Priority will be given to settling of matters for approved crown land leases and grants within the MICAL district, the islands of Great Inagua, Mayaguana, Acklins, and Crooked Island and continue island by island, leaving no island behind. (2019.Jones Bahamas)

In 2019, the Department of Housing provided the second parcel of serviced lots, located in the **Lionel Davis Subdivision in the Fox Hill community**. In 2019 over 300 such serviced lots will be made available for sale in the Carmichael Village Subdivision. The Departments of Housing and Lands & Surveys are also identifying land for subdivisions on the islands of Andros, Abaco, Exuma and San Salvador.

9.3 Introduced or strengthened social protection programmes for women and girls (e.g. cash transfers for women with children, public works/employment guarantee schemes for women of working-age, pensions for older women)

The **Department of Social Services** provides several services that protect the welfare for women falling below the poverty line or persons in need of assistance due to social factors such as unemployment, teenage pregnancy, disability and sickness.

All Persons: DOSS provides financial assistance long-term and short-term in the form of cash transfers, debit cards, coupons and other monetary instruments to be used at local grocery stores. The Department also provides housing assistance, which ensures that vulnerable groups of persons can access shelter in emergencies and the long-term. The Department additionally provides rental stipends, stipends for electricity and water usage, travel stipends so that clients may be able to commute to workplaces and medical assistance to provide prescription and medical devices at a discounted cost.

Children: DOSS provides uniform assistance to parents and legal guardians to ensure that children can access free education at local primary, junior and senior public schools. The Department provides childcare assistance and allowances to parents/guardians who have fostered or adopted children from within the Placement Services Division to ensure their well-being. The Department provides lunch and welfare services at local primary, junior and senior schools for youth and young adults without access to daily lunch rations.

Family Island Division is critical due to the archipelagic composition of The Bahamas; it is necessary to replicate all services provided in New Providence to every inhabited Island. This Division coordinates services to the Family Islands, including those in the Northern Bahamas. Services are provided by a social worker or case aide under the chairmanship of the Family Island Administrator.

Community Support Services Division - seeks to ensure that indigent women in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas have access to the basic necessities such as food, clothing, footwear (inclusive of school uniforms) and essential household items such as beds, assistance with payment of essential utility bills, rent, travel for medical reasons, purchase of appliances (stove and fridge), eyeglasses, fire relief, small house repairs and the burial of family members.

There are four Outreach Centres in New Providence in addition to a component at Urban Renewal. The Department of Social Services has offices in all of the major Family Islands inclusive of Grand Bahama which also has an Urban Renewal component. A large portion of the budget is allocated for food and financial assistance. The DOSS and the Bank of The Bahamas (BOB) have a partnership agreement to provide clients who are approved for food assistance the BOB VISA Pre-paid Cards or food coupons. Clients approved for Uniform and Footwear Assistance receive BOB VISA Gift Cards to purchase school uniforms and footwear from various vendors in New Providence.

Urban Renewal Commission also prepares and distributes food parcels and in New Providence and throughout the Island of The Bahamas.

School Welfare Unit seeks to promote the general welfare of Bahamian students and foster a closer relationship between the school, home and the community. The Unit also supplements and facilitates the learning process for all students by working to eliminate the social, economic, physical and emotional barriers to learning encountered by students in the government-operated, Pre-schools, Primary and High Schools. These services are also available to the private school population. This Division partner with the Ministry of Education with assessing students for the government-operated pre-schools, with the **National Lunch Program** and with the operation of **Providing Access to Continuing Education (PACE) Centre and the Early Childhood Development Centre**. The Division also works in conjunction with Community Support Services Division to assist with uniforms and footwear to indigent parents or guardians for children who attend the public schools.

The Department of Social Services has also implemented a **Food Assistance Programme**, available to all persons but especially to vulnerable groups of people, including the disabled and senior citizens. The service provides persons with monthly food coupons to be redeemed at local supermarkets. The Bahamas Expenditure Survey found that at least one person in 10% of all households in The Bahamas is a recipient of the program.

10. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

- ✓ **Introduced or strengthened social protection for unemployed women (e.g. unemployment benefits, public works programmes, social assistance)**
- ✓ **Introduced or strengthened conditional cash transfers**
- ✓ **Introduced or strengthened unconditional cash transfers**
- ✓ **Introduced or strengthened non-contributory social pensions**
- Reformed contributory social protection schemes to strengthen women's access and benefit levels
- Improved access to the above for specific populations (e.g. women in informal employment, including domestic workers; migrant and refugee women; women in humanitarian settings)
- Other

10.1 Introduced or strengthened social protection for unemployed women (e.g. unemployment benefits, public works programmes, social assistance)

The Bahamas has taken action via public and private agencies to improve access to **social protection, including social services, National Insurance**, among other things. To ensure equality for women in economic and social life in The Bahamas, The National Insurance Act, 1972 (Chapter 350) provides for partial income replacement to qualifying workers, inclusive of both women and men (and in some instances the dependent survivors of workers) during specified contingencies. **These payments include nine (9) benefits and four (4) assistance payments.** There are only two benefits and one assistance payment that make any specific reference to gender: the maternity benefit and survivors' benefit. The maternity benefit will only be paid to females; and in the case of the survivor's benefit and survivor's assistance to a widow being pregnant by her late husband, may qualify her for the monthly payments. (CEDAW 5th Report-Article 13. 2016)

In December 2018, The Bahamas attended the **Commission on the Status of Women Regional Consultation High-Level Meeting** held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The primary purpose of the consultation was to discuss and make amendments to the legal Declaration focusing on social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The Declaration was presented at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held in New York 2019.

The Bahamas offers the following **social protection and social assistance** for women and families:

1. Food Assistance – Debit Card and Food Stamp
2. Death and Burial Assistance
3. Rental and Furnishings
4. Utilities Assistance
5. Uniform Assistance
6. Pre – School Universal Free Education
7. Home Visits for Repairs – Urban Small Home Repairs
8. Home Visits to ensure social, physical, environmental safety
9. Elderly women receive same benefits as well
10. Programmes for Elderly and unemployed women

Unemployment Benefit is a payment made to eligible insured persons who are unemployed but actively looking for employment. It is paid at a weekly rate of 50% of the unemployed worker's average weekly insurable income. It is paid so long as unemployment continues, to a maximum period of 13 weeks within a 52-week period.

Survivors' Benefit is paid monthly to the dependent survivors of a deceased insured person. "Survivors" must have been dependent on the deceased at the time of his/ her death and all other conditions must be satisfied at the time of his/her death as well. Dependency is defined and determined by the criteria set out in the **National Insurance Benefits Regulations**. Benefit is paid to the surviving dependents in the following priority order: i) widow/widower; ii) dependent children under age 16, or under age 21 if still in school full-time; iii) unmarried orphans under age 16, or under age 21 if still in school full-time or part-time; iv) unmarried children who are not children of the deceased person, but who were dependent upon him/her, under age 16, or under age 21 if still in school full-time, or are invalids; and v) the parents.

Sickness Benefit - A weekly payment made when a person is temporarily unable to work.

Invalidity Benefit - Providing monthly payments when a person is permanently incapable of work.

Maternity Benefit & Grant - A weekly payment for mother and a one-time payment for Baby.

Retirement Benefit – A monthly payment in senior retirement years.

Funeral Benefit - To ease the financial burden of the loved ones left behind. Survivors' Benefit - Leaving a minimum level of financial security for dependents. Industrial Benefits - including Disablement, Injury, Medical Care, Death and Funeral for those classified as Self -employed in "Class B."

10.2 Introduced or strengthened conditional cash transfers

In 2014, The Department of Social Services **piloted RISE, a conditional cash transfer program** for parents of school-aged children which encouraged positive school performance. While the pilot program concluded, various aspects of the program still exist such as the software tracking properties and the monetary instrument by way of a **prepaid VISA Debit Card**, which is presently being used in the expanded food assistance program. During the past five years, the Department of Social Services (DOSS) improved its poverty assistance programmes for its clients, the majority of whom are women. Through its **Food Assistance Programme**, DOSS assists persons who

encounter hardship and are unable to provide food for themselves and / or their families. Food coupons and other monetary instruments are given on a 'need basis' or short-term/ emergency relief and/or on a long-term basis, to which clients are assessed and qualified for the monthly Food Assistance Programme.

10.3 Introduced or strengthened non-contributory social pensions

In May 2016, a **Bill to amend the Pensions Act** was passed in parliament to allow a serving Public Officer the opportunity to name the person or persons, through a notarized form, who should receive his or her pension, gratuity, payment for any outstanding salary or accumulated vacation leave, allowance, or any other monies due, upon his or her death. The officer would also have the option of changing the name(s) of the designated person(s) at any time. Upon the enactment of the Bill, when an officer dies the designated beneficiary would need only to produce satisfactory evidence, so that payments in respect of gratuity, salary, vacation earnings or allowances could be effected in a timely fashion. This would alleviate the expense of the legal pursuit of the benefits as they would now be more readily available, thereby lessening the stress on families upon the death of a loved one. (Bahamas Government Website. 2019)

On 1 July 2016, **the increase took effect at NIB and included the wage ceiling rate increase and increases in pension and grant payments.** Due to an amendment to the National Insurance Regulations in 2010, which came into effect in 2011, NIB is obligated to introduce automatic increases every two years to pensions, grants and the insurable wage ceiling.

- a. In the case of adjustments to pensions and grants, the increases are based on the annual percentage increase in The Bahamas Retail Price Index over the immediately preceding two calendar years, before the year that the adjustment takes effect.
- b. In the case of increases to the ceiling on insurable wage, this is determined based on the change in the Retail Price Index of The Bahamas plus 2%. The first automatic adjustment to the wage ceiling occurred in July 2014.

During 2016/2017 fiscal year, Public Officers received \$1,200 added on to their annual salary in addition to their usual increment, as per the 2013 **Bahamas Public Service Union Industrial Agreement with the Government.** Salary scales were extended by two (2) increments during this period. These salary benefits were extended to the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, the Royal Bahamas Police Force, the Department of Corrections, senior managers in the Public Service including the Secretary to the Cabinet, Financial Secretary, Auditor General, and Permanent Secretaries.

During the 2016/2017 fiscal period, in accordance with the **Industrial Agreements for The Bahamas Union of Teachers and the Bahamas Educators' and Managerial Union, teachers and public-school administrators received increases** equivalent to two (2) increments in addition to their normal increment added to their salary. Additionally, the Government advanced regularizing the services of over 2,500 temporary officers who were paid weekly and monthly as well as contract officers earning minimum wage.

Figures released by the Department of Statistics indicated an increase of 1.18% in 2014 and 1.88% in 2015. Accordingly, all minimum pension rates and grants will increase by 3.1%. **The contribution wage ceiling increased** from \$620 to \$650 per week / \$2,687 to \$2,817 per month. Pension benefits in payment increased up to 3.1%; the maternity grant increased from \$465 to \$480; and the funeral grant increased from \$1720 to \$1780. The next biennial increase is expected to take place in 2018. (National Insurance Annual Report. 2016)

In 2018, the **Biennial Adjustments**, The National Insurance Board advised recipients of Long-Term Benefits and Assistances that the 2018 increases to pensions will be paid in October 2018. The increases (of up to 1.2%) were paid retroactive to July 2018. (Bahamas Government Website 2019)

During 2014 – 2019, the following social pensions and assistance were offered to the public by NIB.

Old age non-contributory pensions, which are periodical payments to a person who has reached the age of sixty-five years and retired from gainful occupation in such circumstances as may be prescribed.

Invalidity assistance, includes periodical payments made to a person who is rendered permanently incapable of work otherwise than as a result of employment injury.

Survivor's assistance, that is to say, periodical payments made to a survivor in respect of the death of a person who immediately before his death was receiving old age non-contributory pension or invalidity assistance, or in respect of the death of a person who dies otherwise than as a result of employment injury.

Sickness assistance, that is to say, periodical payments to a person who is rendered temporarily incapable of work otherwise than as a result of employment injury.

11. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to improve health outcomes and skills for women and girls?

- ✓ **Promoted women's access to health services through expansion of universal health coverage or public health services**
- ✓ **Expanded specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, mental, maternal health and HIV services**
- ✓ **Undertaken gender-specific public awareness/health promotion campaigns**
 - Provided gender-responsiveness training for health service providers
 - Strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programmes
 - Provided refugee women and girls as well as women and girls in humanitarian settings with access to sexual and reproductive health services
 - Other

11.1 Promoted women's access to health services through expansion of universal health coverage or public health services

In 2017, the Government of The Bahamas allocated in excess of three hundred (\$300) million dollars to the Health Sector. Funds which provide care to women who seek emergency care are hospitalized, attend outpatient clinics or various laboratory and imaging services are accessed from the Public Hospital Authority's Budget which manages the care from The Princess Margaret Hospital, Rand Memorial Hospital and the Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre. The total budget allocated for the Department of Public Health, which has the responsibility of providing Ante-natal and Post-natal care to women as well as care relating to Sexual and Reproductive Health is five million dollars. As it relates to Women's Health, budgetary allocations to the Public Hospital's Authority, which provides care to women in hospitals, are also to be considered.

The Government of The Bahamas believes that health is a fundamental human right, not a privilege; and that quality healthcare must be universal in its application. Healthcare services are available to all persons regardless of their ability to pay. The Ministry of Health formulates and implements effective health policies and interventions with the objective of safeguarding the health of its citizens throughout the archipelago through health education, promotion, disease prevention, and primary and tertiary care services. Its commitment to healthcare delivery is exhibited in the number of healthcare and medical emergency facilities that the Government has established throughout the archipelago. The Bahamas has 74 healthcare facilities which exist on 16 islands, as shown in Table 15. The two main hospitals located on New Providence and Grand Bahama were added to that number. Opening hours for the majority of these community clinics

are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, except on public holidays. (Ministry of Health official website.2019)

Table 15: Healthcare and Medical Emergency Facilities

<i>Islands</i>	<i>Size/Sq. Miles</i>	<i>Population (2010 Census)</i>	<i># of State-funded Healthcare Facilities</i>
<i>New Providence</i>	80	246,329	11
<i>Abaco</i>	649	17,224	9
<i>Acklins</i>	192	565	2
<i>Andros</i>	2,300	7,490	9
<i>Bimini</i>	11	1,988	2
<i>Berry Islands</i>	12	807	1
<i>Cat Island</i>	608	1,522	5
<i>Crooked Island & Long Cay</i>	84	330	2
<i>Eleuthera</i>	187	8,202	14
<i>Exuma & Cays</i>	112	6,298	4
<i>Grand Bahama</i>	530	51,368	8
<i>Inagua</i>	599	913	1
<i>Long Island</i>	230	3,094	3
<i>Mayaguana</i>	110	277	1
<i>Ragged Islands</i>	14	72	2
<i>San Salvador & Rum Cays</i>	90	1,039	2
Total			76

Sources: The Department of Statistics, *2010 Census* and the Ministry of Health official website

As an indication of its commitment to the provision of equitable access to quality service, The Government of **The Bahamas has enacted legislation** (approximately 43 Acts since The Bahamas became an autonomous nation) and **allocated resources for strengthening the health system** through capacity building, development of infrastructure and enhancement of technology. Its many health programmes, including Infants' and Children's Health, Adolescents' Health, Women's Health, Men's Health, Older Persons' Health, and Family Health, are geared toward improving overall health and meeting the age- and gender-specific needs of the community.

To solve the challenge of lack of access to high quality care, the Government launched the **National Health Insurance (NHI) programme in 2016**, which is still evolving. The implementation of the NHI will be completed by January 2021. The following implementation timeline for the revamped NHI programme was announced:

- i. April-July 2019: Launch of Standard Health Benefit and NHI expanded coverage
- ii. July 2019: Launch of Sugary Drinks Tax and the National Wellness Programme
- iii. January 2020: Launch of Employer Mandate for businesses with 100+ employees
- iv. January 2021: Employer Mandate Expansion (all employers) and deadline for all grandfathered private insurance plans.

The Bahamas continues to **maintain a greater than 90 percent vaccination coverage rate**. Through the National Health Insurance Act, passed in December 2006 and the National Prescription Drug Plan launched in October 2005, significant strides have been made toward accessibility to affordable medicines. Specifically, patients diagnosed with chronic diseases receive prescription drugs at no cost.

11.2 Expanded specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, mental, maternal health and HIV services

All women can access health care through numerous public and private health centres throughout the islands. Clients can be seen free of charge in government facilities. As it relates to obstetric care, there is a standardized assessment of the clients' risk level at their initial visit wherever they are seen, and a pattern of care and management is determined. There has been increasing dialogue relating to the availability of abortions to women; however, abortion remains illegal in The Bahamas.

During the period under review, the Ministry of Health **promoted healthy lifestyles** for youth through the provision of healthcare, health education, and a supportive environment that will empower youth within the framework of families and society. The Adolescent Health Centre was established to provide holistic, accurate and confidential healthcare. This care includes sexual and reproductive health services.

The Ministry of Health has a **policy that all sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls including the various types of birth control methods, are provided free of charge** throughout the country including the family Islands. There are a variety of contraceptive methods available. Women and girls can choose the method that is best suited for their needs. The methods include oral which is taken daily, injectable, which can be taken monthly or quarterly, or Norplant, which is done every five years. Also, male and female condoms are available.

Health Social Services at the Princess Margaret Hospital is a comprehensive network of psychosocial health care, providing physical, psychological, social care and support for the recovery and rehabilitation of patients and their families. This is accomplished through education, intervention, advocacy, community alliances and patients' self-efficacy. Medical social services at Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) is provided through the Health Social Services Division at PMH in partnership with the Public Hospital Authority (PHA).

Health Social Services at Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre (SRC) is a comprehensive network of mental/psychosocial health care, providing psychological, social care and support for the recovery and rehabilitation of patients and their families. This is accomplished through education, intervention, advocacy, community alliances and patients' self-efficacy. Psychiatric social services at Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre (SRC) and Community Counselling and Assessment Centre (CCAC), for out-patients, work with the Public Hospital Authority (PHA).

11.3 Undertaken gender-specific public awareness/health promotion campaigns

During 2014 – 2016, **The Breast Feeding and Lactation Management Campaign** and classes enable mothers to practice breastfeeding exclusively for six months through health education and promotion efforts. This series of activities involve nurses that provide classes and counselling at Community Health Clinics where antenatal clients are seen. These classes are offered to first-time mothers and counselled on an individual basis.

The Bahamas, in collaboration with the IDB, prepared a **'National Development Plan – Vision 2040 (NDP)'** that aligns health goals and strategies with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Some components of the NDP are in draft format. In preparation for this development plan, the Ministry of Health initiated a **National Health Services Strategic Plan for 2010 – 2020** that focuses on inter-sectoral actions, provision of people-centred health services, improved use of information for decision making, strengthened workforce, optimal use of technological and material resources, improved leadership and governance and sustainability. (World Health Organization. 2019. Country Cooperation Strategy at a glance).

In 2018, the implementation of the Caribbean Development Bank grant project to strengthen civil society organizations' contribution to **Childhood Obesity Prevention** continued with a capacity building workshop. The workshop was hosted by the Cancer Society of The Bahamas which included volunteers; representatives from the Ministry of Health and Nutrition Department, physicians, nurses and teachers, lecturers, medical students, and physical fitness instructors. The discussions focused on issues relating to childhood prevention and the development of a draft Action Plan targeting advocacy for a **national policy to ban sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) in and around schools**. The Ministry of Health already produced a draft SSB Policy Brief, which will facilitate the development and implementation of the CSOB's advocacy strategies. (The Cancer Society of The Bahamas website.2019)

12. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls?

- ✓ **Taken measures to increase girls' access to, retention in and completion of education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development programmes**
 - Strengthened educational curricula to increase gender-responsiveness and eliminate bias, at all levels of education
 - Provided gender equality and human rights training for teachers and other education professionals
- ✓ **Promoted safe, harassment-free and inclusive educational environments for women and girls**
- ✓ **Increased access to skills and training in new and emerging fields, especially STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and digital fluency and literacy**
- ✓ **Ensured access to safe water and sanitation services and facilitated menstrual hygiene management especially in schools and other education/training settings**
- ✓ **Strengthened measures to prevent adolescent pregnancies and to enable adolescent girls to continue their education in the case of pregnancy and/or motherhood**
- Other

12.1 Taken measures to increase girls' access to, retention in and completion of education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development programmes

The Bahamas is satisfied that **access to Education and Literacy Rates** of women and girls remain commendable. The implementation of a **technical and vocational education and training (TVET)** body, created by the National Training Agency Act of 2013 was a significant accomplishment.

From 2012 to 2015, the Government awarded a total of 2,319 scholarships to Bahamian students with 1,521 recipients being female, forming 65.6% of the total awardees (para. 82 of the State party's CEDAW report).

In 2016, the Education Act was revised, with technical support secured from the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture. The delivery of Education takes place within the legislative framework of the Education Act. The strengthening of policies related to student learning outcomes and teacher quality is the focus in this iteration. Curriculum Reform is taking place simultaneously. It is anticipated that the rigour and relevance of the curriculum, as it is being reformed, will better address equity. Students can access technical and vocational programmes in public schools throughout The Bahamas. The following table shows the programmes available in these schools and accessed by students throughout The Bahamas.

In 2017, with respect to accelerating participation for women in traditionally male-dominated sectors of employment, The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI), in partnership

with the Ministries of Education and Youth, Sports and Culture conducted Workforce Readiness Programmes in basic plumbing, basic electrical, painting and drywalling. Females participated in all of the programmes and several cohorts of female students have graduated.

TVET Program	Subject Total Enrollment	Male Enrollment	Female Enrollment	% Female Enrollment
Accommodation	62	19	43	69
Auto CAD	111	108	3	3
Auto Body	94	93	1	1
Auto Mechanics	262	250	12	5
Barbering	45	44	1	2
Book Keeping & Accounts	625	239	386	62
Carpentry & Joinery Woodwork	762	723	39	5
Clothing Construction	737	222	515	70
Cosmetology	389	54	335	86
Commercial Art Computer Assisted Drawing	135	131	4	3
Commerce	577	203	374	65
Computer Studies	1929	1143	786	41
Craft	255	133	122	48
Economics	267	96	171	64
Electrical Installation	435	417	18	4
Entrepreneur Studies	221	101	120	54
Family & Consumer Science	356	134	22	62
Food & Nutrition	1048	441	607	58
Food Preparation	62	20	42	68
Graphical Communications	743	683	60	8
Home Economics	899	293	606	67
Keyboarding	454	164	290	64
Office Procedures	569	216	353	62
Technical Drawing	723	566	157	22
Tourism & Hospitality Studies	330	119	211	64
Typewriting	98	53	45	46
Welding	37	30	7	19
Total TVET Enrolment	12,237	6,697	5,540	45.3

Table No. 16 - Technical and vocation education training program — 2017

Source: 2017 National Education Census

In 2017, The National Training Agency was reconstituted and the **leadership team and Board of Directors comprised of 50% women**, with a female appointed as chair. In addition to the

National Training Agency, a statutory advisory body has been constituted for Technical and Vocational Education at the postsecondary level.

During 2014- 2019, the **Zonta Workforce Readiness Programme** – provided training skills and educational empowerment to hundreds of young women. In 2017, thirty unemployed young women were empowered and equipped for the workforce after completing the Zonta Club’s Workforce Readiness Training Program. The women graduated from the three-week program, during a special ceremony at Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI). Five of them were awarded scholarships to further their education at BTVI. The program, now in its fifth year, is a public/private initiative **sponsored by The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute and the Zonta Club of New Providence** whose mission is to focus on the upliftment and empowerment of women through service. It comprises a soft-skills component which includes character traits, interpersonal and communication skills, character traits, attitudes and career attributes.

During The period under review, **Urban Renewal Commission** along with corporate sponsors, including Atlantic College and various churches, successfully conducted the **General Equivalency Diploma (GED)** where hundreds of adults from inner-city communities in New Providence were recognized for completing the (GED), a series of tests designed to measure proficiency which allows students to earn their high school equivalency credentials. This program ensured that persons were equipped to increase their quality of life, especially as it pertains to economic stability.

Data from the Department of Statistics show that men dominated most industrial job categories while women dominated in Hotels and Restaurants; Financing, Insurance, Real Estate & Other Business; and Community, Social & Personal Services. Men dominated in Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry & Fisheries; Mining, Quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water; Construction and Transport, Storage & Communication.

Table 17 Employed Persons by Sex and Industrial Group November 2015 – All Bahamas

<i>Industrial Group</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Women</i>		<i>Men</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry & Fisheries	3,010	2	145	0	2,865	3
Mining, Quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water	2,850	2	640	1	2,210	2
Manufacturing	6,960	4	2,540	3	4,420	5
Construction	18,250	10	1,080	1	17,170	18
Wholesale & Retail	24,900	14	11,530	13	13,370	14
Hotels & Restaurants	33,095	18	20,000	11	13,095	14
<i>Industrial Group</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Women</i>		<i>Men</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Transport, Storage & Communication	12,905	7	4,690	5	8,215	9
Financing, Insurance, Real Estate & Other Business	12,355	7	7,790	45	4,565	5
Community, Social & Personal Services	68,150	37	40,660	45	27,490	29
Not Stated	1,440	1	840	1	600	1
Total	183,915	100	89,915	100	94,000	100

Source: Department of Statistics

12.2 Increased access to skills and training in new and emerging fields, especially STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and digital fluency and literacy

The **Technical Cadet Corp Programme (TCCP)** is a three-year programme facilitated by the Government in which students are offered technical and vocational hands-on experience in high school, beginning from the tenth grade. All of the students have an opportunity to be exposed to various technical subjects to assist them in acquiring the necessary skills, behaviours, attitudes and discipline to succeed in a technologically advanced society. These agencies included Bahamas Telecommunications Company (BTC), Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC), Water and Sewage Corporation (WSC) and the Ministry of Education. Although the TCCP has been in existence for 28 years, the statistical review over a four-year period displays a clear disparity among the enrolled students in the programme. There is a need for the further advancement of female participation in this programme in order to reduce the gender gap.

In 2019, the fourth cohort of students received their Associate Degrees as the **Bahamas Agriculture & Marine Science Institute (BAMSI)**, and of the eleven, four graduated with an Associate Degree in Marine Science, three with an Associate Degree in Agriculture, two with an Associate Degree in Aquaculture and two in the area of environmental science. BAMSI plans to expand its degree offerings in September 2019, to improve the Institute's data collection, food security and research responsibility to Bahamian farmers throughout the country. Of the 11 graduates, 7 were males and 4 females. Valedictorian for BAMSI's Class of 2019 was Alexandria Sinclair, and Ventoi Bethune received the "Spirit of BAMSI" award.

In July 2019, The **Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute (BAMSI)** stands as one of the biggest supporters of the Bahamian farmer. The wealth of initiatives the Institute brings to the national table, including the tertiary level academic programmes that are in place to ensure future Bahamian farmers have both a theoretical and practical grounding in agriculture, with an emphasis on best practices is valuable. Full and partial scholarships are available to applicants, and upon completion of their studies, graduates are likely to find employment with several job opportunities in public and private spheres. BAMSI was founded to: help build a secure food nation; advance the level of education and training amongst industry participants and stakeholders; and to implement sustainable measures that support the overall health of the environment, industry, economy and citizenry. The current state of food security in the Bahamas is that The Bahamas imports approximately one billion dollars' worth of food. BAMSI contributes to women in the communities of Andros Island, via its 'Give Back' Initiative, which provides assistance to the most vulnerable in the community by partnering with various schools, churches and organizations, such as the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, The Bahamas Feeding Network, Unity House and the Children's Emergency Hostel. (BahamasNews.Hamilton.2019)

12.3 Strengthened measures to prevent adolescent pregnancies and to enable adolescent girls to continue their education in the case of pregnancy and/or motherhood

The Bahamas and The PACE Foundation are committed to providing teen mothers with a holistic, quality education that develops their numeracy, literacy, technological, social, and parenting skills. The goal is that all teen mothers can obtain the highest stage of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (which is self-actualization). PACE provides psychological and emotional support, entrepreneurial skills, character-building initiatives, and social competencies. The PACE Programme's academic curriculum is comprised of nine Bahamas Junior Certificates and Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education national subjects, namely: Mathematics, English Language, Civics, Religious Knowledge, Computer Studies, Home Economics, Family Life, Health Education, and Craft. The programme is supported by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Services.

PACE entrepreneurial ventures - Teen mothers are taught various technical skills that can equip them to generate revenue to assist themselves and their newborns potentially. Teen mothers are taught the art of jewellery making, crocheting, hair braiding, and food preparation. During the summer months, some of the teen mothers are afforded **job placement opportunities within**

private and corporate businesses to gain training and experience for entry-level positions. To develop social skills and to cultivate community awareness, civic organizations regularly visit PACE to facilitate **professional development initiatives**. The Foundation often partners with various civic organizations, such as the Zonta Club of Nassau, to organize seminars that focus on the skills needed to operate and sustain businesses.

Once teen mothers have completed the PACE Programme, most are re-enrolled into public school. It is customary for students to be placed in a school that is different from the one in which they were enrolled before becoming pregnant. Nevertheless, teen mothers who return to the regular school environment, are encouraged to attend monthly follow-up meetings at PACE so that they can reflect on challenges faced and obtain support if needed. Teen mothers are provided **health education classes** that focus on pre and post-natal care, family planning options, women's health issues, and diet and nutrition. They are exposed to Health and Safety Training & Education that can potentially save lives and protect their environment. To assist teen mothers who are faced with economic hardships, the **PACE Foundation incurred the cost of Child Care and daycare**. This venture increased the number of teen mothers who attended the PACE Programme regularly. Therefore, the PACE Foundation actively and diligently seeks to partner with local nurseries and preschools to offer free or reduced rates for childcare for teen mothers. Additionally, the **PACE Foundation facilitates motivational seminars for teen mothers** throughout the academic year. (PACE Website.2019)

Teen Life Skills Services Organization is an NGO that is specifically geared towards young parents in the Bahamian community. TLS assists young parents between the ages of 14 to 25, with baby items and donations, if they are facing hardship or fighting for a Fresh Start. Felicia Carey is the Founder and CEO of Teen Life Skills Services (TLS), and she is a former PACE student who has committed her talents, skills and resources to provide shelter for teen mothers and bountiful resources to teen mothers via giveaway fairs and seminars. TLS received the Ministry of Youth 2019 Award for the powerful work been done for teen parents. TLS is a partner with the Department of Gender and Family Affairs.

Parchomas (Parents Choice Bahamas), founded in 2014 by Jasadette Hepburn, is a non-profit organization which **hosts training seminars for pregnant families** and aspires to equip mothers with safe and realistic skills for their motherhood experience. Parchomas informs and prepares parents about the legal, social, biological, spiritual and psychological aspects of parenting. Fun, creative and educational expos are used to engage participants. Parchomas is a partner with the Department of Gender and Family Affairs.

13. In the last five years, which forums of violence against women and girls, and in which specific contexts or settings, have you prioritized for action?

- ✓ **Intimate partner violence/domestic violence, including sexual violence and marital rape**
 - Sexual harassment and violence in public places, educational settings and in employment
- ✓ **Violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (e.g. cyberviolence, online stalking)**
- ✓ **Femicide/Feminicide**
- ✓ **Violence against women in politics**
- ✓ **Child, early and forced marriages**
- ✓ **Female genital mutilation**
- ✓ **Other harmful practices**
- ✓ **Trafficking in women and girls**
- ✓ **Other**

13.1 Intimate partner violence/domestic violence, including sexual violence and marital rape Spousal Sexual Abuse (Draft Amendment to the Sexual Offences Act)

The Government of The Bahamas maintains its commitment to the elimination and eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls and against any individual. The country is aware of

the concerns of human rights treaty bodies with respect to the criminalization of marital rape. As a result, the Office of the Attorney General has drafted an amendment to the Sexual Offences Act, which provides for the offence of 'spousal sexual abuse'. The proposed offence is not labelled as "marital rape", however, it incorporates all of the elements of the offence of rape. The draft Bill follows the tenor of the pre-existing Law which treats instances of marital rape where there are ongoing divorce proceedings, or a decree of judicial separation, or a separation agreement, as being offences of "spousal sexual abuse". Marital rape in the context of a subsisting marriage will now be criminalized as "spousal sexual abuse". The draft Bill has been circulated to religious leaders and civil society advocates for comments in advance of formal publication by way of tabling the same in Parliament. The responses received from the religious community and civil society have been equally supportive and antagonistic of the proposed amendment to the Law.

13.2 Violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (e.g. cyberviolence, online stalking)

In 2017, The Department of Gender and Family Affairs held the school initiative, "**Ending Sexual Harassment and Bullying**", in Grand Bahama where the department conducted training for 300 seventh graders to **eliminate sexual harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, and building safe relationships**. Additionally, similar programs were conducted in Long Island, Cat Island, Crooked Island, Acklins and Inagua.

In 2017, The Bahamas conducted various **Anti-violence Awareness Raising Campaigns** within schools in an attempt to reduce violence against women and girls usually done via technology. Awareness Raising Campaigns by the Police include School Summits. They are being conducted to ensure that young boys and girls are informed about ways to respond to acts of violence toward them. The targeted age groups are students at the primary school level, from grades 3 to 6.

By May 2018, a total of 875 students had participated. From grades 7 to 9, 750 students have participated. A total of 600 students from grades 10 to 12 participated in the programme. The topics covered at these sessions were: (1) Cyberbullying, (2) Gangs, and (3) Sexual Exploitation. The sessions are conducted by teams of officers from the Central Detective Unit and uniform branches. During 2014 to 2019, trained thousands of students were taught similar skills during the annual **Royal Bahamas Police Force Summer Summit Programmes**.

13.3 Trafficking in women and girls

From 2013 to 2015, the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** conducted a 36-month training to build the capacity of both the TIP Committee and Task Force. In 2014, representatives of the Committee and Task Force participated in specialized training in Kingston, Jamaica on a National Action Plan to prevent TIP.

The **Trafficking in Persons Task Force**, which was established in March 2012, is an operational body whose responsibility includes the identification of a victim or potential victim and prosecution of an alleged trafficker. The Bahamas is pleased to report that the **TIP Committee received Tier One ranking status by the United States of America** for five consecutive years (2015 – 2019).

The **TIP Committee has continuous partnerships with NGOs** including The Bahamas Red Cross, The Salvation Army, and The Bahamas Crisis Centre, which operates a "hotline" for victims of abuse, including victims of trafficking in persons. The Links Safe House, a residential facility which provides shelter for victims of domestic violence, is also open to victims or potential victims of trafficking in persons. The Department of Social Services is the agency mandated by the Trafficking in Persons Act and Protocol to provide care for all victims and organizes food, clothing, shelter, medical assistance and legal advisement. Victims and potential victims are removed from their environment in which they are being trafficked and taken to a safe location. **The Victim Support Unit of the Royal Bahamas Police Force's Central Detective Unit** assists in this exercise. When a victim is identified, law enforcement must provide reasonable protection to the victim to prevent their recapture by the traffickers and their associates. If the victim resides in The

Bahamas, law enforcement must secure the victim and the victim's family from threats, intimidation or retaliation by the traffickers and their associates.

During 2014 – 2019, because of the TIP Act, the TIP Committee and Task Force produced and disseminated a number of documents, including: "A Guide to Anti-trafficking in Persons" which provides the protocols for relevant agencies. The **National Antitrafficking Strategy and Action Plan**, is a results-based plan with specific strategies and timelines.

Victims of Trafficking in Persons and their Accompanying Dependent Children", by listing the agencies responsible and the nature of assistance available to victims.

In 2014, the TIP Committee and Task Force launched an **Education and Awareness Raising Programme** to sensitize the population on TIP matters. Information sharing initiatives include (i) TIP brochure distribution, (ii) PSAs, (iii) Facebook presence, (iv) school visitations, (v) door-to-door visitations in local and vulnerable communities and (vi) sensitization seminars.

In March 2016, The Bahamas TIP Committee and Task Force held a **video conference with Haitian and USA officials** covering these matters to discuss best practices. Concerning international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination, the TIP Committee and Task Force collaborate with various foreign consuls to mitigate TIP. A special forum was held on March 2016 with the **Filipino Association** to raise awareness on initiatives to fight TIP.

In May 2016, the **USA conducted training on victim identification for the TIP Committee** and Task Force, including first responders from the major Family Islands. Additionally, both the Police and Defence Forces have ongoing trainings on TIP for recruits. Members of the TIP Task Force have participated in a series of **international training in Florida, U. SA, ILEA in Rosewell, New Mexico and El Salvador**. There is also an ongoing international campaign to strengthen ties with **South American and Caribbean Countries** to improve anti-trafficking strategies and victim care (the majority of whom in sex trafficking cases are women).

In 2017, The TIP Inter-Ministry Committee and the TIP Task Force co-sponsored various awareness-raising activities, including:

- a. Training to public servants, hotline workers, safe house workers, social workers, nurses, labour, police, immigration, custom and defence force officers, Civil Society, faith-based workers, NGO's since 2014. The training is ongoing.
- b. School Awareness Programme in which the Committee spoke with more than 3,500 students and distributed more than 4,000 TIP Brochures;
- c. Radio talk shows, including: 'Joining Hands for Health' and 'Let's Talk Health';
- d. The publishing of an Anti-Trafficking Proclamation in commemoration of Anti World Trafficking Day;
- e. Distributions of Trafficking Brochures and Book Marks in excess of 15,000.

On 30 July, 2018, The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Commission held a training on the day millions observed **International World Day Against Trafficking in Persons**, which serves to bring attention to the urgent need of raising awareness to the situation of persons who are victims of trafficking and to the promotion and protection of their human rights. It is also a day to concentrate on the importance of working to combat trafficking in persons. Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, where innocent men, women, and children are being exploited.

For the period, April 2017 to March 2018, twelve (12) cases of Trafficking in Persons were investigated by the Police and ten (10) cases were sexual, and two (2) were labour trafficking cases. After interviewing the labour group of persons, the Police, in consultation with the Office of The Attorney General and the Department of Labour determined that these persons were not victims of trafficking.

14. What actions has your country prioritized in the last five years to address violence against women and girls?

- Introduced or strengthened violence against women laws, and their enforcement and implementation
- ✓ **Introduced, updated or expanded national action plans on ending violence against women and girls**
- ✓ **Introduced or strengthened measures to increase women's access to justice (e.g. establishment of specialist courts, training for the judiciary and police, protection orders, redress and reparations, including for femicide cases)**
- ✓ **Introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence (e.g. shelters, help lines, dedicated health services, legal, justice service, counselling, housing)**
- Introduced or strengthened strategies to prevent violence against women and girls (e.g. in the education sector, in the media, community mobilization, work with men and boys)
- Monitoring and evaluation of impact, including evidence generation and data collection, including regarding particular groups of women and girls
- Introduced or strengthened measures for improving the understanding of causes and consequences of violence against women among those responsible for implementing measures on ending violence against women and girls
- Other

14.1 Introduced, updated or expanded national action plans on ending violence against women and girls

The Bahamas **updated and expanded the national action plans on ending violence against women and girls** to include the Gender-Based Violence Action Plan, National Development Plan indicators, the SDG and CARICOM indicators, UN Spotlight on Violence, Curricula workbooks in conjunction with Ministry of Education and PAHO and WHO programmes and training.

The Bahamas partnered with the **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)** to participate in the **“Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action for Ending Violence against Women Project”**. UN Women provided funding for a state accountability project to address gender-based violence in The Bahamas. In February 2014, consultants were contracted for the National Assessment of Actions on Ending Violence Against Women and conduct workshops for men and boys. The objective of the program was to create strategies to increase state actor competency, strengthen accountability, promote social and cultural change through youth-led, gender-responsive social communications.

Capacity building for new staff of DGFA was critical for formulating action plans and implementing existing policies to reduce Violence Against Women. Some of the recent regional and international training staff attended include:

- a) Barbados - 3 to 5 October 2018 UN Women and Caribbean Development Bank
- b) Barbados - 11 to 18 November 2018 CARICOM National Roadmap
- c) Washington D.C. - 3 to 5 December 2018 - OAS CIM and MESECVI - Femicide
- d) Buenos Aires Argentina - 10 to 12 December 2018 - UN Women
- e) Trinidad and Tobago - 28 to 30 January 2019 CARICOM – VAW Training
- f) New York - 10 to 22 March 2019 Commonwealth Secretariat at Commission on Status of Women (CSW) Sexual Harassment
- g) St. Lucia - 11 to 12 April 2019 – Discriminatory Laws
- h) Jamaica - 11 to 12 April 2019 - IDB Masculinities and Male Perpetrators

14.2 Introduced or strengthened measures to increase women's access to justice (e.g. establishment of specialist courts, training for the judiciary and police, protection orders, redress and reparations, including for femicide cases)

Victims of sexual assault are treated seriously, professionally and with confidentiality. Proper procedures are strictly adhered to according to law Chapter 99A **Domestic Violence [Protection Order] Sections 27, 28.**

The Royal Bahamas Police Force employs special procedures for dealing with children who are sexually abused. Interviews must always be conducted in the presence of a parent, guardian or social worker. School Psychologists are also used when school-aged children are involved. If a child is under 12 years old, the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Unit is contacted. SCAN operates out of the Princess Margaret Hospital (the nation's principal health facility). SCAN Programme, provides a co-ordinated approach for the management and support of children suspected to have been abused by providing access to complete healthcare. The SCAN Programme was initially established in response to meet the needs of children and families who experience the crisis of abuse. The programme is evidence-based and has since evolved to become the **Ministry of Health's National Strategic Programme for both child abuse prevention and management.** It is made up of a team of dedicated and committed healthcare professionals who work closely with children and adolescents and their families. SCAN provides a link between clinics, schools and police agencies that advocate for children including Social Service/Child Protective Services, Police/CID Forensics, Health Social Services, Crisis Centre, Adolescent Health Centre, Accident and Emergency, Children's Ward, Ministry of Education, Psychological Services, Office of the Attorney General and several non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The SCAN Team also offers care, support and specific skills to help prevent future abuse to children and adolescents who may have been abused.

If the person is over 12 years, the Sexual Assault Follow-up Evaluation (SAFE) Unit is contacted and provides counselling and aftercare. The area used for such proceedings is away from the general public and suitably furnished. Additionally, a matter that is over 72 hours is classified as cold, and under that time frame is considered fresh. In the case of the latter, a sexual assault evidence collection kit is used. Sexual assault service programs can work together to create new paradigms for evaluation that will benefit survivors and enhance our practice.

The Children and Family Services Unit of the Department of Social Services is considered the primary section with direct intervention in child maltreatment matters inclusive of sexual abuse.

In July 2017, adequate court coverage was provided to the Domestic Court. Within the **Domestic Violence and Counselling Unit**, the staff was exposed to ongoing local and international training and also partnered with the Gender Affairs Division during **Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October.** Posters were produced that contained information on where to receive help and distributed to social partners for display in their agencies.

The Family Services Unit of DOSS provides services to the **Domestic and Supreme Courts** by furnishing reports which assist in decision-making in the best interest of children and families.

Whenever a domestic violence complaint is brought to the attention of the Police if it is a minor offence such as common assault, threats of harm or causing harm, a local police station is expected to address it according to Force Policies and the laws that are guiding principles for the Police. **The Central Detective Unit handles a matter that is a major offence.** The officers in this Unit have received sensitivity training and have facilities that are conducive to good outcomes. A doctor has to write a report determining whether the injury is life-threatening – degree of harm would determine the category in which the case falls.

By May 2018, eighty (80) police officers benefitted from training sponsored by the Pan American Development Fund. The training targeted frontline officers on **How to manage victims of gender-based violence.** The topics covered during this training were: "All Forms of Abuse"; "Gender-Based Violence"; "Sexual Offence and Domestic Violence Policy"; "Steps to take to obtain a Protection Order"; and "Sex Kits procedures for Police Officers and Medical Staff".

In June 2018, a two-day **Workshop titled “Educating Men and Women to Stop Domestic Violence”** was held for Police Officers. The objective of the Workshop was to raise awareness and discuss good practices when addressing matters of domestic violence.

14.3 Introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence (e.g. shelters, help lines, dedicated health services, legal, justice service, counselling, housing)

The Bahamas provides **safe houses and shelters** for persons in need, especially victims of gender-based violence. The Ministry of Social Services provides sponsorship of privately-owned safe houses designed to provide temporary shelter and counselling assistance to victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. The Ministry currently partners with many organizations including Links Incorporated, Bahamas Red Cross, Bahamas Crisis Centre, Salvation Army, Great Commission Ministries, and the Roman Catholic Church Men’s Programme to provide services and protection for individuals.

The Department of Rehabilitative Welfare Services provides **weekly seminars and counselling sessions for families, victims, ex-offenders and in confined facilities**, to prisoners serving time or sentenced to The Bahamas Department of Corrections.

The Government of The Bahamas provides **annual grants to homes and residential care facilities** designed as a shelter for individuals subject to threats of violence, actual violence, neglect or abuse inclusive of women, men, girls and boys, in addition to persons who have a disability. The **Residential Care Establishments Licensing Authority** is responsible for the registration and licensing of all residential care facilities within the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. The goal is to elevate the level of care and encourage the development of professionally managed residential care facilities in safe and healthy environments for individuals requiring physical and social protection, and rehabilitation. The goal will be achieved, through inspections and regular visitations, to regulate all residential care facilities; encourage continued growth and development of staff; improvements and maintenance of physical structures, and quality care and rehabilitation of each resident.

Table 18 - SHELTER PROVIDED 2016 – SEPTEMBER 2018

Names of shelters omitted for safety and security reasons. MOSSUD Budget Contribution.Parliament.2017

NAME OF SHELTER	# CLIENTS MEN	# CLIENTS WOMEN	TOTAL # CLIENTS	% WOMEN	TOTAL COST
A	6	34	40	85%	\$ 52,332.81
B	61	142	203	70%	\$170,431.00
C	4	18	22	81%	\$ 23,710.00
D	3	6	9	67%	\$ 47,818.00
E	4	39	43	91%	\$ 97,178.29
F	0	2	2	100%	\$ 9761.50
G	0	1	1	100%	
H	0	1	1	100%	
I	0	1	1	100%	
J	1	0	1	0	\$ 448.00
K	1	0	1	0	\$ 2100.00
Total	80	244	324	Avg. 75%	\$403,779.60

The **Department of Social Services** also provides counselling services in community Urban Centres, in addition to **facilitating anger management and social upliftment programmes**. These programmes benefit at-risk youth, those disadvantaged and marginalized by virtue of their environment and economic conditions, many of whom are women and girls.

In 2017, The Government of The Bahamas commissioned the establishment of urban community centres on every major island; 23 of the 25 are functioning and operational. These centres are designed under a **one-stop inter-agency model** to provide essential services of health, environment, social assistance and development to ensure a prompt and effective response to the needs of vulnerable individuals in urban communities and rural spaces.

In partnership with the Ministry of National Security, the **Royal Bahamas Police Force has a Family Liaison Unit** which provides ongoing comprehensive support services to victims of traumatic experiences. The police work with The Bahamas Crisis Centre in providing support services, which include therapeutic intervention and counselling.

The **Child Care Facilities Unit** seeks to ensure that children who are taken into the care of the Minister as a result of being abused, abandoned, neglected or orphaned are cared for in a safe, secure, and nurturing environment. There are **five (5) residential childcare facilities**; in New Providence; The Children's Emergency Hostel, The Ranfurly Home for Children, The Nazareth Centre, The Elizabeth Estates Children's Home, The Bilney Lane Children's Home, The Old Bight Mission Home, in Cat Island, the Grand Bahama Children's Home along with the Columbus Houses for Boys and Girls in Grand Bahama, for a **total of nine (9) Homes**. The Government of The Bahamas provides annual subventions to each facility to assist with their operation. Additionally, this Division works in partnership with the Department of Immigration and the Royal Bahamas Defence Force in the operation of the Safe House for detained mothers with children whose immigration status is dubious.

Placement Unit is responsible for screening and monitoring all adoptions and foster placements for displaced children. Additionally, **Foster Care Allowance (FCA)** is provided to families via this Unit. The Social Workers of the DOSS monitor the foster children until they attain the age of eighteen (18) years.

The Child Protection Unit provides the necessary intervention to protect all children of The Bahamas from harm whether it is in the form of neglect, emotional, verbal, physical or sexual abuse, incest, or abandonment. All Units in Children and Family Services operate according to the Child Protection Act and the Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC).

The National Child Protection Council was established to develop Programmes and Policies to ensure the protection of all children while the Committee for Families and Children monitors the implementation of policies relative to the CRC.

The National Abuse Hotline - is managed from the Child Protection Unit and manned by professionally trained Social Workers on a twenty-four (24) hour basis, the numbers are 242-322-2763 or 242-422-2763 in New Providence, and 242-471-8036 North Abaco and 242-577-0346 Central and South Abaco.

The continuation of **conflict resolution workshops** that focus on decreasing, violence in our country, and the recidivism rate of our juvenile and adult offenders, has been a significant focus of the **Department of Rehabilitative Welfare Services (DRWS)**. Additional topics that emphasize decreasing school drop-outs and bullying are being addressed through the School Welfare Division and the partnership of the inter agencies of the DRWS and the **National Parenting Program**, which oversee the spectrum of students from primary to tertiary levels. The Department is also in partnership with the Ministry of National Security, in the implementation of programs through the **Citizen Security for Justice Program**.

National Public Media Awareness Campaign has been a critical priority focus of the DGFA for the past five years. Gender specialist Officers from the DGFA have made more than 100 media appearances, presentations and publications to increase the public's knowledge about the DGFA services and resources for the rights, protection and violence against women and girls.

15. What strategies has your country used in the last five years to prevent violence against women and girls?

- ✓ Public awareness raising and changing of attitudes and behaviours
- ✓ Work in primary and secondary education, including comprehensive sexuality education
- ✓ Grassroots and community-level mobilization
 - Shifting the representation of women and girls in the media
- ✓ Working with men and boys
- ✓ Perpetrator programmes

15.1 Public awareness raising and changing of attitudes and behaviours

In August 2012, The Bahamas appointed a **Constitutional Commission** to conduct a comprehensive review of the Constitution of The Bahamas and to recommend changes to the Constitution in advance of the country's fortieth (40th) anniversary of Independence. As of June 2016, the Educational Team of the Commission made approximately two hundred and eighteen (218) presentations throughout the country to various government agencies, NGOs, religious organizations, public and private groups. During National Women's Week 2014, the Bureau, in conjunction with the Constitutional Commission's Education arm, held sessions on the proposed amendments to the Constitution on three (3) of the most populated Family Islands.

In 2014, The Department of Social Services, through the establishment of its **Domestic Violence and Counselling Unit (DVCU) in 2014**, placed great value on the importance of helping victims of violence and their children through direct intervention and services. The Unit has not embarked on an official campaign to raise public awareness about violence against women, however, in November 2014, the Unit participated in a public exhibition hosted by the Department on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, and used the opportunity to raise awareness about intimate partner violence in the community. Representatives from the Unit appear on radio and television shows to promote the Unit's services and to make the public more aware of the laws to protect women from violence.

From 2014 to 2019, The **Department of Rehabilitative Services** developed and provided mechanisms to aid the offenders' inappropriate behaviours and assist them in functioning as law-abiding citizens, thus contributing to the protection of society. Probation Officers and Social Workers are attached to The Bahamas Department of Corrections as well as the Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls and the Simpson Penn Centre for Boys. They **assist offenders with rehabilitative counselling**, discharge planning and aftercare programs in addition to the preparation of Social History Reports, Court Reports, Clemency and Aftercare Reports.

In 2017, thirty-one students graduated from the **National Parenting Programme** hosted by the Department of Rehabilitative Welfare Services, a division of the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development. Its purpose is to prepare persons for parenting roles and responsibilities and to train them to have "stronger" families. Parents receive information to equip them to be better armed to raise their children in a healthy, happy and wholesome environment. While both instinct and experience play a part in child-rearing, being a parent is a hard job, and it is now widely accepted that like other life skills, some skills must be acquired in order for one to effectively fulfil the role of parents. The Parenting Programme was conducted every year for the past five years to prepare and train parents for their parental roles and responsibilities. The goals and objectives of the programme are: to equip parents, guardians/caregivers with the necessary skills and training in order to rear healthy, well-adjusted children; to identify other providers of parent education programmes and develop formal linkages to improve programme delivery; to provide the necessary training, facilities and mechanisms to deliver parenting classes and other interventions to achieve the desired results; to create support network for parents by offering encouragement, information and referrals and to review legislation and policies affecting children and families. (Bahamas Government Website. 2019)

The DGFA partners with NGO organizations, to recognize many national and international observances that raise public awareness to prevent violence against women and girls. These celebrations are organized and funded by DGFA on an annual basis. Some of these initiatives and observances include:

National and International Observances / Meetings:

- a) NGO Forums (monthly)
- b) National Advisory Council Meetings (monthly)
- c) International Women's Day (March 8th)
- d) International Girls in ICT (April)
- e) International Day of Families (May 15th)
- f) International Widow's Day (June 23rd)
- g) International Older Person's Day (October 1st)
- h) International Day of the Girl Child (October 11th)
- i) National Women's Week (November)
- j) International Men's Day (November 19th)
- k) International Day to End Violence Against Women (November 25th)
- l) Disability Week in (December 3-9th)

15.2 Grassroots and community-level mobilization

During 2014 -2019, The Bahamas has celebrated National Women's Week (NWW). In 2017, during NWW, an awareness-raising session on The Bahamas' Sixth Periodic Report to the CEDAW was held. Target: 80/Deliverables: 60, A Reception to honour six leading Bahamian women for their commitments to nation-building (Janet Bostwick, Dame Joan Sawyer, Mrs. Cynthia Pratt, Mrs. Frances Ledee, Ms. Italia Johnson, and Mrs. Zelma Dean). Target:150/Deliverables: 100.

On 8 March 2018, International Women's Day (IWD) forum was held highlighting rural women and girls. Target:120/ Deliverables: 200. A video documentary featuring female farmers and entrepreneurs from five (5) Family Islands was produced and aired on ZNS.

In November 2018, The National Women's Advisory Council (NWAC) planned and executed an Economic Empowerment Expo for over 50 Non-Governmental Organisations for 200 persons. Monthly meetings provide a forum for the DGFA and key strategic partners and stakeholders to collaborate and co-create a National Awareness Roadmap toward the accomplishment of draft legislation that protects the rights of women and girls. NWAC also works with DGFA to plan, execute and monitor training workshops.

During 2014 – 2019, The "Zonta Says no to Violence against Women" campaign was held each year, as Zontians all over the world mark 16 days of intense activism from 25 November (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (the United Nations' Human Rights Day). In 2018, members of Zonta Bahamas and the Staff of Department of Gender and Family Affairs took to the communities in the Nassau Street area with large orange ribbons in attempts to "Paint the Town Orange" and raise awareness of the need to end all forms of violence against women. Zontians visited schools, hosted seminars, and appeared on radio and television programs to promote the campaign. They also visited the House of Assembly and the Senate and pinned orange bows on parliamentarians and asked them to share the message in their constituencies. A town meeting was held at the school of nursing, hosted by Natural Empress of Hot 91.7fm, and a successful "Walk in My Shoes" donation drive and rally were held for families. Members of the public brought new or gently used shoes to represent female victims of violence. The shoes are then donated to charitable organisations. Zonta began in The Bahamas in 1982 and is an international service organisation with a mission of advancing the status of women worldwide. Through funding from the Zonta International Foundation, the Zonta International Strategies to End Violence Against Women (ZISVAW) Program has provided more than US\$9.5 million to support projects to prevent and end violence against women and girls in

46 countries. The 16 days to end violence campaign this year was co-sponsored by the United States Embassy and the Department of Gender and Family Affairs. Zonta is a leading NGO which helps DGFA fulfil CEDAW goals.

15.3 Working with men and boys

On 5 December 2017, in observance of the 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women, a community forum '**Barbershop Talk: Men speak on violence against women**' was held.

In January 2019, the 10th European Development Regional Crime and Violence Prevention and Social Development Capacity-Building Train The Trainers Workshop for Persons Working with the victims and perpetrators of Domestic Violence Trinidad. The Gender-Based Violence Expert and Male Program Officer of DGFA attended the workshop and upon returning to The Bahamas they conducted a similar training for the technical staff of The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development. The focus was how to implement the appropriate intervention, planning, execution and termination skills in domestic violence matters.

On Monday, 19 November 2018, The Bahamas celebrated **International Men's Day**, under the national theme "Unity, Equity and Equality – Men in Support of Women". History was made in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, as scores of men joined forces with thousands of men in over 70 countries to celebrate International Men's Day (IMD). The theme celebrated worldwide was the "Positive values men bring to the world, their families and communities". The Urban Renewal Commission within the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development expressed thanks to all the men who attended the march, rally and luncheon forum events which brought powerful and positive male speakers and male role models together. The men in attendance renewed their commitment as "men in support of women" toward a common pursuit of unity, equity and equality toward building stronger families for a better Bahamas. International Men's Day encourages men to teach and train boys and young men about values, character development and responsibilities of being a man. The attendees were most grateful for the session and strategies shared to create a fair and safe society which allows everyone the opportunity to prosper.

During the past five years under review, the Urban Renewal Commission "**Anger Management and At-Risk Boys**" programme was conducted to address all forms of violence from the perspective of training and counselling young male offenders who are mandated by the courts to attend anger management training. Additionally, the **At-Risk Boys Intervention Programme** works with over 1000 boys per year, in government schools and is intended to prevent acts of violence.

During 2014 - 2019, the **Roman Catholic Archdiocese** in The Bahamas sponsored a 26-week **Cognitive Behavioural Programme for male perpetrators**. The programme is geared towards helping abusive men by helping them identify controlling behaviour from the onset and take back their power. During the programme, the participants are taught various skills they can apply to their lives, which begin with changing their way of thinking and learning to take control of their emotions.

16. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?

- Introduced or strengthened legislation and regulatory provisions
- ✓ **Implemented awareness raising initiatives targeting the general public** and young women and men in educational settings
- Worked with technology providers to set and adhere to good business practices
- Other

16.1 Implemented awareness raising initiatives targeting the general public and young women and men in educational settings

In 2017, **A National Gender-Based Violence Awareness Campaign** was launched by the Department of Gender and Family Affairs. with presentations on Sexual Harassment to high

school students in New Providence. In May, 2017, the Department extended the campaign to Grand Bahama.

During the period under review, The Royal Bahamas Police Force has made a strong commitment to informing the public and law enforcement officials about violence against women and girls. The following measures have been taken to make this possible.

- a. Providing comprehensive instruction on domestic violence to every recruit squad that enters the Police Training College.
- b. Engaging in partnership with organizations such as The Bahamas Crisis Centre, PACE (programme for teenage mothers), the College of The Bahamas, and Social Services.
- c. Utilizing the police website to share information and tips on a variety of subjects that could benefit women (see www.royalbahamaspolice.org).
- d. The appointment of two senior female officers to the **National Task Force on Eradicating Gender-Based Violence** in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.
- e. Utilizing the Urban Renewal Centres to interact with community and provide referral services for victims. Utilizing trained officers as trainers in **Resistance and Prevention Programme (RAPP)** the goal is to teach others social crime prevention strategies. A component of the programme addresses domestic violence.
- f. Utilizing the media to share relevant information compiled by the **National Crime Prevention Office** (Police Headquarters).

17. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media?

- Enacted, strengthened and enforced legal reforms to combat discrimination and/or gender bias in the media
- Introduced binding regulation for the media, including for advertising
- Supported the media industry to develop voluntary codes of conduct
- Provided training to media professionals to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse images of women and girls in the media
- Promoted the participation and leadership of women in the media
- Established or strengthened consumer protection services to receive and review complaints about media content or gender-based discrimination/bias in the media
- Other

18. Has your country taken any action in the last five years specifically tailored to address violence against specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination?

✓ **Yes**

The Bahamas aims to improve the state of disadvantaged women who experience unemployment, domestic violence and discrimination, which are exacerbated due to financial constraints and lack of essential resources. Research has found that the forms of violence and discrimination experienced by women is linked to their financial and or survival dependency on others.

During 2014 – 2019, **The Social Safety Net Programmes** in force, provide Food and Financial Assistance to women facing multiple forms of discrimination as a means to mitigate the discrimination. The Financial Assistance Programmes range from Water and Electricity (Utility Bills), Rent Assistance, School Uniforms and Footwear, Medical and Surgical, Travel, Temporary Accommodation, Foster Care and Disability Allowances, Small House Repair and Burial Assistance.

The DOSS previously assisted students with tuition at Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI) however, in September 2018 the government of The Bahamas granted scholarships to all Bahamian students who attend BTVI.

The Bahamas Urban Youth Development Centre (BUYDC), a local NGO has taken measures to assist women and girls in vulnerable situations. BUYDC has targeted young, vulnerable women through a **Community Outreach Intervention Model** in which informative presentations on HIV,

sexual health and risk reduction are provided through social events. Between 2012 and 2015, 180 females participated in the Programme. BUYDC was established in 2010; however, due to a lack of funding, the Programme was discontinued in October 2017. In 2019 the Director of BUYDC requested funding partnership from DGFA and the prospects of partnership is likely.

The Department of Social Services (DOSS) in partnership with the **Department of Immigration (DOI) and the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF)**, provide safeguarding services in separate accommodations to female detainees with children whose immigrant status are unconfirmed. They are housed in a rented private facility that consists of five (5) bedrooms, four (4) and a half bathroom, kitchen, dining room, storage room and laundry facilities. The basic needs of food, shelter, medical attention and compassionate services of the Detainees are provided.

In 2017, a catering company was given the responsibility of preparing meals for the Detention Centre and the Safe House. The Bahamas Red Cross provided hygiene packs and care packages. Whenever the need arose, the DOSS supplemented grocery which was provided by the DOI. The Safe House – is an extension of the Detention Center. It was established to specifically house migrant women and their dependent children (who have been detained because of their immigrant status). Different levels of staff from the various divisions within the DOSS and DRWS are rostered to work three shifts. The staff along with representatives from the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RPDF) and Department of Immigration (DOI) collaboratively monitor and ensure that detainees are safe; and that they are provided with food, toiletries, and medical assistance - pending repatriation.

The **HIV/AIDS Secretariat conducts a Condom Social Marketing Programme**, which falls under the HIV/AIDS Centre Prevention Programme. The Programme targets vulnerable groups, including sex workers.

19. What actions and measures has your country taken in the last five years to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

- Reformed constitution, laws and regulations that promote women's participation in politics, especially at decision-making level, including electoral system reform, adoption of temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets
- ✓ **Implemented capacity building, skills development and other measures**
- ✓ **Encouraged the participation of minority and young women, including through sensitization and mentorship programmes**
- ✓ **Provided opportunities for mentorship, training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, self-assertion, political campaigning**
- Taken measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish violence against women in politics
- ✓ **Collected and analysed data on women's political participation, including in appointed and elected positions**
- Other

19.1 Implemented capacity building, skills development and other measures

In 2014, the first graduating cohort of Bahamian social work students graduated from Barry University with **Master of Social Work (MSW)** degrees. The initial cohort consisting of six students, most of whom were women. The graduates were a much need boost for the cadre of social workers in The Bahamas.

In 2018, members of the **International Black Women's Public Policy Institute (IBWPPI)** hosted its annual International Women's Conference in The Bahamas. The organization's goals to end domestic violence against women through the implementation of strategic plans, and the elimination and eradication of violence against women and girls through collaborations with different countries were presented to conference attendees. The quest to obtain general parity, fairness, equality in employment, and equal participation in leadership spheres, is achievable when women unite to do the things that are right. The aim of the conference was to inspire

involvement in the organization's current initiatives and draw continued focus to its four pillars which are: Human Trafficking, Economic Security, Health and Wellness, and Education. (*Bahamas Government Website. 2019*)

In April 2018, **The Commonwealth Women's Forum** was held in London and focused on the theme: "An Empowered Future for Women and Girls". The Bahamas attended the meeting to find ways to accelerate the advancement of gender equality for sustainable development, prosperity and peace for all women and girls in the Commonwealth.

In October 2018, the Caribbean Development Bank invited the participation of the Department of Gender and Family Affairs in a workshop to review the Gender Equality Policy Operating Standards (GEPOS). The **Gender Equality Training for Gender Mainstreaming was held in Barbados**.

In November 2018, The Bahamas also attended a **Strategic Gender Equality Planning meeting in Barbados** which focused on social protection systems, best practices and challenges to implementing access to social services and infrastructure. The meeting was held 19-20 November, 2018 and was conducted by the UN Women.

In 2019, The Department of Gender and Family Affairs, in partnership with the University of The Bahamas, IDB and CIWIL plans to offer **Cohort 3 of the Women in Leadership Course** to women in New Providence and the Family Islands.

19.2 Provided opportunities for mentorship, training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, self-assertion, political campaigning

The Bahamas has a democratic system of governance. Women who are willing to offer themselves for public service are at liberty to do so; they are equal to their male counterparts. As members of the **Commonwealth Women's Parliamentarians (CWP) Branch** of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, women parliamentarians are expected to promote and provide support for women interested in leadership. The Government partners with women's groups, for example, Women United, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Zonta and Pilot Clubs, that introduces women to leadership skills.

In June 2015, in partial fulfilment of the commitment made by the Bureau in its two-year report to the CEDAW Committee, the Bureau, created a **course entitled "Leadership for Women in Politics"**. The 6-week course was developed in partnership with the College of The Bahamas' Centre for Continuing Education and Extension Services included topics such as (i) Balancing Family and Public Life, (ii) Strategic Campaign Management, (iii) Parliamentary Procedures, (iv) Transformational Leadership, (v) Dynamics of Political Parties in The Bahamas: How Parties Function, and (vi) Public Speaking: Communications & the Media. Course presenters included former Cabinet Ministers, former parliamentarians, as well as senior government officials who encouraged women to consider political leadership roles. Nineteen women from a cross-section of society participated in, and sixteen completed the course. Subsequently, one of the participants was ratified as a candidate by one of the political parties.

In 2018 The Department of Gender and Family Affairs initiated a **political mentorship and leadership conclave**, that provided a forum for women at various stages in politics and government to participate. Over one-hundred forty (140) women from diverse backgrounds and ages attended.

19.3 Collected and analysed data on women's political participation, including in appointed and elected positions

The Bahamas is represented abroad by a cadre of the finest women and men who work in tandem with domestic and international partners to further our Country's foreign policy objectives. We are proud that women continue to constitute a majority of the staff of **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. Women comprise 80% of the Home Service; 67% of the Overseas Service; 90% of serving Deputy Head of Mission and Post are women; and while women for only 27% of our Heads of Mission

and Post, 100% of our career Ambassadors are women. In 2018 there are approximately nine Bahamian women serving in international organisations.

The Bahamas did a **mapping of women in leadership and executive positions and parliamentary** registration stats of women candidates in general elections. Presently, no quota system is in place to increase women participation in parliament. It is envisaged that the Department of Gender and Family Affairs will continue its **Women in Leadership programme** as a means of encouraging women to consider offering themselves for public life. Statistics of Women in Leadership and National Service - Updated statistics on the gender composition of legislative, executive, judicial bodies as well as other areas of leadership are listed. It is evident that there is some participation and representation of women in politics and in public life. A mapping of women percentage in the fields of Judiciary, Public Service, Politics, and Health are indicated below: As at May, 2018, the mapping on women in leadership and national services was reflected in the table below:

Tables 19 and 20 illustrate 2018 Women public representation in The Bahamas –CEDAW Report 2017

	Positions	%	Positions	%	Positions	%
Judiciary	Justices	68%	Registrars	83%	Magistrates	57%
Politics	Cabinet Minister	5%	Parliamentarians	12%	Senators	43%
Public Service	Directors	78%	Permanent Secretary	65%	Family Island Administrators	31%
Public Service	Chief Councilors	9%	Secretary to the Cabinet is a woman			
Education	Principals of Private high schools	68%	Principals of Public high schools	62%		
Health	Physicians	45%	Hospital Administrators	75%		

<i>Positions</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% Women</i>
Prime Minister	0	1	1	0%
Attorney General	1	0	1	100%
Other Ministers	3	12	15	20%
Ministers of State	0	3	3	0%
Parliamentary Secretaries	1	2	3	33%
Opposition Leader	0	1	1	0%
Speaker of the House	0	1	1	0%
President of the Senate	1	0	1	100%
Total	6	20	26	23%

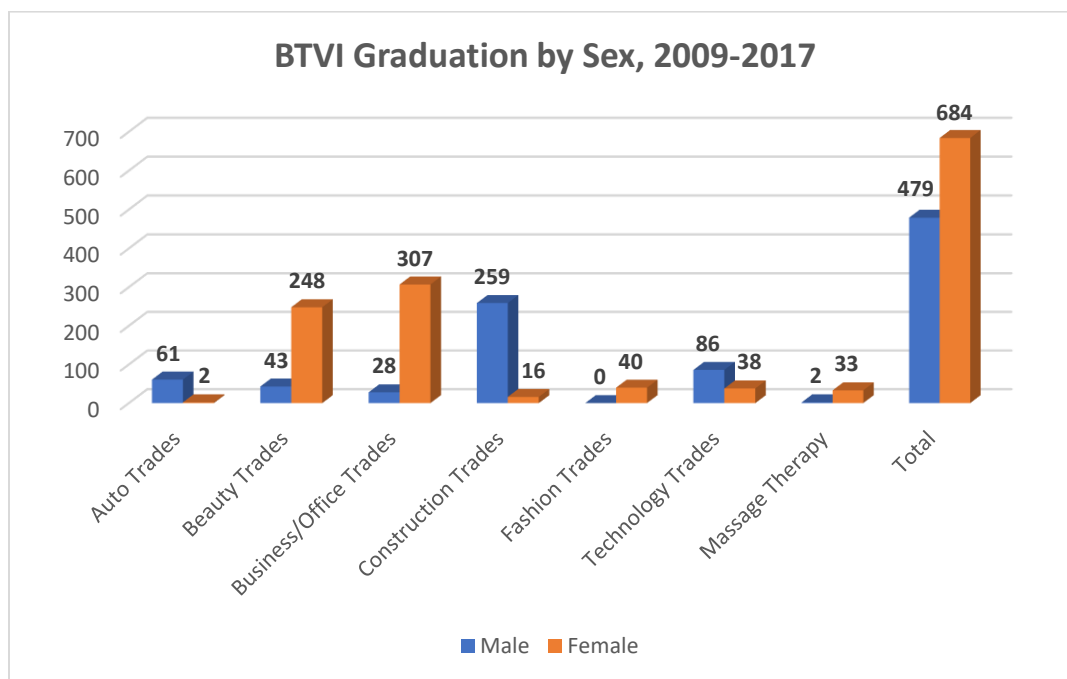
20. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to increase women’s access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?
- ✓ Strengthened the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICTs, including in areas of management and leadership
 - ✓ Taken measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls (e.g. free Wi-Fi hubs, community technology centres)

- Introduced regulations to advance equal pay, retention and career advancement of women within the media and ICT field
- Collaborated with employers in the media and ICT field to improve internal policies and hiring practices on a voluntary basis
- ✓ **Provided support to women’s media networks and organizations**
- ✓ **Other**
- ✓

20.1 Strengthened the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICTs, including in areas of management and leadership

In 2017 and 2018, BTVI was awarded for **excellent international certification exam results from Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA)** out of 40 testing centres regionally. BTVI is a gold standard for Test Out because the students have good results. BTVI trains for future jobs and rely heavily on the international standard and industry certifications.

Figure 5: BTVI Graduation, by Sex, 2009-2017



In 2019, the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute, celebrated three of its employees who presented papers at the fourth annual international conference on technical vocational education and training (TVET) held in Jamaica. Dean of Construction Trades and Workforce Development, Alexander Darville; Chair of Information Technology, Anthony Ramtulla and Chair of Math, Archilene O’Brien, did presentations on **Working to Learn a Skill: The Apprenticeship Model for The Bahamas, Information Communication and Technology Skills for a Global Economy and Making Math Understandable for TVET Students Using Technology: A Case Study of ALEKS**. Ms. O’Brien introduced the Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) web-based artificially intelligent system to BTVI back in 2016. It zeroes in on the strengths and weaknesses of a student’s math knowledge, reports the findings to the student and then helps improve the student’s knowledge of Math via technology. BTVI’s President, Dr. Robert W. Robertson, expressed pride in the team that presented at the conference, adding that it is the intention to provide additional training opportunities to ensure all faculty continue to develop their skills and improve the BTVI brand.

In 2019, **BTVI launched its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) summer youth program**. The three-year summer program, which was launched in 2018 in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Prime Minister, began by training ninth graders

in the modules of I.T. Fundamentals, Linux Unhatched, Introduction to Cyber Security, Python, JavaScript, professional performances and ethics. From grade nine to grade 11, students will sit six international IT certifications and have half of an associate's degree.

20.2 Taken measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls (e.g. free Wi-Fi hubs, community technology centers)

The **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)** and the global technology community annually celebrate **International Girls in ICT Day**. Since April 2015, The Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (URCA) has partnered with local ICT stakeholders to host an annual 'Girls in ICT Day' to discourage gender-based stereotypes and encourage girls and women to consider careers in the field. URCA, Cable Bahamas Ltd, BTC and other licensees organized the first International Girls in ICT Day in Grand Bahama and sponsored full travel expenses for many high school girls from New Providence to attend. A forum and mini-career fair were held. One hundred (100) female high school students were invited to attend. The purpose of the event was to equip young girls with knowledge about the ICT sector and inspire them into the field. The organizers also held a television show called, 'Women Tech Talk' to highlight Bahamian women who are trailblazers in ICT sub-sectors. In 2016, the program included Family Island female students in its celebrations. (CEDAW sixth periodic report; <https://www.urcabahamas.bs>)

In 2017, The Government of The Bahamas implemented **free Wi-Fi Zones at parks and public spaces** in the Fox Hill, Gambier Village and Bain and Grants Town Communities. The Free Wi-Fi Zones allow residents of those areas – particularly school-aged children — access to the worldwide web. Controls have been implemented to block certain content. The provision of the Free Wi-Fi Zones is part of an overarching plan of the government towards the establishment of **a modern telecommunications infrastructure** for all Bahamians – particularly school-aged children living in the country's Inner-cities, many of whom attend public schools from preschool to secondary level, and who do not have access to the internet while at home. (BIS Photo/Letisha Henderson. 2017.BahamasPress)

In 2018, to ensure that **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)** education is strengthened from preschool through tertiary and vocational education The Bahamas allocated \$2 million in 2017/2018 Budget, for the purchase of electronic notepads and the supporting training and infrastructure for two of its government-operated preschools in order to provide more Bahamian children with the educational tools they need. This initiative is geared towards helping pre-schoolers with literacy, numeracy, speech development and computer literacy. Under the new initiative, pre-schoolers will learn about the responsible use of computers. (BIS Photo/Letisha Henderson. 2017.BahamasPress)

21. Do you track the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?

✓ **Yes**

In 2016, The Government increased the DGFA budget to \$2 million dollars to facilitate the employment of Gender Specialists, Programme Officers, and operational expenses. The DGFA also received \$350,000 for programmes, public education, gender mainstreaming and branding. Additionally, the DGFA received \$39,000 for Gender Based Violence capacity building and prevention. (The Ministry of Social Services SDG Report 2019)

22. As a donor country, does your country track the proportion of Official Development Assistance (ODA) that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?

✓ **No**

23. Does your country have a valid national strategy or action plan for gender equality?

✓ **Yes**

In 2012, the Bureau of Women's Affairs completed a ten-year strategic plan to facilitate the expansion of the Bureau to a Department of Gender and Family Affairs. The purpose of the proposed **National Equality Equity Policy and Action Plan (NEEPAP)** IS to effect systemic change to historical and contemporary structures of inequality, eliminate attitudinal and behavioural barriers that impede equitable access to resources and opportunities, attain gender equality and sustainable human development, and promote social justice and equity, respect and tolerance. The scope of the NEEPAP is to provide guidelines and strategies that cover a ten-year period to address differences between women and men to which unequal value is ascribed. It provides a framework for the elimination of structural and attitudinal barriers within government agencies, the private sector, and civil society.

In 2018, The Department of Gender and Family Affairs revised the National Equality Equity Policy and Action Plan:

- a. Initiated, formulated, and developed a plan of action in consultation with all stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the NEEPAP.
- b. Developed, in consultation with stakeholders, a coordinating mechanism for the plan of action to implement the parity policy at all levels.
- c. Provided direction, guidance, and coordination to agencies involved in gender issues as well as facilitate the development of gender sensitivity amongst all sectors and stakeholders.
- d. Collected and disseminated information on NGEF for review and feedback.
- e. Monitored the implementation of women and girls related conventions and agreements to which The Bahamas has acceded.
- f. Facilitated research on pertinent issues that have a bearing on the continued discrimination on the basis of gender.

The Draft National Equality Equity Policy Action Plan priority goals align with Sustainable Development Goal five (5) through the following:

- a. The elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices aims to achieve target 5.1 that address legal frameworks to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
- b. Development of measures to alleviate/prevent and manage gender-based violence; to achieve target 5.2 that addresses the elimination of all forms of violence against women in public and private spheres.
- c. Promotion of an equitable participation in the national economy or labour market; aims to achieve target 5 at which addresses undertaking reform to give women equal rights to economic resources, access to ownership, financial services in accordance with national laws
- d. Fostering equitable access to gender-awareness, and quality healthcare; aims to achieve target 5.6 that addresses access to sexual and reproductive health rights according to the Beijing Platform for Action.
- e. Promoting the equal participation of women in national governance and leadership; aims to achieve target 5. 5 that addresses ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Goal seven (7) of the draft National Equality Equity Policy Action Plan aims to promote a gender perspective in all policies, planning, and programmes in respect to climate change, environmental and disaster management. An objective of goal seven aims to mainstream gender in all policies and programmes concerning the impact of climate change and management of the response to natural disasters. The National Policy plans to:

- a. Mount public education programmes that target men and women to build awareness of precautionary measures to take in the event of a natural disaster and other human made disasters,

- b. Introduce measures to ensure vulnerable women and men have access to shelter and resources to sustain themselves and their children following a natural disaster,
- c. Build awareness among vulnerable populations on how to recognize and respond to disaster warning systems.
- d. Empower women and men as producers and consumers as well as rights holders so that together they can take effective environmental action in their homes, communities and workplaces.
- e. Review climate change and disaster response management project documents and activities to ensure that the provisions are adequate and suitable for the differential needs of both women and men, including appropriate infrastructure for shelters.

Has the national action plan been costed and have sufficient resources been allocated to its achievement in the current budget?

The 2019 status of the national policy on gender, the roadmap, calendar and budgetary allocations for its implementation include: \$50,000 has been allocated for initial implementation of the NEEPAP; \$5,000 for the Final Consultative Review and update as 90% of the document is completed; \$20,000 for printing 10,000 copies for dissemination and training for critical stakeholders (government, corporate Bahamas, hotel managers, school administrators, ministry heads and civil society); \$5,000 for training staff to conduct workshops and seminars; \$15,000 for travel to Family Islands and Training Initiatives; \$5,000 for media and public advertising (*Department of Gender and Family Affairs Roadmap.2018*)

24. Does your country have an action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women?

✓ YES

The Bahamas received eighty (80) Recommendations from The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women following its appearance before the CEDAW Committee on 25 October 2018.

The Bahamas has compiled a timeline action plan for implementation of the recommendations and have commenced twenty-six (26) of the recommendations in conjunction with DGFA, OAG, MOFA and our Civil Society NGO partners. These recommendations are projected to be completed or satisfactorily achieved by June 2020. The Bahamas has identified the remaining recommendations and categorised them into two-year and five-year goals. The **National Reporting Cooperation Mechanism, the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet** are responsible for tracking progress in implementing the CEDAW Committee recommendations as they have been aligned with the SDG # 5.

The Bahamas has a **National Reporting Cooperation Mechanism (NRCM)** chaired by the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Legal Affairs. The NRCM is comprised of representatives from nine government agencies and two civil society organisations. The NRCM drafted a master framework for scheduling, preparing and submitting reports. They are mandated to formulate a strategy for the implementation of the recommendations accepted to all responsible agencies, to determine and develop a monitoring device for the recommendations implemented, and to keep abreast with any human rights violations occurring.

On 12 October 2018, The Bahamas was elected by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**, to serve on the **Human Rights Council (HRC)** and commits to vigorously pursuing the mechanisms that address gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls. The Bahamas will serve a three-year term on the Human Rights Council, commencing 1 January

2019, along with the other countries elected. This is the first time a CARICOM Country has attained a seat on the Council. The Bahamas, Bahrain and Fiji are the only Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the 2019-2021 cohort and, of these, The Bahamas and Fiji will be first-time members. During its term on the Council, The Bahamas has pledged to ensure that the interests of CARICOM States, SIDS and the other Small States are served, as well as to draw more considerable attention to the nexus between human rights and issues such as climate change and sustainable development. The Bahamas will continue to underscore the importance of technical assistance and support for capacity building in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Bahamas has a **Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.340**, ranking it 75 out of 160 countries in the 2017 index. (United Nations Development Programme -Human Development Reports.2017)

25. Is there a national human rights institution in your country?

✓ No

Ombudsman Bill, 2017

Currently The Bahamas has under active review, legislation to improve the provisions of law relating to the establishment of an Ombudsman. The office of the Ombudsman will be created to provide a direct source of relief, where people have legitimate grievances due to the actions or inactions of government or any government agency. The government has indicated that there will be a bill to establish an Integrity Commission for The Bahamas, among one of several bills to be tabled in the House of Assembly. (*Universal Periodic Review.2019*)

26. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

- ✓ **Adopted and/or implemented a National Action Plan on women, peace and security**
- ✓ **Integrated women, peace and security commitments into key national and inter-ministerial policy, planning and monitoring frameworks**
 - Used communication strategies, including social media, to increase awareness of the women, peace and security agenda
- ✓ **Increased budgetary allocations for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda**
 - Taken steps to reduce excessive military expenditures and/or control the availability of armaments
 - Re-allocated funds from military spending to social and economic development, including for gender equality and the empowerment of women
 - Supported inclusive and gender-sensitive conflict analysis, early warning and prevention mechanisms
 - Other

26.1 Adopted and/or implemented a National Action Plan on women, peace and security

The Bahamas acknowledges that just, peaceful and inclusive societies are crucial for the realization of the **sustainable development goals**. Crimes against both persons and property have increased significantly in The Bahamas in recent years, with a notable spike following the 2008-2009 economic crisis and subsequent increase in unemployment. There are also reports of significant incidences of violence against women. The abuse of children and alleged discrimination are other areas of concern. (RBPf Strategic Policy and Planning Branch. 2013 and IDB. Crime and Violence.2014).

The Bahamas has aligned the SDG#16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions with eight priority targets out of the twelve indicators matched to the associated **National Development Plan** goals (see Table below).

Table 21. SDG16 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG16.1	Goal 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 3.2.3; 3.2.6; 4.2.1; 4.2.6; 4.2.8; 4.2.12; 7.7.1
SDG16.2	Goal 7.7.3; 7.7.6; 7.9.2; 7.7.9
SDG16.3	Goal 4.1.8; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.4.1; 4.4.3; 4.5.5; 7.8.1; 4.5.6
SDG16.4	Goal 4.1.10; 4.2.9; 16.1.4
SDG16.5	Goal 1.3.1; 1.3.5; 1.4.1; 1.4.2; 1.4.3; 1.4.4;
SDG16.6	Goal 1.1.1; 1.1.4; 1.1.5; 1.3.1; 1.3.5; 1.2.1; 1.5.5
SDG16.7.	Goal 2.4.1; 7.4.1; 2.6.1; 7.4.2; 7.4.5; 7.5.3; 7.5.2
SDG16.9	Goal 7.2.9; 7.7.10

As SDG#16 is an elaborate goal, there are a number of NDP goals supporting its priority targets, namely Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7. The focus is for the nation to have: a modern, open and accountable, service oriented government that is well trusted by citizens, residents and the business community (Goal 1); well governed public institutions that engage the citizens to strengthen democracy (Goal 2); a law abiding society in which rules are respected and communities can thrive (Goal 3); a more efficient, methodical, fair and effective administration of justice through coordinated action by the police, courts and corrections services (Goal 4); a society free of poverty and discrimination (Goal 7). Thus, all of these NDP goals are well aligned to the SDG16 priority targets.

26.2 Integrated women, peace and security commitments into key national and inter-ministerial policy, planning and monitoring frameworks

In 2018, The contract signing marked a major milestone in the progress of the **Ministry's Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP)**. The CSJP is a multi-faceted crime and violence prevention initiative of the Ministry of National Security, funded by a \$20 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank. The objective of the CSJP is to reduce crime and build community safety.

The Bahamas believes that the existence of the **Auditor General and Public Service Commission (PSC)** as independent guardians of the integrity of key public functions, adds to the capacity of parliament to hold the government accountable within an inter-ministerial policy, planning and monitoring framework.

In April 2018, The Bahamas launched the **National Neighbourhood Watch Council**. The initiative is spearheaded by the Ministry of National Security and Neighbourhood Watch Bahamas. The Neighbourhood Watch Council is made up of neighbourhood watch group leaders and civil society formed to provide peace and security in the communities. It is designed to provide evidence-based crime prevention support and guidance to existing neighbourhood watch programmes. The council facilitates the establishment of new neighbourhood watch programmes within the country. The program aims to bridge the gap between the police and the community where each police division would select a Liaison officer to provide logistical support to these watch groups.

26.3 Increased budgetary allocations for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda

In January 2017, the government initiated a **Public Defenders Unit** staffed with experts as part of a \$20 million-dollar Citizen Security and Justice Programme loan facilitated by the Inter-American Development Bank. The unit is expected to accelerate access to justice or those groups who would ordinarily be unable to afford defence counsel in criminal matters and will help reduce court delays.

In 2019, The Bahamas approved that funds from the \$20 million-dollar CSJP loan be used to conduct a **National Women's Health Survey using WHO model** to ascertain the levels of security, safety and violence women and girls face relative to areas of their political, education, social protection, access to justice, economic and health well-being. Meetings were held with DGFA and CSJP Executive Directors and IDB. The Terms of Reference for the needed prevalence scientific national research have been agreed and proposals from firms wishing to conduct the survey are being evaluated.

27. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

- Promoted and supported women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements
- Promoted equal participation of women in humanitarian and crisis response activities at all levels, particularly at the decision-making level
- Integrated a gender perspective in the prevention and resolution of armed or other conflict
- Integrated a gender perspective in humanitarian action and crisis response
- Protected civil society spaces and women's human rights defenders
- Other

28. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

- Implemented legal and policy reform to redress and prevent violations of the rights of women and girls
- Strengthened institutional capacities, including of the justice system and transitional justice mechanisms as applicable, during conflict and crisis response
- Strengthened capacity of security sector institutions on human rights and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse
- ✓ **Increased access of conflict-affected, refugee or displaced women to violence prevention and protection services**
- ✓ **Taken measures to combat illicit arms trafficking**
- ✓ **Taken measures to combat the production, use of and trafficking in illicit drugs**
- ✓ **Taken measures to combat trafficking in women and children**
- Other

28.1 Increased access of conflict-affected, refugee or displaced women to violence prevention and protection services

The Government of The Bahamas has taken steps to establish a **Refugee Administration Unit** (under the Department of Immigration) and a Migration Task Force (under the auspices of the Office of the Attorney General), which both seek to address refugee issues. The Refugee Administration Unit is mandated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration to assess asylum cases that come to its attention through screening at places of immigration detention or otherwise.

In the administration of refugee and asylum matters, there is no penalization of asylum seekers for illegal entry and stay in The Bahamas. Immigration laws also appear to show no discrimination whereby Bahamian women and men have the same rights with respect to gaining residence and employment status for their spouse in situations where the spouse is a non-national. Persons that are undocumented or are irregular migrants found in The Bahamas are interviewed by trained personnel from the Department of Immigration. In keeping with the protocols developed in consultation with the **United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)**. Once persons are found to have a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin, if they were to return, they would be granted refugee status or relocation assistance to a third country. If an individual does not meet standards, then they are repatriated to their country of origin. Every effort

is taken by the Government to improve the efficiency of detention, interviewing, and repatriation exercises connected to irregular migrants.

The Bahamas, in adherence to its commitments to eliminate discrimination against women The Bahamas, has incorporated the **United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders, otherwise known as the “Bangkok Rules”**, as part of its programme to enhance the conditions of female detainees in The Bahamas Department of Corrections (recommendation 92.54).

In June 2015 the **Migration Working Group (MWG)**, an inter-ministerial group with the representation of The Bahamas Red Cross and The Bahamas Civil Society was formed to assess the challenges the country faces with mixed migration, asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons and irregular migrants. The MWG examined the Conventions and the Protocols that The Bahamas is a party to that refer to refugees. The MWG has worked to formulate a comprehensive approach to addressing asylum and refugee issues in The Bahamas. A Migration Working Group, including representatives from the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Immigration, formulated **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers seeking refuge and asylum status within The Bahamas**. It should be noted that from 2012 through 2017, twenty-seven (27) asylum seekers were recognized as refugees. Their current work is focused on implementing Standard Operating Procedures for the Department of Immigration’s Refugee Unit.

In April 2017, the Migration Working Group, in conjunction with the local **United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)** held a training session on the SOPs for the Refugee Unit and Senior Immigration Officers within the Department of Immigration.

In December 2017, the Migration Working Group evaluated **UNHCR’s 10 Point Plan of Action and the Brazil Plan of Action** and has been working towards the implementation of their obligations. The Migration Working Group also spearheaded the planning and execution of the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC) meeting held in The Bahamas. One of the agenda items at this meeting was the triennial review of the implementation of the Brazil Plan of Action.

In 2018, The Bahamas introduced the **Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill (2018)** that will allow application for asylum, a right to appeal, obligations for asylum seekers and refugees, and helping asylum seekers to enter The Bahamas. The Bill also includes the establishment of a Board of Immigration and the establishment of an **Immigration Appeals Tribunal**.

28.2 Taken measures to combat illicit arms trafficking

In April 2019, The Bahamas led a delegation to Matthew Town, Inagua, in April 2019, to **commission the new \$2 million long-range maritime surveillance coastal radar system**. The Bahamas notes that the installation of the radars is critical steps in the government’s strategy to strengthen the borders of The Bahamas to better address illegal migration, illicit drugs, gun trafficking, poaching, human trafficking and other threats to national security. It is a tremendous challenge to monitor the approximately 100,000 square miles of our porous, extensive maritime domain, and the installation of technically-advanced, long-range coastal radars are an essential component in enhancing the monitoring and better protection of the borders of our far-flung island-chain. A second radar will be installed at the Coral Harbour base in New Providence. Approval was granted to fund a third radar, which will be installed on Great Exuma. Once installed and operational, these radars will significantly enhance the ability to monitor illicit traffic transiting through Bahamian waters.

28.3 Taken measures to combat the production, use of and trafficking in illicit drugs

The Bahamas has fortified its efforts to prevent the trafficking of illicit drugs through the 700 islands and cays with additional joint operations with the **Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF) and U.S. naval forces** since October 2018. The efforts have resulted in the confiscation of over

\$505 million worth of drugs and the repatriation of over 1,700 illegal migrants, according to U.S. Embassy in Nassau Charge d’Affaires Stephanie Bowers (2019). The joint efforts resulted in greater security and safety in The Bahamas, as 25 successful interdictions of both cocaine and marijuana occurred as well as the confiscation of over 490,000 pounds of marijuana and almost 500 kilos of cocaine – representing a street value of over \$505 million. During that same time, the joint forces interdicted 41 migrant sea vessels, resulting in the repatriation of over 1,700 illegal migrants.

In 2019, The Bahamas agreed to install more radar systems and facilitate the RBDF to decentralize its operations, which is a core element of the government’s national defence strategy. This will be accomplished because **Over The Horizon Target Tracking Systems** have already been installed onboard all of the RBDF patrol and interdiction vessels. These systems will allow the RBDF to target illicit activity, including arms trafficking, significant distances from shore and will play an instrumental role in RBDF efforts to decentralize their forces across the archipelago. These significant investments in The United States of America and The Bahamas partnership will contribute to the security of the southern approaches to both nations and demonstrate unwavering resolve to advance U.S. and Bahamian interests. (Guardian. Smith. 2019)

29. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child?

- ✓ **Taken measures to combat negative social norms and practices and increased awareness of the needs and potential of girl children**
- ✓ **Strengthened girls’ access to quality education, skills development and training**
- ✓ **Tackled disadvantages in health outcomes due to malnutrition, early childbearing (e.g. anemia) and exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases**
 - Implemented policies and programmes to reduce and eradicate child, early and forced marriage
- ✓ **Implemented policies and programmes to eliminate violence against girls, including physical and sexual violence and harmful practices**
 - Implemented policies and programmes to eradicate child labour and excessive levels of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by girl children
- ✓ **Promoted girls’ awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life**
- Other

29.1 Strengthened girls’ access to quality education, skills development and training

The Fresh Start Programme is a youth employment skills training programme that provides job search skills and training to youth between the ages of 16 to 25. Once enrolled in this programme, participants are exposed to relevant workplace experiences and instructions through a structured training and placement curriculum. The programme covers a variety of personal development and job search topics, geared to afford the young prospective professionals, with the resources, information and tools needed for successful employment and job retention. (Ministry of Youth Website.2019)

There are two (2) **Youth Ambassadorship Programmes** that facilitate the involvement of Bahamian youth.

(i) **The Commonwealth Youth Ambassadors Programme (CYAP)** - a 1993 initiative of the Heads of Governments of the Commonwealth that aims to develop a cadre of dynamic young Caribbean leaders equipped to educate their peers about regional integration.

(ii) **CARICOM Youth Ambassadors** - Each CARICOM member state is eligible to nominate one male and one female to act as the Country’s CARICOM Youth Ambassadors for a term of two (2) years. The Ambassadors are young people between 18 to 25 years. These individuals perform an advocacy and peer education role and generally serve as watchdogs for community decisions, which impact young people. As CARICOM Youth Ambassadors, these young people are required to travel nationally and internationally in order to discuss issues relevant to young people.

The **Youth Leaders Certification Programme** was designed to train, expose and sharpen the skills of present youth leaders in techniques and methods in work. The programme also provides training in leadership skills and assist youth leaders and youth workers in developing competencies necessary to manage young people effectively. Finally, the programme formulates basic concepts regarding the role of Youth organisations. This course is designed to cover ten weeks, comprising sessions, and a field study. Interested individuals 18 years of age may apply to the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture, Division of Youth.

The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture maintain relationship with over 300 registered youth organisations. This relationship helps to concretise the **alliance with youth leaders**, as well as assist in the coordinated growth and development of youth organisations. The Youth Unit activities and services for these organisations include: ongoing maintenance of an active database on youth organisations; consultative services to facilitate the requests of youth organisations and ensure quality of service; co-ordination of youth involvement in national events; promotion of involvement and expansion of youth organisations across The Bahamas; provision of technical assistance, financial assistance, youth leaders training and certification, administrative support, and mentoring, referral services, international networking, and assistance with grant writing.

The educational system of The Bahamas is characterised by **universal access and free education** for all children in public schools between the enrollment ages of 5 and 16. Special provisions exist both for at-risk males and females in the education system, including **PACE (Providing Access to Continued Education) for girls** aged 12 to 17 who become pregnant in school.

	Male	Female	Total	% Male	% Female
Business	222	596	818	27%	73%
Communication & Creative Arts	48	113	161	30%	70%
Culinary & Hospitality Management Institute	99	306	405	24%	76%
Education	106	797	903	12%	88%
English Studies	8	10	18	44%	56%
Nursing & Allied Health	11	410	421	3%	97%
Sciences & Technology	65	68	133	49%	51%
Social Sciences	93	363	456	20%	80%
Graduate Studies	0	18	18	0%	100%
Chemistry, Environmental, & Life Sciences	59	204	263	22%	78%
Mathematics, Physics, & Technology	143	61	204	70%	30%
Totals	854	2946	3800	22%	78%

Table 22 COB Graduation by Sex, 2010-2017 – The tables and figures, illustrate the Graduation by sex data for three tertiary institutions. In each case females are higher than males

Fielding (2013) quotes a study by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) that one of the areas in which youth in The Bahamas are considered to be at highest risk is poor education outcomes and early school leaving. Repetition rates were higher for boys than girls at both the primary and secondary levels, and the proportion of boys repeating grades was twice that of girls in primary school (14 per cent vs. 7 per cent). Fielding's data also show that parents invest more in the education of their daughters than their sons and that there is more parental expectation of daughters than sons to engage in higher education.

29.2 Implemented policies and programmes to eradicate child labour and excessive levels of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by girl children

The Bahamas, with the assistance of the International Labour Organization, recognized some of the challenges The Bahamas faced regarding Child Labour through an ILO 2016 Rapid Assessment. The report highlighted specific statistics and international red flags facing children and young persons. The National Tripartite Council, with the assistance of the International Labour Organization, aims to produce a National Child Labour Policy by the end of 2019.

The Bahamas is presently discussing amendments to the Employment Act at the Tripartite level to take all recommendations into consideration. It acknowledges the disparity of having access to employment at 14 years and the compulsory age for education at 16.

In 2014, The Child Protection Act was amended to make provision for the appointment of a national committee for families and children to implement the obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

29.3 Promoted girls' awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life

The Bahamas is grateful for hundreds of NGOs, CBOs, FBOs programmes that accelerate the advancement of girls via many projects and initiatives. This indicator is achieved through partnerships with Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture as well. **A National Youth Policy** relative to the advancement, training and development is in circulation for public consultation.

A weekly television program, **“The Youth Zone”** was broadcasted by The Bahamas Broadcasting Corporation which raised awareness of violence against the girl child.

The **Bahamas Crisis Centre** launched a “Let’s Talk” Campaign to raise awareness of youth on incest, dating violence and bullying behaviour.

The Department of Gender and Family Affairs collaborated with the Zonta Club on various initiatives to promote an **end to violence against women and girls in The Bahamas**. In 2016 thru 2018 the department and club commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. There was an effort made to raise awareness by selling and distributing t-shirts with “Stop Violence against Women”. During the sixteen days of activism to end violence against women campaign in 2017, the Zonta Club organized a town hall meeting, press conference, and church service.

The United Nations has declared 11 October as **International Day of The Girl Child**. The observance supports more opportunities for girls, and increases awareness of inequality faced by girls worldwide based upon their gender. 2018 theme: “With Her” was celebrated during a fun filled seminar for girls held at Adventure Learning Centre. Minister Frankie Campbell spoke to 100 girls from public and private schools about the importance of self-respect, determination in pursuit of personal and professional self-love and the need to encourage and bring along the young men to build a better Bahamas.

S.T.R.A.W. (Strengthening, Transforming, Restoring, Affirming Young Women)

Incorporated TM Center for Young Women[®] is a nonprofit community-based learning facility which has been providing safe, positive and structured mentoring, advocacy and intervention programs for adolescent girls, teen girls and young women in The Bahamas since March 2004. The Executive Director and Founder is Ms. Therenia A. Cunningham. During the period under review, STRAW hosted annual conferences for young women ages 14 – 19 around topics of social, economic and political life for women and girls.

Bahamas Girl Guide Association has been inspiring girls and young women, preparing them to lead respectful, civil, meaningful lives as empowered women growing from strength to strength even as they help colleagues, peers, families and a nation grow. Approximately 2190 girls and

131 leaders are located throughout The Bahamas. Girls and leaders are given the opportunity for international exposure through participation in sessions at the World Centres and attendance at regional and international camps. The Bahamas Girl Guides Association launched an anti-violence campaign to provide further public education during the UN International Day to End Violence Against Women.

Information for this question was also provided in question 3.4 on organizations such as GirlCON, Pilot Club Bahamas, Anchor Clubs, **The Bahamas Debutante Foundation and Governor General Youth Award (GGYA)**.

30. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies?

- ✓ **Supported women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance**
 - Strengthened evidence and/or raised awareness about gender-specific environmental and health hazards (e.g. consumer products, technologies, industrial pollution)
- ✓ **Increased women's access to and control over land, water, energy, and other natural resources**
- ✓ **Promoted the education of women and girls in science, engineering, technology and other disciplines relating to the natural environment**
 - Enhanced women's access to sustainable time- and labor-saving infrastructure (e.g. access to clean water and energy) and climate-smart agricultural technology
- ✓ **Taken measures to protect and preserve the knowledge and practices of women in indigenous and local communities related to traditional medicines, biodiversity and conservation techniques**
 - Taken steps to ensure that women benefit equally from decent jobs in the green economy
 - Monitored and evaluated the impact of environmental policies and sustainable infrastructure projects on women and girls
 - Other

30.1 Supported women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance

During 2014 – 2019, **The Bahamas Climate Change Unit within the Ministry of the Environment** has been providing leadership in combating climate change through several initiatives. The Bahamas has passed legislation, advanced policies and programmes to ensure that the country is doing its part to reduce emissions. The Bahamas has reduced and/or eliminated tariffs on solar systems and energy-efficient appliances to encourage a move to the consumption of clean energy. Also, The Bahamas has joined national and international organizations that focus on protecting our environmental and marine resources.

In 2015, a symposium titled "**Women & The Environment: The Future We Want**" was held in the Melia Hotel. The symposium sought to provide a space where much needed open dialogue about the environment and climate change could take place with a particular focus on women. Attendees and panellists were from various professions and backgrounds.

In 2015, **the Government adopted Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)** which emphasizes that 'women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes; and adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as build their capacity for alternate livelihood means in post-disaster situations'. This Framework also indicated that 'empowering women ... to publicly lead and promote gender-equitable and universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches is key'.

In 2018, the Department of Gender and Family Affairs has a significant role to play with respect to raising awareness about gender and disaster risk management. It is noted that women's

human rights, which are promoted and protected by the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** at all stages of climate change and disaster prevention, mitigation, response, recovery and adaptation.

The Bahamas made monumental steps toward integrating gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies. **The impact of climate change on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**, such as The Bahamas, is likely to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. A healthy environment is fundamental to national development and poverty alleviation. It is often the poor and disadvantaged that 'pay' for an unhealthy environment in the form of deterioration of health or quality of life, and negative impacts on subsistence livelihoods. Increasing the health of natural resources also improves their resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change. It is vital, therefore, that adaptive measures are practical both in terms of effectively responding to present-day climate and project risks, as well as advancing the broader issue of sustainable development, particularly as it relates to women and vulnerable groups.

In 2019, The Department of Gender and Family Affairs participated in the first National Disaster Preparedness Baseline Assessment (NDPBA) launched by The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The Baseline Assessment Launch Workshop is a year-long programme which will measure disaster preparedness and risk. The workshop allowed participants to exchange disaster management experiences, international best practices and data

In 1992, the **Rio Declaration on Environment and Development** stated, at Principle 20, that **"Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is, therefore, essential to achieve sustainable development"**. The Bahamas is very grateful for the environmental and natural resource advocacy and research conducted by many organizations.

The Bahamas also celebrates the women participation and leadership in these vital areas: Below are a few of the **women leaders in environmental organizations**:

Eleanor Phillips is the director of The Nature Conservancy's Northern Caribbean program, responsible for the Conservancy's work in The Bahamas, Puerto Rico and Turks and Caicos.
Shenique Albury-Smith, Senior Policy Advisor/Country Representative, The Nature Conservancy Northern Caribbean Program (The Bahamas and Turks & Caicos)

Janet Johnson, President (2017-2019) Bahamas National Trust - Appointed Member Ministry of Tourism

Lynn Gape, Deputy Executive Director – Bahamas National Trust

Dominique Martin – Director of Development - Bahamas National Trust

Catherine Pinder – Director of Finance & Operations - Bahamas National Trust

Portia Sweeting – Director of Education - Bahamas National Trust

Shelley Cant-Woodside – Director of Science & Policy - Bahamas National Trust

Dorcas Miller – Human Resources & Operations Manager - Bahamas National Trust

Monalisa Sweeting – Communications Manager - Bahamas National Trust

Urmie Braynen – Development Associate - Bahamas National Trust

Dr. Valeria Pizarro, Research Associate - Sea Turtle Conservancy

Candace Fields, Research Assistant - Sea Turtle Conservancy

Kelley Bostwick-Toote - Chair of The Board – BREEF

Stacey Moultrie - Vice Chair

Patrice Wallace – Director

Casuarina Mckinney - Lambert - Executive Director – BREEF

Karen Pratt – Panton – Executive Director – The Bahamas Protected Area Fund (BPAF)

30.2 Promoted the education of women and girls in science, engineering, technology and other disciplines relating to the natural environment

The Bahamas supports and promote the education of women and girls in disciplines relating to the natural environment. The Bahamas is an archipelago with about 95% of its mass underwater, making it a country-focused and dependent on marine life. Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF), an NGO that is focused on educating Bahamians on the value and need of conserving marine life, stated in their annual 2017 report that they had impacted 68,000 students and 750 teachers. (BREEF, 2018)

In Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 at the College of the Bahamas, now University of The Bahamas, only 26 students enrolled into the environmental Bachelor's Degree Programme called Small Island Sustainability, while 335 students were enrolled for the Bachelor's Degree programme in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. In the other environmental courses, Environment and Ecotourism and Environment, Ecotourism and Maritime, only 19 students have been accepted in this area. Environmental education engages students in learning, and has been known to –

- a. help children to perform better in math, language arts, science and social studies;
- b. build critical thinking and relationship skills;
- c. teach how to be real-world problems solvers; and
- d. Make students become self-directed learners.

The Bahamian economy is built on the assets of our environment, and more teachers must place more attention on sensitizing more students to the environment. The curricula must be revised to ensure more lesson plans are geared towards developing skills and building confidence in students to explore the outdoors and become good environmental stewards. There is a career for those engaged in environment sciences too. The Government, under its **National Scholarship Programme, provides financial support to students wishing to pursue environmental sciences** aboard at other Universities. To date, consideration is given in the areas of Conservation Management, Geographic Information Systems and Marine studies.

During the period under review, educators from across the country have had a chance to get the first-hand experience in marine conservation at the **Bahamas Reef Environment Education Foundation (BREEF) Marine Conservation Teacher Training Workshop at the Gerace Research Centre** on San Salvador. Immersed in experiential education, including snorkelling beautiful coral reefs and mangroves creeks, and building curriculum connections, these educators can more effectively engage and inspire their students.

Over six hundred (600) educators have now returned to their islands and schools to share this practical experience in conservation education with their students and colleagues. The annual summer workshops are usually attended by twenty-five (25) educators from around The Bahamas. During the workshop, teachers explore rocky shores, conduct beach cleanup, and examined stomach content of an albatross to see the impact plastics can have on marine life. All of the activities carried out at the workshop are aimed at providing teachers with various ways to get their students interested in learning about and protecting the marine environment. In addition to hosting the **Marine Conservation Teacher Training Workshops**, BREEF also provides teachers around The Bahamas with follow-up classroom educational materials, outdoor field trips for students and in-class presentations, all focused on the marine environment.

BREEF's mission of promoting the conservation of the Bahamian marine environment that sustains our way of life is the driving force behind these workshops. Many teachers who have completed the workshops over the past 20 years have become leaders in getting their communities more involved with marine protection and conservation.

Lieutenant Desiree Corneille, the **Environment and Conservation officer with the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF)** attended the BREEF workshop in San Salvador and was impressed with the depth of information shared. Hence **the workshop was replicated for Defence Force Officers** increasing awareness that leads to the preservation of our natural resources and the RBDF's ultimate mission of "Guarding our Heritage

In April 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture & Marine Resources in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) hosted a two-day theory and practical **Natural Pesticides Workshop for Agricultural Teachers**, small and large scale Farmers and Extension Officers at the Ministry of Agriculture. The event was held at the Stapleton School Auditorium on the 10th and 11th April 2019. The objective of the workshop was to teach large and small scale farmers how to use naturally occurring substances and self-made mixtures to control pest and disease in plants without resorting to chemical pesticides. Presenters for the event were Ms. Racheal Ali, Plant Protection specialist and Dr. Michelle Singh, CARDI Country Representative for The Bahamas. The workshop was also conducted in North Andros.

30.3 Taken measures to protect and preserve the knowledge and practices of women in indigenous and local communities related to traditional medicines, biodiversity and conservation techniques

The Bahamas National Trust was created by an Act of Parliament in 1959 to build and manage the national park system of The Bahamas. BNT's mission is to protect and conserve the natural resources of The Bahamas, through stewardship and education, for present and future generations. The Bahamas National Trust offers environmental workshops for all types of educators. The goal is to build a legacy of environmental stewardship for generations to come. Our interactive environmental education workshops are customised for specific grade levels or topics, both marine and terrestrial. These short workshops are aimed at giving hands-on experience to teachers, enabling them to:

learn new teaching skills and become comfortable teaching outdoors; use the environment to make teaching science and other subjects both fun and meaningful; meet Ministry of Education curriculum standards; learn how to incorporate environmental activities into lesson plans; benefit from follow-up resources and opportunities; and earn professional development credits recognised by the Ministry of Education.

The **Nature Conservancy** works in The Bahamas with the government and local partners to protect ecologically rich places for future generations. The Conservancy has been working in two major sites for several years. Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park is The Bahamas first national park. It is a 176-square mile park with blue tropical waters, coral reefs and forested cays. Andros Island is the largest island of the Bahamian archipelago, and its land area is higher than that of all the other islands combined. Andros is famous for its outstanding reefs, tropical dry broadleaf forests and Bahamian pine forests that cover hundreds of thousands of acres. The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organisation working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. Among its many initiatives in The Bahamas, The Nature Conservancy is expanding coral reef protection – an issue at the heart of The Moore Bahamas Foundation's strategy across the Caribbean.

A recent **Sea Turtle Conservancy project**, supported in part by The Moore Charitable Foundation, involved a sea turtle research, education and community-outreach project focused on Clifton Bay and adjoining marine areas in New Providence, The Bahamas. The objectives of the project are to: 1) fill critical gaps in knowledge about sea turtles occurring within Clifton Bay and adjacent marine sites around New Providence; 2) generate broad awareness and support for the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats around New Providence, particularly within Clifton Bay; and 3) build conservation capacity in The Bahamas by providing hands-on research and conservation training to Bahamian students.

It is recognised that climate change is likely to impact negatively on human settlements (housing), especially as most major settlements are situated in low-lying coastal areas, and many roads and other critical infrastructure, like airports, are located close to the coastline.

In January 2019, Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources met with representatives of the Bahamas National Trust (BNT), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Bahamas Reef

Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF). The group officially presented to the Minister the **Nassau Grouper Conservation Management Plan for the Commonwealth of The Bahamas** and an accompanying Nassau Grouper Policy Brief. Dr. Krista D. Sherman, a Senior Scientist at the Fisheries Research & Conservation Program at the Perry Institute for Marine Science, provided an overview of the management plan and policy brief which was designed to assist with population recovery and promote sustainability of the Bahamian Nassau grouper fishery. The report pointed out that to adequately address threats to Nassau grouper, The Bahamas needs to be proactive with fishery management policies, and increase its capacity for scientific research, monitoring, enforcement and outreach which will require both national and international support from a diverse range of stakeholders. The first step in this process is the implementation of the management plan, and the Nassau Grouper Working Group is looking forward to collaborating with the Ministry on this initiative.

31. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation?

- ✓ **Supported women’s participation and leadership, including those affected by disasters, in disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation policies, programmes and projects**
 - Strengthened the evidence base and raised awareness about the disproportionate vulnerability of women and girls to the impact of environmental degradation and disasters
- ✓ **Promoted access of women in situations of disaster to services such as relief payments, disaster insurance and compensation**
- ✓ **Introduced or strengthened and implemented gender-responsive laws and policies related to disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation (e.g. disaster laws addressing vulnerability of women in disaster)**

31.1 Supported women’s participation and leadership, including those affected by disasters, in disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation policies, programmes and projects

The Bahamas is a part of the **Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)**, which is an organ of CARICOM and is comprised of eighteen (18) Participating States. CDEMA is pursuing a Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy, 2014–2024. The cross-cutting theme of this strategy comprises of Climate Change and Adaptation, Information Communication Technology, Gender Mainstreaming, and Environmental Sustainability.

In 2015, The Bahamas made representation at the **United Nations COP 21 Climate Change Conference**, where it highlighted its vulnerability to climate change. National initiatives include how to relocate vulnerable communities.

In 2016 The Bahamas was a party to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, which recognizes the importance of involving women and men equally in its processes and in the development and implementation of national climate policies that are gender-responsive.

In 2017, the Department of Gender and Family Affairs, in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN Women), Multi-country Office (Barbados) conducted a post-Hurricane Matthew gender assessment for North Andros and Grand Bahama.

In 2018, the **University of The Bahamas introduced the Small Island Sustainability Research Complex**, which has state-of-the-art laboratories to “support a wide range of environmental monitoring and chemical analysis methods and techniques of the air, land and sea.” The research centre is also focusing on meeting national priorities in agricultural production as well as food safety and security. (University of The Bahamas, 2018) The development of the research centre is a milestone for The Bahamas as research must be carried out, and data is collected about our changing environment, mainly because we are susceptible to hurricanes and flooding.

Disaster Management Unit (DMU) is primarily responsible for Shelter Management. The Unit is also tasked with assisting in national disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts relative to all-natural and human-made events and disasters throughout the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. Hence, it is a part of seven (7) of the fourteen (14) Emergency Support Functions (ESF) established in the National Disaster Plan by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

The **National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)** has responsibility for National Disaster Management, relief and recovery efforts in the country. NEMA coordinates the activities of Government and Non-governmental agencies, which comprises women and men in every island of The Bahamas. Among the staff at NEMA, the director and two senior administrative/technical officers are women. NEMA holds monthly meetings with representatives from all government ministries and departments and NGO's which form the **Disaster Management Committee**. The Department of Social Services is an essential service on the team that responds to national disaster, i.e. fires, adverse factors in the environment (for example, smoke or flood) Management. The Department of Gender Affairs and Family Affairs is represented on that Committee. The Department of Social Services is responsible for the identification approval of Hurricane Shelters as well as the provision of Shelter Managers when the Shelters are activated. The Committee also coordinates disaster-related activities in all of the Islands outside of the capital.

31.2 Promoted access of women in situations of disaster to services such as relief payments, disaster insurance and compensation

The Department of Social Services offers, in a limited capacity, a **small homes repair program** that assists the most vulnerable in the renovating and upkeep of private homes. Before and after times of natural catastrophes and disasters, DOSS assesses the homes of persons applying for assistance, and where possible make the necessary renovations to ensure that the basic standard of living is adhered to.

In 2016, the Government's Urban Renewal Programme made repairs to over 1,000 homes within the 23 constituencies in New Providence. **The Small Home Repairs Programme** is a signal initiative of the Urban Renewal Programme. It has had tangible results within a relatively short period, rehabilitating the physical environs within urban and traditional communities. During that period, more than 1,000 individuals were employed in the Small Homes Repairs Programme. They included local contractors and tradespersons: carpenters, masons, plumbers, tile layers, painters, electricians and semi-skilled persons. In June 2016, the Government invested almost \$10 million in the Small Home Repairs Programme which represented a significant economic injection into inner-city communities, and a sizable employment boost for small local contractors and tradespersons.

In 2019, the Urban Renewal Commission spent approximately \$2.5 million on small home and roof repair. Thirty-two homes throughout Grand Bahama that sustained roof damage during Hurricane Matthew (2016) received needed repairs thanks to the Urban Renewal Programme implementing its Small Home Roof Repair Program. The cost associated with the Small Home Roof Repair Program currently stands at \$249,000.00 and contractors are expected to perform the scope of works in strict accordance with the budget set. Urban Renewal assisted the residents of Grand Bahama through the Small Home Roof Repair Program, which was established to repair and correct damages to small homes, including, minor roof repairs to eliminate threats to health and safety. The repairs were divided among the five constituencies on Grand Bahama (West Grand Bahama, Central Grand Bahama, Pineridge, Marco City and East Grand Bahama).

31.3 Introduced or strengthened and implemented gender-responsive laws and policies related to disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation (e.g. disaster laws addressing vulnerability of women in disaster)

In 2015, The Bahamas Government adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 to provide resources and implement gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programme to empower women for disaster preparedness and recovery.

In 2016, The Bahamas implemented the Paris Agreement on 4 November 2016. The Paris Agreement, 'for the first time brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so. (<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/d2hhdC1pcy>)

In November 2018, three staff members from the Department attended a Disaster Assessment Methodology Course facilitated by Economic Commission Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) where they explored methodology which allows for the analysis of disasters' impacts in three separate sectors: social, infrastructure and productive. It also included an analysis of environmental impacts and gender considerations.

In 2018, DGFA staff collaborated with NEMA, **United States Northern Command, and North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) to engage in training and planning exercises** for significant disaster risk reduction. Issues and concerns about gender mainstreaming of the policies were represented by DGFA staff and thus included in the manual document.

The Bahamas continues to participate and receive support at the international level to address issues surrounding climate change. The Bahamas established a National Climate Change Committee in 1996 as part of its obligations under the United Nations Framework for Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The **National Policy for Adaptation to Climate Change developed** in 2005 established objectives for adaptation and critical actions that are needed to address climate change in various sectors; although progress in the adoption of the policy has been slow. The University of The Bahamas has established a Climate Change Initiative (CCI) to conduct research relevant to the issue. Current work themes of the CCI include climate-induced displacement and migration, management strategies for loss and damage in small island states, as well as the impacts of international agreements on both the Pacific and Caribbean.

A public education and outreach subcommittee was established in 2010 to increase public education about climate change, which includes local NGOs and environmental institutions. A project sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) focuses on integrated coastal zone management to support the country in adapting to climate change and reduce its vulnerability to coastal hazards. http://eh.gov.bs/gov_initiatives/climate-change/ 2019

SECTION THREE: NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

32. What is your country's current national machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women? Please name it and describe its location within Government.

The national machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women is **the Department of Gender and Family Affairs (DGFA)** within the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development. A brief history of the Department. In June 1981, a Women's Desk was established in the Ministry of Youth, Sports & Community Development. Since the institutionalization of the Women's Desk, the division has undertaken a few name changes. The Desk was renamed the Women's Affairs Unit in September, 1987. In January, 1995, the Unit was renamed the Bureau of Women's Affairs. In October, 2016, the name was changed to the Department of Gender and Family Affairs. Currently, the Department is located in the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, located at Aventura Plaza, John F. Kennedy Drive and Bethel Avenue.

The location of the DGFA within Government is illustrated below

1. CABINET – Prime Minister and Ministers

2. Minister of Social Services and Urban Development

3. Permanent Secretary-Ministry of Social Services & Urban Development

4. Department of Gender & Family Affairs

5. Director – Department of Gender & Family Affairs

Is the head of the national machinery a member of the institutional process for SDG implementation (e.g. inter-ministerial coordinating office, commission or committees)?

✓ Yes

The Director of Gender and Family Affairs is a proposed member of the Sustainable Development Goal Technical Committee which operates from the Office of The Prime Minister. Several consultation meetings were held with the Executive Officers of SDG Technical Unit and the Staff of DGFA regarding the national and ministry level SDG implementation and Beijing + 25 Review.

33. Are there formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

✓ Yes

There is a formal mechanism in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The **National Reporting Cooperation Mechanism (NRCM)** monthly meetings are held to review the implementation of recommendations received from Treaty Bodies and Special Rapporteurs and to monitor their implementation. It is presently seeking technical assistance with installing software to keep track of their implementation and monitoring. The NRCM also aims to participate in better communication with Treaty bodies. The NRCM is an inter-ministerial body with representatives from every ministry and civil society.

The Bahamas hosts a monthly meeting for more than 100 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs) and community or civic based organizations (CBOs) to increase their awareness of ways they may empower their members and the public to access government small business funding, grants, loans as well as how to apply for and write proposals for crown land. Additionally, these NGOs provided information, suggestions and feedback regarding the implementation of the programmes, initiatives and projects that were organized to fulfil the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs has provided funding to various non-governmental organization partners for assistance with the implementation of programmes and initiatives that may fulfil the Beijing Platform for Action as well as the SDG # 5 and # 17.

The committee for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development is called the **National Sustainable Development Goal Technical Committee**. Meetings were held with the executive team of the committee regarding implementation of Beijing, CEDAW and SDG initiatives.

In March 2019, the DGFA made history by organizing the largest delegation to attend **United Nations Sixty-Third Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63)**, which comprised of ninety (90) persons which includes seventy (70) NGO representatives, thirty-five (35) NGO organizations, four (4) political parties, two (2) parliamentarians and public service officers representing government and non-governmental organizations. The NGO representatives participated in and attended numerous sessions at CSW and committed to expanding the work of the DGFA by advocating for and executing programmes that will advance the work of women and girls in The Bahamas to achieve the goals of SDGs # 5,10 and 17. Members of the CSW delegation submitted reports and contributions for this Beijing National Review.

This Beijing+ 25 National Review was shared with forty-five leaders of NGOs and agency representatives for review and corrective feedback and input.

34.a Which of the following stakeholders participate formally in national coordination mechanisms established to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Beijing Declaration and PfA

- ✓ Civil society organizations
- ✓ Women’s rights organizations
- ✓ Academia and think tanks
- ✓ Faith-based organizations
- ✓ Parliaments/parliamentary committees
- ✓ Private sector
- ✓ United Nations system
- Other actors, please specify.....

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- ✓ Civil society organizations
- ✓ Women’s rights organizations
- ✓ Academia and think tanks
- ✓ Faith-based organizations
- ✓ Parliaments/parliamentary committees
- ✓ Private sector
- ✓ United Nations system
- Other actors, please specify.....

34.b Do you have mechanisms in place to ensure that women and girls from marginalized groups can participate and that their concerns are reflected in these processes?

✓ YES

The Bahamas appreciates and expresses gratitude to many of the grass roots NGO organizations that represent the voices, concerns and needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Families of All Murdered Victims (FOAM), Teen Life Skills (TLS) and Parents Choice (PARCHOMAS) are three of the NGOs that have large social media following and who consistently make representation for and on behalf of the marginalized and indigent. These mechanisms for such advocacy and facilitation occur formally during the monthly meetings and via social media as all leaders have mobile contacts for DGFA staff.

34.c Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.

Stakeholders have been invited to contribute to the preparation of the presentation national report via letters and informally via phone calls and emails. They were provided with questions that were best suited for their areas and were asked to respond in a time sensitive manner.

The DGFA encouraged and promoted strategic partnerships to fulfil its mandate by ensuring the gender specialist officers within the department serve as core members of national boards, committees, and commissions including:

- a. The National Women’s Advisory Council (NWAC)
- b. Trafficking in Persons Committee (TIPS)
- c. Migration working Group
- d. National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
- e. National Mechanism for Coordinating and Reporting (OAG)
- f. National Statistics System (NSS)
- g. Urban Renewal Commission (URC)
- h. National Drug Council
- i. National Child Protection Council

The Department holds regular meetings with representatives of Non-Governmental Women’s Organizations and interested women to discuss the concerns of women and how they can be addressed. Strategic partnerships have been forged with entities such as Zonta and Pilot Clubs, Links Incorporated, Developing Alternatives for Women Now (D.A.W.N.), The Bahamas Crisis Centre and Civil Society Bahamas. These organizations assist with awareness raising on various issues that affect women. The Department coordinates the work of the National Women’s Advisory Council, a Government-appointed body of women from a cross-section of society. **Many**

of these organizations submitted annual reports which were used to complete this Beijing + 25 National Review.

The Department has formed an alliance with a number of Men's Organization to address issues that affect men. An inaugural partnership was formed on International Men's Day, 19 November, 2018 with a number of men's organizations. Members of the various Men's group meet on numerous and compile information which was added to this report.

35. Is gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls included as a key priority in the national plan/strategy for SDG implementation?

✓ **Yes**

The **National Development Plan (NDP)** is how the Government of The Bahamas intends to implement and monitor its commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals.

Women have played an integral role in the development of the NDP and the resulting initiatives to promote adequate representation and empowerment. In this vein, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Ministry of National Security have incorporated efforts to ensure that vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, are represented in programmes such as the Over-the-Hill Community Development Partnership Initiative and the Trafficking in Persons Taskforce Victim Centered Approach initiative. Low-income housing for women in low-income communities was particularly noted in the plan.

The SDG Unit has formed a partnership with DGFA to employ a gender focus to many of the initiatives.

The Voluntary National Review 2018 outlines how the Sustainable Development Goal's targets have been aligned with National Development Plan Goals. SDG priority targets 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 which 'end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere...eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation' and, 'eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation respectively' are matched to National Development Goal 7. This goal seeks to eliminate inequality by removing discriminatory laws, policies and practices to ensure social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or another status. National Development Goal 7.2 supports SDG 5 by creating policies which enable full participation of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in economic opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. (Voluntary National Review.2018)

SECTION FOUR: DATA AND STATISTICS

36. What are the top three areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?

- Promulgated laws, regulations, or statistical programme/strategy setting out the development of gender statistics
- ✓ **Established an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics (e.g., technical working group, inter-agency committee)**
- Used more gender-sensitive data in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes and projects
- ✓ **Re-processed existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and/or new gender statistics**
- Conducted new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics (e.g., time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability)
- Improved administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps
- Produced knowledge products on gender statistics (e.g., user-friendly reports, policy briefs, research papers)
- Developed a centralized web-based database and/or dashboard on gender statistics

- ✓ Engaged in capacity building to strengthen the use of gender statistics (e.g., trainings, statistical appreciation seminars)

36.1 Promulgated laws, regulations, or statistical programme/strategy setting out the development of gender statistics

In 2018, The Bahamas established the **Public Financial Management and Performance Monitoring Reform (PFM/PMR)** Project Component II geared toward the formation of a **National Statistical System (NSS) and the Modernization of the Statistics Act** that will meet national and international information standards; with a view to positioning the country and policymakers to have access to more reliable and timely data.

In 2018, a workshop was held as a critical step in preparation for a **National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)**; whereas it brought together key individuals from Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies who are producers and users of official statistics.

During the first of two workshops, four (4) **Sector-Specific Committees** were formed
1. Crosscutting, 2. Environmental, 3. Social and 4. Economic. The committees were responsible for the compilation of user needs and gaps and the development of the Sector Strategy for the Development of Statistics aligned with the relevant Sector Development Plans and Programmes.

The workshops, along with Sector-Specific Committees meetings, were held over four months. The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development (MOSSUD) had two (2) representatives, at the workshops, one from the Department of Social Services (DOSS) and another from the Department of Gender and Family Affairs.

In 2019, the staff members of the Department of Gender and Family Affairs was placed on the **Environmental Committee** which was tasked with: 1. prioritizing the changes that should take place within the NSS during the next five years to fill the gaps identified in the diagnosis; 2. identify the mission and vision of the NSS also looking at data being compiled and disseminated from an environmental perspective. At the end of the workshops and sector-specific committee meetings, all information compiled was given to the consultant hired by the government to oversee the establishment of the **National Statistical System (NSS)**.

The DGFA has not conducted any research to capture current gender statistics about women and girls. This is of urgent priority and will be accommodated in the 2019/2020 fiscal budget period.

The Department of Statistics was scheduled to execute the National Census by Mid-year of 2019. This research will capture poverty disaggregated data.

36.2 Established an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics (e.g., technical working group, inter-agency committee)

The DGFA hosts monthly meetings for an **Inter-agency CEDAW Conventions Committee** to guide the preparation and production of research and programmes which address forms of violence against women and girls. Members of this committee represent over 20 ministries and representatives of NGOs who provided current disaggregated data regarding the status and advancement of women and girls in The Bahamas. This inter-sectorial committee meets monthly and provides relevant data for DGFA Reporting.

The Government of The Bahamas signed a \$20 million-dollar loan with the Inter-American Development Bank in 2016 for the Citizen Security and Justice Programme which the Ministry of National Security is the Executing Agency. The CSJP includes funding for a **national women health WHO model survey** which will be conducted in 2019.

The DGFA works closely with the **Director of Planning Policy and Research Unit** of the Royal Bahamas Police Force so as to access needed disaggregated data on all forms of violence which have been reported and yield convictions. A member of this unit is on the MOSSUD Convention Committee. Data Collection - On September 6, 2018 a meeting was held at Police Headquarters with the Officer-in-Charge of Information Technology, the Police Data Project Manager, Officer-in-Charge of Strategic Policy & Planning Research Branch and the Deputy of that area to review data collection for all official and non-official reports and studies. It was agreed that this information would be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, rural or urban origin, among other variables. Protection orders were also added to the codes so that they can be quantified. Additional support staff was deployed to the Information Technology Department within days to embark on this assignment. This effort is ongoing.

36.3 Engaged in capacity building to strengthen the use of gender statistics (e.g., trainings, statistical appreciation seminars)

The Bahamas supports the need to strengthen the collection and use of gender statistics. In 2014, **Regional Seminar on Time Use Surveys**: The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) organized a two-day Seminar on Time Use Surveys, in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines from 10th -11th December 2014. The short-term goals of the seminar were to provide a forum for sensitizing technical staff and practitioners from gender bureaux and national statistical offices on the value of Time Use Surveys and facilitate the promotion of such surveys for measuring all forms of work, particularly women's activities. The long-term goal was expected to contribute to the development and adoption of national policies regarding the conduct of time use surveys.

In 2015, The Bahamas attended a 2-day workshop on the **System of Progress Indicators for Measuring the Implementation of the Belem do Para Convention** held on March 24th -25th 2015, in Grenada. The workshop provided an overview of the Belem do Para Convention, explained the procedures associated with its survey instrument, and highlighted reporting challenges in the region and recommendations to address such challenges. (The Bureau of Women's Affairs Annual Report 2015)

In 2015, the Government commissioned a study, through the **Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC)**, for a review of the Public Service. This study showed that there is a need to concentrate on, among other things, governance, greater use of technology, succession planning for the public service, training at middle management and senior levels as well as greater inter-ministerial collaboration. In light of this, it is anticipated that one million dollars will be needed in 2016/2017 to foster these developments. The 2015 COMSEC Diagnostic Study of the Public Service rightly stated that "it is vital that [leaders] are selected for the future and not against the present requirements".

In 2016, the **Caribbean Development Bank** provided the opportunity for the Government to participate in its training programme in **Project Cycle Management and Public Policy Analysis and Management**. Over 100 public service employees subscribed to online and face-to-face training in project management and policy analysis. The Training Programme aims to support institutional reforms needed to enable more effective management of policy, programmes and projects. The training included the month-long assessments for First Assistant Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries (formerly the AC Assessment), as well as Certificate courses for Accounts and Secretarial personnel, and for officers interested in Human Resources and Records Management. The assessments included courses such as Governance and Financial Management as well as skills such as innovative and creative thinking, communication, teamwork, analytical and strategic thinking and judgment.

In 2018, the **Disaster Assessment Methodology: Climate Change Workshop** was held. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs participated in the Ministry of Environment and Capacity

Building and Preparation of Country Strategic Framework workshop from 27 to 28 November 2018. The Ministry of Environment and Housing was appointed by the Government of The Bahamas to act as the **National Designated Authority for the Green Climate Fund (GCF)**. As the National Designated Authority, its role includes facilitating, supporting, and creating an environment of GCF processes in The Bahamas.

DGFA worked with **national, regional and international partners** to receive training, funding, technical assistance, resources and data to assist with the identification, assessment, construction and implementation of projects, programmes, and initiatives.

37. Out of the following which are your country's top three priorities for strengthening national gender statistics over the next five years?

- Design of laws, regulations, or statistical programmes / strategies promoting the development of gender statistics
- ✓ **Establishment of an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics (e.g., technical working group, inter-agency committee)**
- ✓ **Use more gender-sensitive data in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes and projects**
- Re-processing of existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and/or new gender statistics
- ✓ **Conduct of new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics (e.g., time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability)**
- Greater utilization and/or improvement of administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps
- Production of knowledge products on gender statistics (e.g., user-friendly reports, policy briefs, research papers)
- Development of a centralized web-based database and/or dashboard on gender statistics
- Institutionalization of users-producers' dialogues mechanisms
- Statistical capacity building of users to increase statistical appreciation on and use of gender statistics (e.g., trainings, statistical appreciation seminars)
- Other

37.1 Establishment of an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics (e.g., technical working group, inter-agency committee)

The DGFA needs to strengthen the establishment of an inter-ministerial and inter-agency Committee to guide the formulation and execution of scientific research, surveys and data analysis so that pertinent and current statistics and empirical data is available to write and publish reports that are needed nationally, regionally and internationally. Capacities and partnerships should be developed to enable States to meet their obligation to collect and publish data disaggregated by grounds of discrimination recognized in international human rights law. These include sex, age, ethnicity, migration or displacement status, disability, religion, civil status, income, sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Department of Gender and Family Affairs monitors, evaluates and reports on the implementation of international conventions adopted by the Government that impact women and men. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Beijing Platform for Action, Montevideo Strategy, CARICOM, and Commonwealth Report. The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women, "Convention of Belem do Para" was adopted in June 1994 and came into effect in March 1995. This Convention seeks to protect women's human rights and eliminate conditions which permit acts of violence against them.

Several initial meetings and discussions were held with various agencies in the 2018/2019 Fiscal Year, and the DGFA will now reach out to these agencies to re-establish connections to advance the coordination mechanism on gender statistics.

1. UNIVERSITY OF THE BAHAMAS RESEARCH AND PLANNING UNIT

- a) Requested partnership on research with gender focus

- b) Requested assistance with review of surveys designed and implemented by the Department of Gender and Family Affairs.
 - c) Requested access to results of research conducted by the University pertaining to Gender Based Violence and Women in leadership
 - d) Requested assistance with design and formulation of questions for Department of Gender questionnaire
2. **SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AT UNIVERSITY OF THE BAHAMAS**
Drafted a proposal to Chair of School of Graduate Studies regarding issues, observations and research needs and data analysis gaps which are needed to help the department make necessary decisions regarding funding, grant writing, programme design and implementation.
 3. **Josiah Leadership Institute and United States Embassy** to fund a course to train the staff at DGFA to observe gaps, determine research problems, design methodologies and conduct research that will provide valuable data analysis for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Articles of CEDAW.
 4. Fortify Partnerships with **POLICE, NSS, DOS, IDB, PAHO, and WHO** regarding the National Women's Health Survey. Formally approached via formal letter and or courtesy visits.

37.2 Use more gender-sensitive data in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes and projects

The Department is mandated to ensure that: (i) international reporting obligations are met, including the United Nations Agencies, Organization of American States Agencies, the Commonwealth and CARICOM; (ii) data collection and management are carried out to inform programming. Specific focus will be given to the cross-cutting issues of Family Island development as well as men and boys in the context of all programming across the two pillars of the Department's work. As a member state of these international agencies, the Department coordinates the regional and international meetings, including the Commission on the Status of Women, which is held in March in New York.

37.3 Conduct of new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics (e.g., time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability)

The MOSSUD has identified seven surveys that need to be conducted to compile and collect current prevalence data and information regarding gender matters.

Meetings were held with IDB and PAHO regarding the need to conduct the Women's Health Survey.

Meetings were held with professors of University of The Bahamas and University of the West Indies regarding the need to conduct surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics.

38. Have you defined a national set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

✓ Yes

In February 2017, the Government of The Bahamas requested the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to conduct an assessment of The Bahamas National Development Plan** to evaluate its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. The UNDP conducted a Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA), and the findings of that review revealed that the first draft of the Plan was 88% aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals. The National Development Plan Secretariat following the RIA, incorporated the recommendations made by the UNDP's

report into The Bahamas National Development Plan to further strengthen the Plan's alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. A subsequent review of the Plan would, therefore, reveal that it is more closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and that gender mainstreaming has been incorporated throughout the Plan as appropriate.

The **Human Development Index (HDI)** is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. To ensure as much cross-country comparability as possible, the HDI is based primarily on international data from the United Nations Population Division (the life expectancy data), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (the mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling data) and the World Bank (the GNI per capita data). Bahamas' HDI value for 2017 is 0.807— which put the country in the very high human development category—positioning it at 54 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 2000 and 2017, Bahamas' HDI value increased from 0.776 to 0.807, an increase of 4.0 per cent. (Global Human Development Indicators. September. 2018)

If yes, how many indicators does it include and how many of those are gender specific?

The National Development Plan consists of sixteen (16) goals, seventeen (17) SDGs and eighty-seven (87) indicators.

Two (2) of the action numbers for goal five (5) are gender specific. The gender specific indicators are:

- i. Create policies which enable full participation of poor and vulnerable groups in economic opportunities for sustainable livelihoods;
- i. Eliminate inequality by removing discriminatory laws, policies and practices to ensure social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, or ethnicity.

The Bahamas has been guided by the CARICOM gender indicators which consist of more than 30 indicators. The DGFA has collated all of the SDG indicators for Goal # 5 and formulated them into the National Gender Equality Policy.

If yes, how many of the gender-specific indicators are additional country indicators (not part of the global SDG monitoring and indicator framework)?

39. Has data collection and compilation on SDG 5 indicators and on gender-specific indicators under other SDGs begun

✓ **Yes**

Data collection is at the beginning stages of being carried out by The Department of Gender and Family Affairs. The Department has compiled a comprehensive report on Goals 1, 2, 5, and 17 which was presented to Cabinet in May 2019. Additionally, information on the SDG 5 indicators are being used to complete both national and international reports. The Department is still at the phase of training staff and finding appropriate methods to compile and store data to make it easily accessible for future use.

40. Which of the following disaggregation is routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

✓ **Geographic location, Income, sex, Age, Education, Marital Status, Disability**

The geographic location is routinely provided by all surveys conducted by the Department of Statistics. Specification on income, sex, age, marital status, education and disability are provided by the Household Survey conducted by the Department of Statistics.

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