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**National Report on Progress in the Application of the Montevideo
Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within
the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030**

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES



**NATIONAL REPORT ON PROGRESS IN THE APPLICATION OF THE
MONTEVIDEO STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL
GENDER AGENDA WITHIN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORK BY 2030**

**Ministry of National Mobilization, Social Development, The Family,
Gender, Persons with Disabilities and Youth Affairs**

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MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN WOMEN'S AUTONOMY AND GENDER EQUALITY SINCE THE ADOPTION OF THE MONTEVIDEO STRATEGY IN 2016

(i) **Improvement in women's achievements in Education:**

During the period under review, the Education Sector has continued to represent the hallmark of achievement of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (GOSVG) for they are convinced that education is the safest, surest and most sustainable way out of poverty and under-development.

Since 2005, the GOSVG has provided universal access to secondary education thus requiring all males and females to attend school. Furthermore, the Education Act of 2006 stipulates that all persons in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) are entitled to receive an education appropriate to their needs and within the compulsory school ages of 5 years to 16 years of age. No person who is eligible for admission to an educational institution shall be subjected to any form of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, place of origin, political opinion, color, creed, social status, physical handicap and sex.

With the Education Revolution Campaign, the government has widened the scope to providing access to and improving quality education in the areas of Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary, Post-secondary, Tertiary, Technical and Vocational, Special Education, Adult and Continuing Education, and Teacher Education. Having entrenched equal access to education at all levels, the focus is on deepening the quality of educational offerings and producing graduates who are well equipped to meet the challenges of a modern economy, and the needs of developing country. In fact, the areas of Science Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) were prioritized for focus in improving teaching quality and student performance.

Generally more females complete secondary school with the qualifications to pursue higher education than do males. Further, like their Caribbean counterparts, Vincentian females not only participated in greater numbers in Tertiary Education but exceeded the performance of males. Caribbean Countries have some of the highest rates of female participation in Tertiary Education with the English Speaking Caribbean having the highest rates of all. One factor that explains this phenomenon is that males leave the formal education system earlier to enter the labour force.

(ii) **Improvements in the area of Women's Health.**

During the period under review, significant improvements were realized in the area of access to sexual health and reproductive services. The GoSVG, through partnership with donor agencies, provides access to women in SVG to be educated and informed of their sexual and reproductive rights. Similarly, access to family planning services assisted with the prevention and management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) nationally.

Additionally, family planning services are integrated into primary health care which are at no cost to users.

(iii) **Provision of support to women affected by Gender-Based Violence:**

Within the period under review, the Domestic Violence Act was passed in 2015 and proclaimed in 2016 where applications for protection orders against perpetrators can be made in the Family Court. This court is a specialized one that was established in 1992 under the Family Court Act, Cap 25, which has sole jurisdiction in matters relating to sexual offences, maintenance and juvenile offenders. It was established to provide the framework for the enforcement of legislation promoting gender equality under the law. This legislation enables applications to be heard in camera.

Analysis has shown that in SVG, domestic violence is systematically linked to the inequality of power relations that result in discrimination against women. In addition to the legal remedies, female victims are provided with social support in the form of cash transfers, therapeutic interventions that are provided through collaborative efforts between the Gender Affairs Division, Child Development Division, Family Court, Ministry of Health and Marion House, which is a non-governmental organisation.

THE USE OF THE MONTEVIDEO STRATEGY IN DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC POLICIES TO ENSURE GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AUTONOMY AND RIGHTS

The Montevideo Strategy has provided the platform towards the implementation and achievement of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030. The strategy was able to draw on lessons learnt from the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals to propose measures in overcoming challenges and obstacles to mainstreaming gender and gender equality into legislation, policies, and programming.

The measures proposed serves as a roadmap towards the development of sectoral and cross-cutting policies aimed at eliminating gender inequalities and fostering women's autonomy, economic empowerment and sustainable development.

PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONTEVIDEO STRATEGY MEASURES

1. Normative Framework: Equality and the rule of Law

- **Domestic Violence Act 2015**

Domestic legislation impacting on the states obligation that was passed during the reporting period, and now forms part of the Revised Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the Domestic Violence Act #7 of 2015. This Act replaced the Domestic Violence (Summary Proceedings) Act of 1995, and provides a road map of response mechanisms for reports of domestic violence. It further provides avenues for action for victims, such as their rights to protection and support among others.

The Domestic Violence Act was passed in May 2015 and proclaimed on November 16, 2016, and is recognized within the Criminal Code and punishable by imprisonment. The legislation provides for added protection through an interim Protection Order which is valid for twenty-eight (28) days and a Permanent Protection Order to further protect the survivor once the investigation during the interim protection order period validates the need for permanency of protection against the respondent.

Subject to Section 7 of the Domestic Violence Act of 2015, a protection order issued by the court may prohibit the respondent from: -

- (a) Committing any act of domestic violence;
- (b) Enlisting the help of any person to commit any act of domestic violence;
- (c) Entering the shared household, except that the Court shall impose this prohibition only if it appears to be in the interests of the applicant or any child or dependant;
- (d) Entering a specified part of the shared household;
- (e) Entering the residence of the applicant;
- (f) Entering the place of employment of the applicant;
- (g) Preventing the applicant, any child or dependant who ordinarily resides or has resided in the shared household from entering or remaining in the shared household or a specified part of the shared household;
- (h) Taking possession of, damaging, converting or otherwise dealing with property that the applicant may have interest in;
- (i) Approaching the applicant within a specified distance

In addition to the above prohibitions, the Court may direct the respondent to: -

- (a) Pay emergency or interim monetary payments to the applicant for spousal and/or child maintenance;
- (b) Immediately vacate the shared household for a specified period of time;

- (c) Make or continue make payments in respect of rent or mortgage for the shared household;
- (d) Receive professional counseling or therapy.

The Legislation defines domestic violence to not only be limited to spousal abuse within the home but a complainant can be any child or adult and is quite extensive to include stalking, intimidation and the environments outside of the home as well as the relationship is not confined to married parties only.

The Domestic Violence Act of 2015 is one of four (4) pieces of family laws that were harmonised across the OECS region, and is complimented by the Status of Children's Act 2011, Child Care and Adoption Act 2010, and the Child Justice Bill.

- **National Action Plan Against Gender-Based Violence**

In 2014, a National Action Plan against Gender-Based Violence (funded by UNWOMEN) was developed to provide a platform for the implementation of activities across various agencies for the period 2015 – 2018 in the following areas:

- Public awareness campaign.
- Activities to improve the capacity of the judiciary and law enforcement to respond to gender-based violence.
- Standardized procedures for responding to gender-based violence (GBV) across agencies.
- Establishment of the National Commission on Gender-Based Violence.
- The provision of legal protection for women, children and other vulnerable groups.
- The development and implementation of rehabilitative support for perpetrators of GBV.
- Partnering with men in communities in reducing GBV.
- The collection of multi-sectoral data on GBV.

2. **Institutional Architecture: Multidimensional and Comprehensive gender equality policies**

The strengthening of the GAD has been a major achievement of the GoSVG during the period under review. In 2015, as part of a business process reengineering within the Ministry of National Mobilisation, that has the responsibility for gender affairs, the division was able to effectively carry out its mandate to ensure that all citizens have equal access to opportunities that will shape their social, cultural, spiritual, educational, economical and political development. This included the reorganizing of the division and its continued evolution into the GAD that reflects a reorientation

towards a more targeted approach in the areas of Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Policy Development and implementation.

The GAD is supported by the normative framework through the execution of the Domestic Violence Act of 2015 in coordination with other core institutions, such as the Royal SVG Police Force, Family Court, and the Ministries of Education and Health. Furthermore, the GAD is guided by the international conventions and human rights treaties which the GoSVG have signed, ratified and acceded, such as the:

(i) Inter American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention of the Belem do Para)

(ii) Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

(iii) Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC)

(iv) Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)

(v) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

The GAD continues to build networks with other key stakeholders such as other government agencies, the private sector, CSOs, and NGOs in an effort to provide understanding and gain acceptance on the role and significance of gender relations in an equitable society. Notwithstanding, the absence of a fully articulated policy framework, the objectives of the GAD are to:

- Increase public awareness on Gender and Gender Equality;
- Strengthen partnerships for the formulation and implementation of a Gender policy;
- Collaborate with other departments/Government Ministries and organizations to institutionalize the responsibility for gender equality throughout government;
- Create a systematic data collection system and Influence departments/Government Ministries and NGOs to institute systems to collect and store disaggregated data;
- Research the current Gender situation in St. Vincent and the Grenadines through situational analyses e.g employment, migration, income, etc.;
- Introduce Gender Mainstreaming initiatives in the key sectors and strengthening Gender mainstreaming through continuous reviews of legislative initiatives around a gender equity framework;
- Formulate a policy on gender equity and implement an action plan that will ensure gender integration into all policies, procedures and programmes; and

- Address the issue of prevention and eradication of domestic violence and educational, social, cultural, and economic growth of the marginalized.

As part of the restructuring in 2015, a number of programmes were developed/strengthened and implemented by the GAD for the full engagement of boys, girls, men and women as strategic allies in achieving gender equality: -

- Re-Entry of teen mothers in Secondary Schools
- Single Parents Empowerment Programme
- Positive Reinforcement Programme for the Rehabitable
- Men As Partners (MAP)
- Anti-Violence Campaign in Communities and educational institutions
- Victims of Domestic Violence Support Programme

Throughout the period under review, the GAD instituted a series of interventions aimed at reducing gender-based violence, poverty, addressing HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, strengthening legislative reform and gender-responsive social policies.

The work programme of the GAD is undertaken by a staff complement of permanent and assigned staff that includes: -

- One (1) Co-ordinator
- One (1) Assistant Co-ordinator
- One (1) Social worker
- Two (2) Project Fields Officers
- Two (2) House Mothers
- One (1) Driver

This staff composition has not been substantially increased during the period under review, and continues to impede the effectiveness and efficiency of the GAD.

Support towards Gender equality and empowerment of Women are also provided by the National Council of Women (NCW) and the Marion House, which are CSOs. Collaboration is continuous with both stakeholders in the implementation of activities towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. In addition, both agencies are provided with an annual subvention to assist with advocacy on women's issues.

3. Popular and citizen participation: democratization of policy and society.

During the period under review, women would have gained the necessary training and experience to occupy leadership positions in both public and private sectors. This is reflected in data from the education sector whereby women and girls are pursuing tertiary and university levels of education in more numbers than men and boys. In addition, a number of senior public officers participated in the Caribbean Leadership Project (CLP) to strengthen the next generation of men and women leaders to contribute more effectively to economic growth, national development, and the reform of the public sector. This investment provided a stronger platform that allowed women to be represented in leadership positions in the public service as Permanent Secretaries, Senior Assistant Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries. Unfortunately, this investment is not reflected in the top positions in statutory bodies and even in the Parliament where males are the majority.

Of the public servants in Grade B positions and above, which constitute the highest posts within the civil service, approximately 60.7% were females. Of those at Grade C posts, which consist of directors, department heads, coordinators and other upper management staff, approximately 57.1% were women.

Women are well represented in the leadership of the public service of the GoSVG as permanent secretaries, members of Statutory Boards and Heads of Departments. Section 79 of the Consultation of SVG provides for the appointment and removal of these persons by the governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Other significant positions in the government held by women during the period under review include the following:

- Accountant General of the Treasury Department
- Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit
- Cabinet Secretary
- Director of the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO)
- Director of Public Prosecution
- First female Deputy Director of the National Insurance Services
- Director of Airports
- Director of Audit

Relative to the eligibility of women to be elected as candidates in general elections, Section 25 of the Constitution of SVG provides for any Commonwealth citizens over the age of twenty-one (21) years and who resides in SVG for a period of twelve (12)

months immediately before the date of his/her nomination for election, who is not physically incapacitated to be elected.

However, in the 2015 General Elections, three (3) women contested that resulted in zero (0) women elected. The House of Parliament comprised:

- A total of twenty-three (23) members
- Two (2) women appointed as Senators
- One (1) woman appointed as Attorney General
- Thirteen percent (13%) women were appointed in Parliament (3/23)
- Women represented 0% of all elected members (0/15)
- SVG ranked #146 out of 193 countries in the world - classification for level of women's representation of legislations (Inter-Parliamentary Union).

In spite of the under-representation of women in parliament, women were very active in the campaigning, mobilizing, and other political work as members and supporters of the political parties during the General Elections in 2015. In addition a Women's Arm is established in two (2) of the main political parties in SVG and these members are involved in training exercises locally and at the regional levels. However, there is a need to move beyond the traditional responsibilities associated with women in political parties, and strive towards identifying and developing candidates in elections, who can attain significant and influential leadership roles in government.

Women play major leadership roles within Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based organizations, Social Service clubs and church organizations. There is a network of NGOs in SVG that focus on various issues including income generation, cultural activities, youth development, provision of social services and poverty reduction.

There are about five (5) vibrant trade unions in SVG where women are active as members and as participants in the leadership. These trade unions represent general workers, public servants, teachers, nurses, and the police. As part of the trade union movement, women receive on-going training in many aspects of organizational development, collective bargaining and other issues including social and health issues relevant to their role as workers. These bodies are very organized and vocal, not just in representing the interests of their membership, but in speaking out on broader national issues.

4. **State capacity building and strengthening: Public administration based on equality and non-discrimination**

The Gender machinery of St. Vincent and the Grenadines collaborates on an ongoing basis with the Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IDGS) – Caribbean Institute for Gender and Development programme held every two years through the Cave Hill Campus. Members of staff of the machinery, other public officers, and members of the general public enroll into this programme where they are awarded with a certificate in Gender and Development Studies.

In addition, the Gender Affairs Division, with effect from 2017, facilitated in collaboration with PAHO two (2) training workshops for service-providers and professions such as the police, educators, health workers, social workers, counsellors, and non-governmental organisations. This is usually conducted during the annual commemoration of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence from November 25 – December 10.

5. **Financing: Mobilizing sufficient and sustainable resources for Gender equality**

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the 2016 budgetary cycle had approved a Performance Budgeting Structure that has since 2018 disaggregated budgetary allocations for the gender development in order to ensure sustainability in providing awareness and the protection of children. With effect from January 2018, The Gender Affairs Division was allocated US\$110,000 per annum to provide social assistance to the clients and for the implementation of empowerment programmes.

In addition, in order to achieve the mandate of the national machinery, support is sought from strategic partners such as UN Agencies (UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UNFPA) OECS, CARICOM, PAHO, USAID among others.

6. **Communication: Access to information and cultural change:**

The National Gender Machinery implements an active public awareness campaign to raise awareness on gender-related normative frameworks, institutional architecture, statistics and information, as well as campaigns for cultural change in the forms of:

- Anti-violence campaign in communities
- Gender sensitization sessions in educational institutions and in communities

- Weekly radio programmes
- Use of social media (Facebook) for further outreach

This campaign is further galvanized during the 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence that is commemorated between November and December annually.

7. Technology: towards e-government and innovative and inclusive economies

Since 2012, the Information Technology Services Division (ITSD) within the Ministry of Economic Planning has conducted activities in celebration of “Girls in ICT Day” on the 4th Thursday in April annually. Some of these activities included: -

- Sensitization sessions on Cyber danger in primary and secondary educational institutions;
- Workshop on Web and Mobile Application Development targeting young women and girls from 15 years; and
- Training on ICT for job employment targeting young female single-parent heads of households.

8. Information systems: transforming data into information, information into knowledge and knowledge into political decisions

Progressive steps have been taken in St. Vincent and the Grenadines towards improving the statistical system with a gender perspective, and the disaggregation and dissemination of data according to important variables in order to improve analysis to reflect the diversity of women’s situations.

- In 2015, the Division of GAD had spearheaded a project in collaboration with the Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force and the Statistical Department to strengthen the data collection procedures in an effort to better record reported incidents of Domestic Violence. The Division of Gender Affairs, along with its partners, has created a standardized tool called “Victim of Crime Data Form’ and database in which sex disaggregated crime data is collected and collated. As part of this initiative there now exists sex disaggregated data on several criminalized forms of gender-based violence and this data is both collected and housed by the Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force. This initiative is particularly essential considering the urgent need for evidence-informed state responses. It also demonstrates the possibilities for partnerships across departments to address Gender Based Violence.

- On March 26, 2018, the GoSVG had signed and endorsed the CariSECURE Citizen Security Toolkit that was designed to guide governments in the OECS region on how to manage citizen security data for effective evidence-based youth crime and violence prevention policy-making and programming. The CariSECURE project is a component of USAID's Youth Empowerment Services (YES) project through support by USAID with technical assistance from UNDP. The goal of this project is to improve youth crime and violence policy-making and programming in the Southern and Eastern Caribbean through the use of quality, comparable and reliable national security information.

CariSECURE is implemented in ten (10) Southern and Eastern Caribbean country including SVG. It is expected that by 2020, targeted countries will be using evidence-based decision-making to develop and improve policies and programmes supported with national budgeting allocations, which effectively targets youth crime and violence risk factors, thereby contributing to the reduction of youth involvement in crime and violence.

9. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability: guaranteeing rights and transparency

At the National level in SVG, there are a number of institutions that implement and monitor the progress of the Montevideo Strategy: -

- 1) The Gender Affairs Division within the Ministry of National Mobilisation, Social Development, etc. is the National Gender Machinery and focal point for the implementation and monitoring of the Montevideo Strategy.
- 2) In November 2017, the GoSVG approved the establishment of a National Commission on GBV, which serves as an oversight body to monitor and report on international conventions and agreements that SVG is signatory too, inclusive of the Montevideo Strategy. This Commission acts as the National Mechanism for Monitoring and Follow-up for gender equality that comprises representatives from key stakeholders including representatives from the magistracy, legislative, health, education, social development, civil service Organisations and Non-Governmental Organizations.
- 3) In the performance of its mandate relative to the Montevideo Strategy, the GAD liaises with the National Council of Women (NCW) and the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Human Rights Association.

**RELEVANCE OF IMPLEMENTATION PILLARS IN ACHIEVING WOMEN'S PHYSICAL,
ECONOMIC AND DECISION-MAKING AUTONOMY**

1. Which implementation pillars have been most relevant for public policies aimed at achieving women's physical autonomy in your country?
 - a. **Normative Framework**
 - b. **Capacity-building and strengthening**
 - c. **Institutional architecture**

2. Which implementation pillars have been most relevant for public policies aimed at achieving women's economic autonomy in your country?
 - a. **Normative Framework**
 - b. **Financing**
 - c. **Institutional architecture**

3. Which implementation pillars have been most relevant for public policies aimed at achieving women's decision-making autonomy in your country?
 - a. **Normative Framework**
 - b. **Participation**
 - c. **Institutional architecture**

MAIN CHALLENGES TO BE OVERCOME IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE THE STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES OF GENDER INEQUALITY IDENTIFIED IN THE MONTEVIDEO STRATEGY

(i) Patriarchal socialisation of society

The pervasiveness of patriarchal attitudes to women are deeply entrenched in the Vincentian society so much so that many institutions including the constitution of SVG and the legal framework aligns themselves in promoting gender inequality. Prescribed gender roles discourage women from pursuing careers in areas such as farming, fishing, engineering science and technology. This has resulted in lower numbers of women in leadership roles in these sectors.

(ii) Gender stereotypes in the Education Sector

The Education System, which plays a significant role in socialisation of children and young people, continue to steer males to studying subjects in the fields of technology, science and engineering with females studying art subjects. The GOSVG is cognizant that gender stereotypes, especially in the education sector, can limit development of the natural talents and abilities of girls and boys, women and men, as well as their educational and professional experiences and life opportunities in general.

Gender stereotypes combined with an absence of gender-sensitive career guidance adversely affects girls and women, and equal access to education does not equate to quality of education or equal outcomes. Thus, we may find women being confined to low-income careers, thereby reinforcing their disadvantaged position in society.

(iii) The Feminization of Poverty

The issue of poverty is greater among female-headed households as identified by the 2007/2008 Country Poverty Assessment, and this continues to be a challenge for gender equality even during the period under review. The data at that time indicated that the poorest women had the largest size households (5.1) compared to the well-off which had small size households (2.4) (KAIRI: 2009).

This research has shown that men and women experience poverty differently, and the reality of increased female-headed households result in women occupying the sole responsibility for the economic survival of their households. The reality of this is that women are the breadwinner and responsible for unpaid care in the household.

In addition, the concept of women in poverty is referenced to those who are unemployed without the economic power or independence to make decisions, and who become vulnerable to sexual harassment, domestic violence, and unequal pay.