
**Thirtieth anniversary of the
Fourth World Conference on Women and the approval of the
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing, 1995) in
Latin American and the Caribbean**

**NATIONAL REPORT
ST. KITTS AND NEVIS**

2024

Government of St. Christopher and Nevis



**Thirtieth anniversary of the
Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**

**Comprehensive National Level Review
The Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis
May 2024**

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AVEC	Advanced Vocational Education Centre
BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
EBB	Entrepreneurs Business Builder
ECDU	Early Childhood Development Unit
EMTCT	Elimination of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEPAP	Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GoSKN	Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis
IOM	International Organization of Migration
IWD	International Women’s Day
LIFT	Livelihood Improvement for Family Transformation
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
PAP	Poverty Alleviation Programme
OAS	Organization of American States
MoSDGA	Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs
NCC	National Counselling Centre
NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
NHC	National Housing Corporation
NIA	Nevis Island Administration
NGM	National Gender Machinery
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NHLDC	Nevis Housing & Land Development Corporation
NMRF	National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-Up
MEND	Mould, Empower, Nurture, Direct
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PSA	Public Service Announcement
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RISE	Restore, Inspire, Secure, Empower
RSCNPF	Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police Force
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SoM	Smuggling of Migrants
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
STEP	Skills Training Empowerment Program

SUD	Substance Use Disorders
THB	Trafficking of Human Beings
TOC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNFPA	United Fund for Population Activity
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WEEFIP	Women Empowerment Entrepreneurship Financial Inclusion Project (WEEFIP)

Introduction

The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) which provides a roadmap for the achievement of gender equality. The year 2025 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration. In March 2025, the Commission of the Status of Women of the United Nations will undertake a review and appraisal of progress made by member states since its implementation.

In this regard the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis presents its report which reviews the progress made since the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) in the 12 critical areas of concern: poverty; education and training; health; violence; armed conflict; economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; human rights; media; environment; and the girl child. This national review takes into consideration achievements, priorities, setbacks, and future goals. Particular mention is made of actions implemented by the Federation to advance women's economic empowerment, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls. This report documents the action taken by the Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis to implement the BPfA since its submission in 2019, of the report marking the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

Section One: Highlights

The Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis has, over the last five years made several advances in its implementation of the BPfA. This report highlights the core elements of the country-level review process; including the main achievements, challenges and setbacks. The review provides an analysis of the measures undertaken to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

Consideration has been given to good practices, mechanisms of national institutions, including the use of data and statistics and demonstrates how the government has provided targeted measures for marginalised women and girls, paying attention to the human rights of women, and the principle of leaving no-one behind.

The review provides an opportunity engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including public and private sector, media, and civil society organisations to enhance awareness of gender equality, mainstreaming and to provide opportunities for national collaboration.

The Federation has seen many achievements including enhanced social protection measures, greater protection for individuals affected by domestic violence (through legislation and training), greater inputs to health, through the addition of specialist healthcare professionals, and provision of service to the most vulnerable groups in society.

Achievements

Social protection measures provide assistance, support and resources to help women improve their financial stability and economic well-being. The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) was revamped and transitioned into the new Livelihood Improvement for Family Transformation (LIFT) Programme in 2024. The new LIFT programme provides increased assistance and support to eligible households, and places special focus on vulnerable groups. New programming has a goal of self-sufficiency, designed to support beneficiaries to return to independence.

Violence against women and girls continues to receive attention through increased education, interventions and legislative measures which have facilitated women's access to justice through the court system. Other efforts continue through training activities and public awareness activities.

Women have benefited through several economic empowerment initiatives in collaboration with, and with the support of international partners. Most notably, skills training and education programmes have enhanced women's marketable skills and increased their earning potential.

Healthcare services have been enhanced through the appointment of specialist healthcare professionals. The Federation has seen the introduction of a breastfeeding policy, programming on non-communicable diseases and nutrition; and several contributions by Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Maternal deaths are very low, and the Federation has maintained its status on Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis for the period 2019-2020.

The development of the St. Kitts and Nevis National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan (GEPAP) was finalised in 2021 with the support of the Saint Kitts and Nevis National Commission for UNESCO. The policy document is a blueprint, and the government's commitment to achieve gender equality. The government is currently implementing the policy; with the first meeting of the National Gender Committee scheduled for July 2024.

Promising practices that support gender equality and the empowerment of women include the development of institutional policies and programming, for example, the National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan and the National St. Kitts and Nevis Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints Protocol. A series of sensitisation sessions were conducted in the last quarter of 2023 where awareness of the two documents were raised with senior management teams of various government ministries. Advancements in women's economic activity have seen several initiatives that support women's entrepreneurial development.

Setbacks

COVID-19 was a major setback to progress, which saw an increase in the cases of domestic violence as women were confined to their homes with perpetrators during periods of lockdown. The caregiving burden of women increased following school closures. The pandemic's severe and wide-ranging effects on the tourism and service industries, and informal economy created unemployment, and financial burdens within families. The economic downturn was intensified by the closure of three factories in the light manufacturing industry, further exacerbating unemployment rates among women. The federal Government however, implemented several measures in response to economic and other challenges that arose during the last five years.

Challenges

Access to good quality and timely data remains a challenge which affects data collection processes. In some cases, sex- and age-disaggregated data remain unavailable in national information systems

Section Two: Priorities, Achievements, Challenges and Setbacks

1. **Achievements, Challenges and Setbacks**

Social Protection

The multidimensional nature of poverty is addressed with a variety of actions focused on responding to economic vulnerabilities which include expanding economic opportunities and improving livelihoods; extending social services to cover all persons and expanding social protection coverage; and reaching those who are socially excluded (including the elderly, unemployed youth, persons with disabilities and persons with compromised health conditions). The Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs is responsible for providing services and programmes aimed at improving standards of living. In addition, other government ministries, private sector stakeholders, and NGOs implement programmes and services which help to reduce poverty and help break cycles of exclusion and inequality.

The former Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), launched in 2018 provided assistance (EC\$500) to households earning a monthly income of less than EC\$3,000. The Cabinet-approved reform of the PAP to the new Livelihood Improvement for Family Transformation (LIFT) Programme in 2024 provided increased assistance and support to eligible households; where seniors, persons with a disability, and persons with children are prioritised. The LIFT Programme provides increased support (up to EC\$600) to households and families with combined earnings of less than \$2,500 per month. Priority is given to unemployed individuals living with the applicant, single parents with child(ren), persons with disabilities, or their caregivers; and seniors aged over 62 years. The improvements are intended to serve the most vulnerable in society, a key feature of the new programme is an increase in the amount of support to qualifying households, including the availability of training in various personal and professional areas through case management. Application processes have been upgraded and incorporate digitisation, and eligible applicants receive cash transfers through the electronic banking system.

The former PAP provided additional support following the COVID-19 pandemic, and the criterion for qualification of the stipend was extended to persons who were directly impacted by the pandemic. This included tourism industry workers, taxi operators who lost their incomes and a host of others whose incomes were severely impacted. Temporary PAP Relief was awarded to 932 recipients during the height of the pandemic. At the end of December 2020, 4,804 households were beneficiaries of this initiative. This social safety net programme supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals one, two and three: no poverty, zero hunger and reduced inequalities. As further support to needed families during the pandemic, the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs (MoSDGA) expanded the care package programme to include households with loss

of, or reduced income due to the pandemic. As of December 2020, the MoSDGA provided more than 250 care packages to households.

Other successes to date include the MEND (Mould, Empower, Nurture, Direct) and RISE (Restore, Inspire, Secure, Empower) cash transfer programmes, implemented in St. Kitts and Nevis respectively which help families develop resilience to break the cycle of poverty by connecting them with a range of social services. Beneficiaries included children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women.

Under the Social Housing Programme, the National Housing Corporation (NHC) and Nevis Housing & Land Development Corporation (NHLDC) have invested in the construction of social and low-income housing units to increase the standard of living. These programmes are also supported by duty-free concessions for first-time owners, which contributes to significantly reducing construction costs. In April 2023, the government entered into a contract with a Trinidadian developer to finance and deliver 2,400 affordable smart homes over a period of four years. The most recent CEDAW periodic reports (2019) submitted to the CEDAW Committee indicates that the majority of application for housing were from women.

Violence Against Women and Girls

Addressing violence against women and girls is an ongoing issue that receives attention through increased education, interventions and legislative measures which have facilitated women's access to justice through the court system. Following the launch of the Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints and Response Protocol in November 2018, training has been delivered through workshops to stakeholders, and sensitisation sessions to senior management teams of government ministries, and police officers. The global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence continues to be utilised by the National Gender Machinery to raise public awareness.

Challenges: The Special Victims Unit of the Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police Force no longer deals primarily with cases of domestic violence. Complainants are now required to report incidents to their nearest police station. This has necessitated the sensitization of police officers on matters of gender-based violence and their handling; the Department of Gender Affairs provides this training. There is no state-provided housing for victims of violence, however, clients can benefit from provision from civil society in this regard.

Limited systems exist to facilitate information capture and reporting on the domestic violence prevalence rates, including victim and offender profiles.

Economic Empowerment

The Federal Government offers skills training and education programmes to enhance women's marketable skills and increase their earning potential. This includes financial literacy and entrepreneurship training for women to build their confidence and skills in managing their finances and businesses. Opportunities are created for local small businesses to market their products and services through networking and participation in Business and Trade Fairs, Social

media platforms are utilized to introduce and market small businesses and female entrepreneurs as well as to advertise virtual learning opportunities targeted at female entrepreneurs.

Setbacks: Loss of employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of three factories came as a major blow to the local light manufacturing sector resulting in approximately 300 job losses.

Health

Ministry of Health initiatives, including efforts in collaboration with international, regional and local partners have contributed to achievements over the past five years including the enhancement of healthcare services through the appointment of specialists; health programming; NGO support to empower women through health-focused programs; and international and regional funding. Breast Cancer Associations and non-governmental organizations work to promote awareness, coordinate support groups, and offer free mammograms to women regularly throughout the year.

Ministry of Health successes over the past five years include a Breastfeeding Policy which led to the formation of the Ministry of Health's Breast-Feeding Committee. These initiatives empower women with the confidence and knowledge to breastfeed. The JNF Hospital received Baby-Friendly Hospital Certification in October 2022, acknowledging its adherence to the ten steps to successful breastfeeding. The SKN Moves Programme celebrates its fifth anniversary this year, this program promotes healthy eating, physical activity, and regular health checks and is particularly significant for women, who are disproportionately affected by overweight, obesity, and some non-communicable diseases (NCDs). A Virtual Nutrition Programme implemented in 2022 and 2023 by the Ministry of Health has empowered women by enhancing their knowledge about healthy eating; the majority of participants are women. A Chronic Disease Self-Management Programme (in collaboration with PAHO) is primarily accessed by women and empowers people living with chronic health conditions with evidence-based techniques to manage chronic health conditions effectively.

Steps to address violence against women and girls through improvements in legislation are important as violence against women and girls have significant physical and mental health implications both on the victim, her family and community. The national Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan makes provision for health for all, with particular mention given to women's health.

Women's health in the Federation has significantly benefited from the efforts of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) such as Lake Health and Wellbeing, the Essence of Hope Breast Cancer Foundation, Reach for Recovery, Lupus Hope Foundation, the Business and Professional Women of St Kitts and others have empowered women through health-focused programs and support.

Challenges: The lack of an intersectional approach results in overlooked gender and sex differences in disease experiences and responses are often overlooked, leading to inadequately addressed health needs of women and men. Women living with disabilities are also a concern, particularly concerning their access to health information and health services and risk of

developing non-communicable disease which is likely to be higher because of the barriers that they experience.

Development of the St. Kitts and Nevis National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan

The development of the St. Kitts and Nevis National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan (GEPAP) was developed with the support of the Saint Kitts and Nevis National Commission for UNESCO. The policy document is a blueprint, and the government's commitment to achieve gender equality under 10 key priority areas which correspond to agreed international priorities for achieving gender equality. The accompanying Gender Equality Action Plan (2022-2027) is central to the coordinated delivery monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the Policy.

The GEPAP was launched with stakeholders across the Federation in 2022, with sensitization sessions delivered to senior management teams and Gender Focal Points in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

Challenges: The impact of COVID-19 and social distancing requirements hindered the consultation process during the development of the policy.

Data collection remains a challenge in the Federation. The lack of a centralized mechanism for the regular collection of sex-disaggregated data impacts upon the ability to generate quality data and evidence required to assist the decisions of policymakers.

Education

The Ministry of Education has increased access to TVET education, technology integration and devices in the school system, as well as increased support for students with special needs.

Priority has been given to the broad aim "Quality education, training, and lifelong education" in keeping with the Education Sector Plan which was developed in alignment with SDG 4.1.

It should be noted that within the education sector the Education Act (2005) addresses issues of equality and non-discrimination. Further, there are no impediments either in law, policy or programme which would impede the progress of women and girls in the sector. Within the Federation, gender does not present a barrier to access, inclusion, nor progression in the education sector.

Challenges: Reports of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual harassment.

Setbacks: The COVID-19 pandemic resulting in a period of school closures

Environment and Climate Action

Reported achievements comprise the increased representation of women in leadership roles within the ministry, such as ministerial positions, department heads, and advisory boards. Efforts have been successful in engaging women in climate change adaptation and mitigation projects, including training, capacity building, and access to resources. Recognition has been given including the celebration of women's contributions to environmental conservation, climate action, and sustainable development through awards, events, and public awareness campaigns.

Challenges: Limited funding and resources allocated specifically for gender equality initiatives, leading to gaps in implementation and sustainability. Inadequate data and research on gender-related issues in the context of environmental and climate policies, hampers evidence-based decision-making and monitoring progress.

Setbacks: Failure to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of gender equality initiatives, leads to a lack of accountability and learning from both successes and failures. There is insufficient coordination and collaboration among government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners to advance gender equality and women's empowerment agendas.

Factory Closures in Light Manufacturing

Manufacturing contributed 4.4% to GDP in 2021¹. Most of the manufacturing industry comprises light manufacturing sectors such as the electronic components. The workforce of which is predominantly female. The sector has seen a decline in recent years. The closure of three factories came as a major blow to the local light manufacturing sector resulting in approximately 300 job losses.

Lutron Liamuiga Ltd closed on 1 March 2019 after 31 years of operation in the Federation, affecting up to 59 workers. The company provided qualifying workers with ex-gratia payments in addition to a financial allowance for the transition and training of workers who desired to transition into other fields. The Government provided severance payment in accordance with the claims made under the Protection of Employment Act. An inter-sectoral collaborative approach spearheaded by the Department of Labour oversaw the transition of the workers after closure. The company-funded training programme provided a buffer for displaced employees and included absorption into other manufacturing companies (53 workers), training through the national skills training programmes, retraining in hospitality, early childhood care, beauty services, capacity building; and entrepreneurship training.

Electrofab closed on 16th October 2019 after more than 10 years of operations in St. Kitts, leaving 100 employees, mostly women without work.

Kajola-Kristada closed its doors on 5 November 2022 after 28 years of existence in the Federation leaving 147 employees laid off; the majority of whom had over 15 years' of service. The Government led a multi-sectoral transition team including members of the Trades and Labour Union, the Labour Commissioner, government bodies, non-governmental organisations, and the Human Resource Manager for Kajola Kristada established to re-train and re-tool employees in order to re-join the workforce as quickly as possible. Laid off workers received a gratuity.

2. Priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies and/or programmes

The government of St. Kitts and Nevis provides comprehensive social protection services to all citizens, nationals, and legal residents to protect against or rebound from risk, shocks and

¹ St. Kitts and Nevis Voluntary National Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2023), p. 49 [accessed 28.5.24]

vulnerabilities. Particular focus is placed on children, women, seniors, and persons in need of medical assistance, income support and social welfare assistance.

Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls

The Department of Gender Affairs currently handles most cases involving violence against women. It is therefore important to have a mechanism to deal with such. The National Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints and Response protocol sets out the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved in domestic violence matters. The Department of Gender Affairs plays the lead role in seeking to reduce and/or eradicate domestic and sexual violence and also in assisting complainants of such violence.

The Domestic Violence Act, 2014, was enacted in November 2019. However, the enactment created changes to the jurisdiction of the court regarding the treatment of domestic violence matters. Previously, domestic violence matters could be brought before the Magistrates Court by the Special Victims Unit (SVU) of the Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police Force, and dealt with by the Legal Aid Centre at no cost to the complainant. The change meant that applications were heard before the High Court and incurred costs to the victim for the processing of legal paperwork; potentially resulting in considerable sums required and creating a barrier to justice for individuals without the means to have their matter heard. To seek redress for complainants, the Legal Aid Centre waived their letter-writing fees and instead wrote a letter to the alleged perpetrator asking them to cease and desist. A meeting of relevant stakeholders was convened in June 2021 to consider the matter and it was recommended that an approach be made to the Attorney General to have domestic violence matters returned to the Magistrates Court, and to redress the perceived oversight in the drafting of the law so that matters may be dealt with at no cost, or low cost.

The matter was successfully resolved through the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, 2022 which enabled cases, to once again be heard before the Magistrates Court.

Poverty eradication

In 2024, the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) transitioned to the Livelihood Improvement for Family Transformation (LIFT). The digitized application process used mechanisms to identify and stabilise the most vulnerable families. Priority is given to unemployed individuals (with or without children) living with the applicant, single parents with children, persons with disabilities or those who care for them; and seniors (62 years and older). Seniors were seamlessly transitioned to the new programme. Closer case management increases interaction with beneficiaries who are encouraged to participate in self-development activities, e.g. empowerment sessions on financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and job-seeking skills to support the path to independence LIFT provides up to EC\$600 (increased from EC\$500 under PAP) cash transfer social assistance per month to households and families earning less than EC\$2,500. This represents an increase of \$100 from the former PAP.

The government provides qualifying individuals with medical, food vouchers and other social assistance.

Women's entrepreneurship and women's enterprises

National population data shows that 51% of households are headed by single females; therefore, it is important to support women in their quest for personal and family development. Through government interventions, women have successfully acquired new skills and started businesses, significantly improving their lives, and increasing their household income.

Sex disaggregated data from Inland Revenue shows that across the Federation, 37% of females were registered for business licences compared to 63% of males (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: St. Kitts and Nevis - No. of Registered Business Owners (by Sex) (February 2024)

Sex	Nevis	St. Kitts	Grand Total
Female	1013	2582	3595
Male	1802	4427	6229
Grand Total	2815	7009	9824

Source: Government of St. Christopher and Nevis Inland Revenue Department

The Small Business Development Unit creates opportunities for local small businesses to market their products and services through networking and participation in Business and Trade Fairs, e.g. annual observances such as Global Entrepreneurship Week, Energy Month, National Carnival, Christmas, and Easter agriculture markets etc. Social media platforms are utilized to introduce and market small businesses and female entrepreneurs as well as to advertise virtual learning opportunities targeted at female entrepreneurs.

Data from the Ministry of Small Business & Entrepreneurship shows that in 2023, 29 training and/or vending opportunities were created, and attended by 788 participants. Females participated in activities in much greater numbers than males accounting for 80% compared with 20% of males (634 females and 154 males). This contrast is particularly evident at small business fairs and the Agri-Night markets (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Ministry of Small Business & Entrepreneurship Activities* (by Sex) (as at 2023)

Particulars	No. of Training Sessions	Number		Area
		Male	Female	
Overseas Workshops	1		1	Global Green Growth Institute Green Entrepreneurship training
Training	1	24	65	Global Entrepreneurship Week
Training	10	66	284	Marketing, Grant Readiness, Record Keeping, Digitalisation
AgriNight Market	4	27	137	
Regional Training	2 (12-week training)		7	Global Green Growth Institute Green Entrepreneurship Training

Particulars	No. of Training Sessions	Number		Area
		Male	Female	
Small Business Fairs		9	40	
Community Business Meeting	6	25	65	Overview of the services of the Ministry
Training Online	4		12	OAS Women's Economic Empowerment
Training and Counselling	1 of general training, then 18 hours of one-on-one counselling	3	23	Taiwan WEEFI Extension
No. of participants		154	634	

Source: Ministry of Small Business & Entrepreneurship

* The same persons often attend all of these programs.

Women's Prison Programme

Incarcerated women are a vulnerable group who face multiple forms of discrimination, including stigma and challenges in obtaining gainful employment upon release. The Women's Prison Programme is part of the women's empowerment platform of the Department of Gender Affairs. The programme delivers weekly short-term skills training in micro-business for female inmates. Sessions aim to improve personal and career development, and focus leadership, life, and technical skills to empower women to enable them to participate fully in the economic activities of the country to assist in alleviating the feminization of poverty. Where appropriate, advocacy services are provided on behalf of inmates, e.g. referral for social assistance, Labor Department. On average, nine women benefit from the weekly programme.

Education

In the Ministry of Education, priority has been given to the broad aim "Quality education, training, and lifelong education" in keeping with the Education Sector Plan which was developed in alignment with SDG 4.1

It should be noted that within the education sector the Education Act, (2005) addresses issues of equality and non-discrimination. Further, there are no impediments either in law, policy or programme which would impede the progress of women and girls in the sector. Within the Federation, gender does not present a barrier to access, inclusion, nor progression in the education sector.

3. Preventing discrimination and promoting the rights of marginalized groups

Women and Girls living with HIV/AIDS

In 2022 the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis successfully maintained its status for the Elimination of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis (EMTCT) for the period 2019-2020. Global and regional validation is required biennially, to evaluate the country's EMTCT programme. The Ministry of Health facilitates the EMTCT Committee which continues validation exercises to monitor the quality and accuracy of data collection mechanisms, and audit the care provided to

pregnant women. As part of its training programme, the Department of Gender Affairs provided sensitisation and refresher sessions in 2019 and 2022 respectively, to healthcare professionals on the relevant articles pertaining to women's health in the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The Ministry of Environment, Climate Action, and Constituency Empowerment has collaborated with the Ministry of Health in hosting Community Health Fairs and HIV/AIDS screening. There are continued efforts to promote access to clean water and sanitation, address environmental determinants of health, and support community-based interventions for women and girls living with HIV/AIDS.

Younger Women

In June 2023, The Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs welcomed the involvement of a private sector company as the main partner and corporate supporter of the long-standing Project Viola Teen Mothers Programme. The initiative, known as 'The Horsford's Project Viola Teen Mothers Educational Scholarship Initiative' provides financial support to Project Viola students pursuing tertiary education.

During the period 2017 to 2022, Project Viola served 51 teen mothers, with 71% successfully completing their secondary education. However, data reveals that students enrolled in tertiary level programmes require additional support. Over the same timeframe 35% of students dropped out of tertiary education citing financial difficulty or the need to pursue employment as reasons.

The annual commitment of EC\$4,400.00 (four thousand four hundred Eastern Caribbean Dollars) in sponsorship from Horsfords will make a significant impact on efforts to provide better support to programme participants in St. Kitts through enhanced access to tertiary education including provision for transportation, school supplies and lunch subsidy. It is recognised that education can serve as a catalyst for social change which better equips persons to secure better-paying jobs, thus combatting the risk of social and economic exclusion; with the added benefits of empowering teen mothers to improve their economic status while contributing to the economy and well-being of their own families.

Age-Inclusive Climate Action

The Ministry of Environment, Climate Action, and Constituency Empowerment has ensured that its climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies are age-inclusive and consider the needs of older women. This involves conducting vulnerability assessments that specifically consider the impacts of climate change on older populations and developing targeted interventions to address their needs.

Youth, Ageing and Disabilities

The Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Ageing and Disabilities was officially launched in March 2022. Its mandate encompasses several programmes and initiatives undertaken by other government departments to address the needs of target populations which focuses on vulnerable populations, which include youth, older adults and those living with disabilities.

Several successes in 2023, included the completion of the initial report on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the introduction of a Seniors Day Programme in three communities, an increase in support to special interest organizations, the introduction of sign language training for front-line workers, the return of the annual summer residential camp to a two-week timeframe and the reintroduction of a scholarship opportunity to the International Music Camp. In collaboration with the United Nations Regional Office, the Ministry also facilitated youth input to the National VNR by hosting a national youth consultation.

The Ministry acknowledges that lack of accessibility remains a critical obstacle. Social inclusion through communication such as sign language has improved via the Government public media engagement but is not yet mainstreamed in the local sphere. The use of disability parking permits has been introduced in Basseterre. Home Care Services will be expanded with weekend assistance and respite services for private caregivers. Accessibility to decent employment will remain a priority area for the Ministry. Training opportunities, such as the successful Youth Entrepreneurial Advancement Scheme, will be available in collaboration with other partners. In 2024, the Ministry will launch a school-to-work transition programme for persons with disabilities to assist with job retention. The Ministry believes that its programmes and initiatives should always be evidence-based and as such, will be guided by the results of various surveys and research that the Youth Unemployment Task Force will undertake.

New activities to be introduced to the Senior's Enrichment Programme to promote inclusion include a Gardening Club for seniors, a Chess Club and music classes. The Seniors Day Programme will be extended to three additional communities. Programmes such as these promote active and healthy ageing, which not only improves the quality of life of seniors but also allows them to continue being actively involved in their communities.

Special groups for gender mainstreaming

Domain 10 of the Gender Policy and Action Plan makes provision for Special Groups for Gender Mainstreaming. It speaks to ensuring the rights of older persons through analysis of their needs and opportunities for participation, and development of a policy on ageing/rights of older persons and gender mainstreaming in policies; and youth through youth-centric programming, education and awareness. The policy aims to ensure that gender-aware services reflect the rights and aspirations of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) through gender-aware policies and programmes, evidence-based strategies; and public education. The policy promotes protecting the human rights of the LGBTQI population through working with the sector to end discrimination and violence, enhanced education and training on protection, building zero tolerance education, and mechanisms to safeguard freedom of expression etc. Strategic actions suggested to achieve gender equality progress for Adults in the Justice System include a review of prison programming, and integration of female inmates into academic programming offered to male inmates. Further recommendations include upholding the gender rights of migrant populations through research to identify discrimination, and prevent gender-based violence. Other strategic measures include public education, and monitoring and evaluation.

In 2024, members of the National Gender Machinery participated in train the trainers sessions hosted by the Eastern Caribbean Alliance (ECADE) on the Trainers' Manual for Inclusion and

Diversity in the Caribbean (commissioned by Equality and Justice Alliance). Representatives of the St. Kitts Nevis Alliance for Equality have expressed a desire for a more inclusive approach regarding their concerns.

Education

Within the education sector women and girls are not specifically discriminated against and are traditionally not marginalized. Within the education sector, persons with disabilities are marginalized. Efforts are being made to improve educational outcomes for persons with disabilities through the following activities:

- Establishing two campuses for Cotton Thomas Comprehensive School. The decision was taken for several reasons: a) to allow for a return to full day instruction, b) allow for a reduction in class size, c) increase access to the institution as students with moderate disabilities were often waitlisted owing to large class sizes at the school.
- Provision of learning equipment for blind students.

It should be noted that education access and quality is not significantly impacted by location. There are no areas which would be deemed remote in the Federation. Rural schools (i.e. schools outside the capital) are equally provisioned for within the education budget and benefit from the equal distribution of school materials, equipment, supplies, and personnel.

Employment and Labour

Over the last 5 years, staff within the Ministry of Employment and Labour have participated and received training on Gender mainstreaming and institutionalization. Training and policy mapping has also been conducted for selected persons within the Ministry.

4. Confluence of different crises

COVID-19

Women across the Federation were particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was evidenced through the escalation of cases of gender-based violence (aka 'shadow pandemic'). The closure of workplaces, and schools increased caregiving responsibilities for women. The service and tourism industries were greatly impacted, leading to loss of income and employment, which also affected informal workers.

Government response measures included a national \$120 million stimulus package; this included, additional support to the Poverty Alleviation Programme, Social Security Board payments of income support relief for employees and self-employed persons. Social protection measures included the provision of care packages and meal support.

Mental Health Impact of COVID-19

The National Counselling Centre (NCC) is a mental health agency attached to the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs. Its primary responsibilities include the provision of specialized counselling services for a variety of issues; crisis intervention during mental health emergencies and crises, including crisis de-briefing.

The pandemic, at its height, led to a rise in mental health problems among women, including anxiety, depression, and stress. Factors such as increased caregiving responsibilities, job losses, and health concerns, especially for women who have a heavier burden as the head of households, exacerbated these issues.

Changes in Help-Seeking Behavior were evident in how and when women sought help for mental health issues. At the height of the pandemic, social distancing measures, lockdowns, and fear of contracting the virus made traditional in-person counselling less accessible, pushing more women into self-isolating behaviours.

Women faced several barriers to accessing mental health care during the pandemic, including increased domestic responsibilities; with children at home due to school closures and the need to care for sick family members, many women had less time to seek help. Limited availability of services caused by the suspension of face-to-face services in clinic settings and Day Treatment Centre services as a result of the COVID protocols, many women were forced to have minimal access to mental health care to address the stressors associated with the pandemic. The National Counselling Centre (NCC) noted that the pandemic changed social dynamics, potentially reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental health care as more people recognized the universal impact of the crisis.

Specific vulnerable groups during the pandemic, included:

- Pregnant women and new mothers who faced increased anxiety and depression due to concerns about prenatal care, childbirth, and postpartum health.
- Women Experiencing Domestic Violence. Lockdowns and social isolation intensified situations of domestic violence, making it harder for women to seek help safely.
- Women in Low-Income Brackets: Greater financial instability and limited access to healthcare resources.
- During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Counselling Centre registered increases in women seeking support (via telephone/virtual services) to address the above-mentioned.

COVID-19 and Education

The implementation of the BPfA was impacted by COVID-19. There were brief periods of school closure to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. In an effort to respond to concerns regarding loss of learning for students the following actions were taken during and after COVID.

- Provision of internet access to families without during periods of school closure for a period of six months.
- Distribution of tablets and laptops to students in need of devices during COVID.
- Post-COVID, the implementation of an educator sector strategy to provide devices (appropriate for age, grade, and learning outcomes) to all students at the primary and secondary level.

It should be noted that access to technology information, digital applications, equipment, and training is universal in the education sector. As gender is not a limiting factor in education no gender specific strategy was developed with regard to distribution or training.

Food and Fuel Crisis

Rising prices and fluctuations in global food and fuel prices have increased the cost of living, subsequently affecting household budgets and exacerbating food insecurity, particularly among low-income families. Women, who are often responsible for food preparation and household management may face challenges in accessing affordable and nutritious food, as well as affordable and clean energy. Response measures include the promotion of sustainable agriculture and food production practices that enhance women's access to land, inputs, and markets, while also addressing climate resilience and environmental sustainability; and targeted assistance to women-headed households and marginalized communities to mitigate the impacts of rising prices and food insecurity.

Climate Crisis

The Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis is vulnerable to climate-related hazards such as hurricanes, flooding, and sea-level rise, which can disrupt livelihoods, damage infrastructure, and exacerbate social and economic inequalities. Environmental degradation and climate change impacts, such as changes in rainfall patterns and temperature extremes affect agricultural productivity, water availability, and ecosystem services, impacting women's livelihoods and well-being.

Response measures include the implementation of climate adaptation and resilience-building initiatives that prioritize the needs and perspectives of women, including access to early warning systems, disaster preparedness training, and resilient infrastructure. Promoting sustainable land and natural resource management practices that enhance women's participation and leadership in conservation efforts, such as community-based forest management and marine protected areas. The integration of gender considerations into climate change mitigation strategies, including renewable energy projects, low-carbon transport initiatives, and sustainable urban planning, to ensure equitable access and benefits for women and girls.

5. **Priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls**

National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan

Federal priorities include the full implementation of the National Gender Equality Action Plan and supporting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); National Social Protection Policy and Action Plan; monitoring and reporting on Cabinet-approved protocols (Child Protection and Domestic Violence; compliance and adherence to national legislations, including regular reporting to regional and international entities on conventions acceded to.

The domain 'Rule of Law, Justice and Gender Rights' under the national gender policy seeks to strengthen the Federation and link the accountability and compliance agenda for gender rights and equality with national laws and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. The policy aims to create an enabling environment that guarantees gender rights as human rights and ensure legal protections accordingly. Strategic actions under in the Gender Action Plan include a comprehensive review of legislation, review, amendment, and repeal of all discriminatory laws and harmonizing the age of consent (currently at 16, with the age of majority at 18).

Education

The Ministry of Education has established frameworks, policies and procedures which are intended to enhance the professionalisation of teaching. Through this process, the Ministry expects to see enhanced accountability for all persons within the sector and greater transparency regarding operational decisions. Further, current revisions to the national curriculum, inclusive of learning and assessment strategies, are aligned with gender-sensitive instruction. Thus, teaching and learning processes which pay attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys are fully reflected.

It is anticipated that within the next five-year period, the Ministry will begin the task of reviewing the Education Sector Act, (2005). Major advancements concerning the education curriculum, and the professionalisation of the system necessitates the proposed review and subsequent revision. Issues of gender equality and equity will be addressed in the review and will inform the revision.

Youth Empowerment, Ageing and Disabilities

The Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Ageing and Disabilities remains committed to working towards full accessibility and inclusion of all persons regardless of age and ability. Consultations will continue toward the development of policies and legislation to ensure adequate protection for clients, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Services and other stakeholders. The introduction of a Case Manager provides clients with an advocate to provide support and relevant information on services available. The Ministry is optimistic about the future and has received support from the private sector, community-based organizations, other government stakeholders and international and regional organizations.

In 2024, the Ministry will continue its outreach efforts. Advocacy will be intensified by the launch of several new PSAs promoting the rights of target populations, and provision of opportunities for interaction between populations to promote tolerance and acceptance. Intergenerational

relationships will be encouraged by including school-aged children and youth volunteers at Seniors' Day and Enrichment Programmes.

National Counselling Centre

While there is not yet a dedicated programme, the National Counselling Centre (NCC) has been the recipient of recent training – facilitated by OAS/CICAD – on the issue of 'Women and Substance Use: Stigma'. This training highlighted the need to address women's substance use and mental health concerns in a very dedicated way, including conducting various educational and destigmatizing activities on the subject matter.

The timeline for the rollout of some activities suggested under this training, is scheduled for October 2024, and should result in the beginning of the de-stigmatizing activities.

The NCC provides an array of services, in a centralized location, to persons seeking mental health care. On average, 155 clients are seen monthly, 80% of which are women who seek services for depression, anxiety and other mood disorders; trauma and PTSD; relationship/family conflict/intimate partner violence; and Substance Use Disorders (SUD).

Access to specialist care is offered when indicated in the treatment protocol. However, specialist care is limited to two (2) psychiatrists who serve the public health system in the Federation, and stigma in mental health still impacts women seeking specialized services for disorders such as substance use. There is a mental health day treatment center that aims to provide complementary mental health services for people diagnosed with more complex mental health disorders, but there are no specialized programmes for women in any of the treatment options mentioned.

Recommendations for health services include:

- Development of a Comprehensive Women's Health Policy: Ensure the policy includes clear implementation plans and consequences for inaction.
- Increased Funding: Allocate more resources to women's health initiatives.
- Enhanced Collaboration: Build stronger partnerships between governmental departments and NGOs to address women's health issues effectively.

The initiatives undertaken by the government and civil society to improve women's health are crucial as strides are taken to equip women with information and skills to make informed health decisions. This empowerment grants women the agency to manage their health and lives proactively. Furthermore, these efforts can facilitate women's access to essential medical care and support, enhancing their overall health and well-being. Good health is an important factor that enables full participation in society; therefore, any measures aimed at improving women's health are vital for advancing gender equality and equity.

Section Three: Progress across the 12 Critical Areas of Concern

This section provides an analysis of the priorities, achievements, challenges, and setbacks over the previous five years since the completion of the last report in 2019; in addition to new and emerging priorities for the future.

6. **Advancement of gender equality in the world of work**

Under the Gender Policy and Action Plan the domain 'Decent Work and Inclusive Economic Growth' makes provision for entrepreneurship, business development and trade whose overall goal is to enable men and women to benefit from sustainable livelihood strategies, economic growth, and productive resources. Recommended strategic activities include the provision of an enabling environment and equitable access for women and men for entrepreneurship and business development, including credit and financing.

Women's Employment, Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion Project (WEEFIP)

The Ministry of Small Business, Entrepreneurship and Cooperatives has measures in place to assist in "Connectivity and Technology for driving Women Economic Empowerment through Women-led MSMEs". However, please note that the Federation's laws and policies, The Small Business Development Act of 2009, does not contain any special provisions for men or women as there are no discriminatory practices or impediments for individuals to access benefits, services or other types of concession prescribed in the Act, except that of nationality (must be a CARICOM national). Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Ministry is cognizant that women form the backbone of our society, and their entrepreneurial spirit is second to none. There is commitment to foster an environment where women can rise, lead, and inspire. From training to funding, special initiatives targeting women in business will be a priority.

COVID-19 magnified gender inequalities and disparities faced by women entrepreneurs, highlighting the need for targeted policies, programmes, and support mechanisms to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and promote their recovery and resilience in the post-pandemic era. In the context of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality, the role of the Ministry of Small Business, Entrepreneurship and Cooperatives is even more critical. SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Through collaborative partnerships with international agencies who share the same objective as it relates to the development of women-led businesses, outlined below are some of the programs/initiatives to date the Ministry successfully contributed to in achieving this goal.

Taiwan ICDF Project Proposal for Assisting the Economic Empowerment of Women in Latin America and The Caribbean in the Post-Pandemic Era. Women Empowerment Entrepreneurship Financial Inclusion Project (WEEFIP)

Project Description: To support boosting the economy after the pandemic and maintaining social stability through strengthening women's economic empowerment, the Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (Taiwan ICDF) provided financial assistance support for micro-enterprises and women, combining credit guarantee mechanism and capacity building of employment and entrepreneurship to improve financing opportunities for enterprise.

The main components of the project:

- Institutional function enhancement
- Vocational skills training for women
- Counselling for women's entrepreneurship and development
- Counselling for MSMEs

Nine cohorts of vocational training were delivered to 255 unemployed women which comprised business strategy, micro-trade, digitization, beauty, and food and beverage; MSMEs counselling included financial relief, management support and one-on-one assistance. Overall, 400 women were served by the project, including 120 Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) receiving USD \$3,000 financial relief, with nearly 30% starting their own businesses.

Advocacy for project graduates takes the form of awareness raising to enable government to utilize goods and services of the entrepreneurs.

Economically Empowered Women for Equitable and Resilient Societies – Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Project

The Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis is a participating member state of the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Project implemented with funding from the U.S. Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States (OAS) and META. The objective of the project is to 'empower women to actively participate in and benefit from the digital economy'.

One of the pillars of this program is to build the capacity to support women-led MSMEs and enterprises in their effort to digitize, build their online presence, access financial services, benefit from the digital economy, and access the international market.

Trainers receive training in these six modules to then train women entrepreneurs. The three geared toward the use of technology included topics such as digital technologies, cybersecurity, data protection, e-commerce, digital products, content creation, and data analytics. In 2023 women received training in these areas and the training is set to be repeated in 2024 and will include the other modules.

Other technology programs under the OAS WEE project include:

- META – the effective use of Facebook and Instagram (completed in 2023)

- Blueprint – self-paced, step-by-step tutorial to build digital marketing knowledge and place businesses online.
- SheMeansBusiness – this encourages women entrepreneurs to develop digital skills.
- WhatsApp business training

The OAS also created an online Clearinghouse where the above information can be found for free, including continued access to the training material. The Clearinghouse is dedicated to supporting and empowering women entrepreneurs. A formalization toolkit was created for St. Kitts and Nevis which is a roadmap for women-led and women-owned micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) designed to empower women to make informed decisions.

Sixty-nine women from the Federation have signed onto the OAS WEE programme. Two of these women will attend Expanding International Marketing Opportunities for MSMEs to be held in Washington DC on 13th and 14th March, 2024. The conference aims to build on past and ongoing MSME national and regional initiatives led by the OAS geared towards MSME digitalization, internationalization, and the active participation of women-led MSMEs in e-commerce.

The Federation does not suffer from an internet access challenge, but business technology education may be required. Possible programs to increase the use of technology in businesses include:

- Networking and mentoring programs
- Peer-to-peer training
- Lower priced equipment
- Hands-on training sessions
- Easier access to finance and different types of financing options for persons to invest in technology-based solutions

Women's Unemployment Registry (Nevis)

On 1st August, 2023 the Department of Gender Affairs partnered with the Nevis Island Administration's Department of Labour, SIS Inc., and the Nevis Division of the St. Kitts and Nevis Chamber of Industry and Commerce to re-launch its Women's Unemployment Registry. The initiative, originally launched in 2016, aims to increase women's employability.

Under the program the Department of Gender Affairs provides support to women in their search for work through tailored training assistance with resumés, interview preparation, the provision of workshops and mentorship to help women enhance their skills, and boost confidence, and assists employers in male-dominated fields to appropriately achieve gender balance in the workplace. The initiative marks a milestone in empowering women and promoting gender equality through its offer of ongoing support to women to facilitate their career growth and job stability.

A further benefit of the Women's Unemployment Registry program is the creation of a centralized database that is advantageous to both parties; employers may access a diverse talent pool and women will have a platform to showcase their abilities.

Legislation

The Equal Pay Act, 2012 makes provision for the removal and prevention of discrimination based on the sex of the employee in paid employment.

Agriculture

Farm holdings are predominantly held by men, with women under-represented in direct farming and fishing operations. Women tend to be involved in small-scale agro-processing and marketing activities. There is no official policy or programme within the Department of Agriculture that targets women or women in rural areas in St. Kitts. Notwithstanding this, women in agriculture and in general have equal opportunity to access farmlands, although the agriculture sector is still dominated by males. In 2022, farmer registration indicated that there was a significant increase in farmer registrations over the past 5 years to approximately 1,599 farmers, of which 216 (14%) were females and 1,383 (86%) were males.

The Fahies Women Cooperative Society, established after the closure of the sugar industry (2005) is still active and continues to receive the support of the Ministry of Agriculture. Over the past five years this group benefited from several agro-processing workshops geared towards expanding and enhancing their livelihood. Such training focused on processing of breadfruit chips, breadfruit flour, guava cheese and wine.

The Department of Agriculture continued its initiative to build resilience to a crisis such as COVID-19 through its Farmer Assistance Program to which both male and female farmers, whether from rural or urban areas, have equal access. In 2022, 203 farmers (25 females and 178 males) benefited from this programme, where they received wire, fencing poles, ground cover, seeds, fertilizer, insecticide, water storage tanks and greenhouses.

At the Department of Agriculture, more women have been promoted to managerial and sub-managerial positions. In 2022, the Strategic Operation Committee constitutes more than 50% females.

The Ministry of Agriculture continues to support the development of women farmers. In 2022, several women farmers were engaged in fruitful discussions with the purpose of implementing a range of measures to further support local women's participation in the agricultural sector. Examples of such include the relationship with women within the Federation to form the St. Kitts chapter of the Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP). Special extension and advisory services will also form part of the ministry's support to women and this support will enable women to understand the market and how it operates and it will enable them to know the needs of the market both in products, quality and volume.

Other projects include the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Water Energy Food (WEF) Nexus project which sought to incorporate gender mainstreaming in its implementation. Twenty (20) farmers were selected to benefit directly from the WEF Nexus project that aimed to install and equip the farms with solar-powered drip irrigation, water harvesting and storage systems. The project stipulated that 20% of the farmers selected should be women. Of the 20 beneficiary farmers selected, 6 were women (30%). Training comprised installation, operation, maintenance, and management of the systems that allow them to adapt to climate change challenges, with the potential to increase farm output, productivity, and household income. As part of the gender mainstreaming focus of the project, planned focus group sessions on gender mainstreaming in agriculture aimed to bring together women farmers, women employed in technical and agricultural extension positions. The sessions provided opportunities to raise concerns, constraints, give perspective on disadvantages faced relating to access to resources, support services, shortfalls of existing their recommendations for solutions going forward.

Social Security

Employees in the informal economy in St. Kitts and Nevis can access protections through self-employed coverage provided by the St. Christopher and Nevis Social Security Board. Where an informal worker does not have formal employment contracts with an employer, or operates unregulated (but legal) business activity, they may register as a self-employed person to access all benefits and protections offered by Social Security to employees in the formal sector, except for Employment Injury benefits. However, the Social Security system does not provide unemployment benefits at this time.

A female from the informal sector who registers with Social Security as a self-employed person has access to short-term benefits such as maternity, funeral, and sickness, as well as long-term benefits like age, survivor's, and invalidity pensions among others.² However, there are other ways for the informal worker to obtain protection as an employee. If a person requiring the service of the informal worker registers with Social Security as an employer, then they may make the requisite payments and reports to Social Security on their behalf. This would ensure that the informal employee can be covered for the duration of the work relationship. Some examples exist as homeowners register as employers for persons they hire as domestic workers. These employers may not be required to register with Inland Revenue as they are not conducting business that generates profit etc, or providing services that are accessible by the general public. This registration as an employer is mainly to ensure that their employee has Social Security coverage.

Financial inclusion and access to credit

As at time of this writing, data was available only for one commercial bank in the federation. Please note that, in this regard the following information in this section pertains to such.

² St. Christopher & Nevis Social Security Board, Things You Should Know booklet which available for download at <https://socialsecurity.kn/booklets/> or <https://socialsecurity.kn/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Things-You-Should-Know-2018.pdf> [accessed 8.9.22]

One commercial bank reported that, with regard to lending and loan types, no disparities existed relating to products and rates.

It is recognised that barriers associated with women’s access to credit facilities included:

- Income: Women being the only bread winner
- Education: Lower levels of education. Hence women have lower paying jobs
- Based on the two above, they do not have the available collateral

Financial inclusion metrics are based on behaviours. Men are more confident and knowledgeable as it pertains to finances and open to take a risk. Women, however, are more cautious, save more, and most of the time; have a plan for the future. Financial education is available to both sexes.

Gender-specific initiatives in the banking sector

For 2024 International Women’s Day (IWD) and among the celebratory initiatives, Republic Bank launched the third cohort of the renowned Entrepreneurs Business Builder (EBB) Programme. Eighty women entrepreneurs are to be engaged in the EBB Programme, executed by their partners, Business and People Development (BPD) Associates, and made possible through Republic Bank’s Power to Make a Difference Social Investment Programme, which was specially crafted with women entrepreneurs in mind, and seeks to empower them to build future-proof, profitable and sustainable businesses.

One hundred and eleven (111) women from across Republic Bank’s subsidiary territories successfully graduated from the first and second cohorts.

Challenges and opportunities in the banking sector

Opportunities available in the sector include financing for women with start-up businesses based on type of business; and special interest rates and lending programmes for women. Challenges include the lack of financial education, proper record keeping; and collateral requirements.

Sex-disaggregated data provided by the financial institution shows that females represented 54% of mortgage borrowers. Females accounted for almost equitable numbers with regard personal loan borrowing. The data also revealed that of all female customers, 15% accounted for the number of loans. See tables below.

Table3: Lending Patterns at One Commercial Bank by Sex (May 2024)

Sex	Mortgage	Personal Loan	Grand Total
Female	632 (54.1%)	393 (49.6%)	1025
Male	536 (45.9%)	399 (50.4%)	935
Grand Total	1168	792	1960

Source: Republic Bank

Table 4: No of Deposit Accounts and Loans for Females at One Commercial Bank (May 2024)

Number of Female customers	Number of Deposit AC	Number of Loans
6740	6771	1025

Source: Republic Bank

7. Actions to reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance, and strengthen the rights of paid care workers

Expanded childcare services or made existing services more affordable

Women’s economic enhancement is assisted by the government-run island-wide network of Early Childhood Development Centres which enable women to enter the workforce. Serving children from birth to five years old; the centres operate between the hours of 7am to 5:30pm and provide high quality early childhood care. There are no fees for parents and guardians of children who attend government centres. The government provides a subvention, which rose in September 2023 from EC\$25 to EC\$50 per child to parents/guardians of children who attend private early childhood facilities (subject to eligibility, based on socio-economic criteria). Public centres give priority to the most vulnerable populations. These services assist women to balance work, caregiving responsibilities, and to participate in public life.

Education

The Ministry of Education - St. Kitts, through the ECDU, is developing a parent education programme aimed at the early childhood education sector. Thus, the target for this intervention are the parents and legal guardians of children enrolled in the early childhood centres in St. Kitts. The programme is intended to support parents, mothers, and fathers alike, in meeting the development needs of their children during this distinct phase of early education and care.

Employment and Labour

The Ministry of Employment and Labour reports that international developments are ongoing with regard to the Care Economy and recognizes that the Care Economy is central to human, social and economic well-being for development and for advancing social justice.

8. Reducing the gender digital divide

Further effort to increase females in Science Technology, Education and Mathematics (STEM) and IT fields is required. The ICT department promotes digital training for girls and young women in the Federation and International Girls in ICT is observed annually. Key activities included learning sessions about the fundamentals of programming and mini-robots as learning aids, at which 16 girls from different schools participated in 2022. Up to 12 girls from first and second forms also benefited from internships in 2022 and had opportunities to learn about web development programming and 3D printing.

In 2023 the Department of Gender Affairs collaborated with the Ministry of Education (St. Kitts) to conduct a survey on the Representation of Female Students in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) in Public Education Institutions in St. Kitts. The research examined factors that influence the under-representation of females in the STEAM subject areas. The target populations comprised students at primary school (sixth grade), secondary school (second form); and tertiary level (first and second year); and principals from all sectors. The research sought to understand student perceptions and motivation, gain insights into their learning and teaching experiences; identify areas of improvement to highlight training and development needs; and obtain data for evidence-based policy to support the development of initiatives.

Education

See response to question 4.

A gender digital divide does not exist in learning environments. A universal approach to technology procurement and distribution is applied in the education sector. Ministry of Education data shows a total of 3,504 devices have been distributed to students.

9. **Effect of the macroeconomic and fiscal policy**

Minimum Wage Increase

The Government undertook measures to reduce income inequality through wages and social policies, one important strategic goal was the revision of the minimum wage. In December 2023 the government announced the raise of the minimum wage. Effective from 1st January 2024 the minimum wage rose from EC\$9 per hour, or EC\$360 per week; to EC\$10.75 per hour or \$430 per week. A further increase in the minimum wage is scheduled to be implemented on 1st July 2025, increasing the hourly rate of EC\$10.75 to EC\$12.50; resulting in a rise from EC\$430 to EC\$500 per week. The increase is intended to improve the standard of living and empower the workforce to support themselves and their families. Approximately 9,655 workers, representing 38% of those who were actively employed were eligible for the income in the minimum wage.

Pension Contributory Plan

The government introduced a contributory pension, operational from January 2024 to for all government employees. The plan, designed to enhance the welfare and financial security of public sector workers employed since 18th May 2012, aims to contribute to employees' financial stability after employment.

National Gender Machinery

The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis publishes annual Budget Estimates, adopted by the National Assembly, and which indicate the budgetary plans of various government ministries.

Over the last five years the strategic plans and activities of the National Gender Machinery towards achieving its initiatives and policies include, but are not limited to:

- Assisting teen mothers to become educated, self-sufficient, and productive citizens.
- Finalising the National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan.
- Mainstreaming gender in all programmes and legislation.
- Empowering women financially and economically.
- Training key stakeholders in the use of the Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints and Response Protocol to support its full implementation.
- Educating the public and private sectors, along with civil society on the components and responsibilities enshrined in the National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan.
- Educating, advocacy and raising awareness.
- Improving the quality of life for men and women through the promotion of gender equity and gender equality.

Poverty eradication, social protection, and social Services

10. **Actions to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls**

Education

Education is seen as a mechanism for human development and consequently as a driving force in the long-term economic gains resulting from an educated populace. However, development and implementation of poverty alleviation programmes has not been a specific focus within the education sector.

There are provisions within the education sector to ensure equity of access to education. Thus, the Ministry provides at no cost to all students enrolled in public schools the following: free school bus program, and free school lunch program. For students whose families demonstrate the need there is support for books and the payment of examination fees.

Other social safety net programmes such as uniform assistance is managed through social development based on demonstrated financial need.

Several programmes for women's entrepreneurial development have been conducted.

11. **Improving access to social protection for women and girls**

National Social Protection Policy and Action Plan

The drafting of the National Social Protection Policy and Action Plan³ has been completed with the assistance of UNICEF. The vision of the policy is the attainment of Universal Social Protection and to support a high quality of life for the people of the Federation. The Government provides

³ Government of St. Kitts and Nevis, 2022 Estimates, Vol 2, p. 09-2

support for individuals and families through services and programming to protect the population against chronic poverty and hunger, shocks, destitution, and social exclusion. Built on a human-rights based approach, the National Social Protection Policy includes gender responsiveness in understanding and responding to the different needs of women and men and girls and boys.

Introduction or strengthening of cash transfers for families with children that prioritise women as recipients

The process to transition recipients from the former Poverty Alleviation Programme to the new Livelihood Improvement for Family Transformation (LIFT) programme in 2024 gave priority to specific groups, i.e. households headed by seniors, persons with a disability, and persons with children in the first instance.

12. **Actions to improve health outcomes for women and girls**

Health and Education

Within the education sector, programming is universally applied. There has been an increase in the number of Guidance Counsellors in the system which supports improved mental health outcomes for all students. It should be noted that the field of Guidance and Counseling is female-dominated. As such, ensuring boys would have equitable access to male guidance counselors was of concern. The number of qualified male guidance counselors was increased by three during the 2023-2024 academic year. The increase allowed the Ministry of Education to ensure that all six secondary schools had both a male and female guidance counselor thereby ensuring gender balance in service provision for secondary students in the area of guidance counseling.

Gender Specific Mental Health Services

The National Counselling Centre recognizes the unique needs of women who seek mental health care, including:

1. Child-friendly spaces for women who have children
2. After care availability for women who have children
3. Decentralized mental care services
4. Flexible hours of service for mental health needs of women
5. Transportation needs (where relevant)
6. Facilitative arrangements with women's employers
7. Specialized approaches to mental health needs of women (e.g. Women and Substance use)
8. Destigmatizing efforts – women and mental health needs
9. Inclusion of women's mental health screening in primary care facilities
10. Treatment spaces for women

While the NCC recognizes the therapeutic value of the abovementioned, related to women and mental health, there are few dedicated approaches to women and their mental health needs.

Healthcare Provision

The government, in its 2023 Budget Address, outlined its intention to increase public investments in healthcare toward the PAHO benchmark of 6% of GDP through infrastructure upgrades, equipment purchase and additional health personnel.

Healthcare provision was enhanced at the Joseph N. France Hospital by the arrival of medical specialists. The Ministry of Health announced the arrival of new medical specialists and a surgeon at the JNF General Hospital. The hospital now has four gynaecologists, an endocrinologist, and seven radiographers. This important advancement provides specialist care to improve women's healthcare and increased capacity and expertise to address hormonal conditions and chronic reproductive issues that are common in women.

The Federation's Voluntary National Review (2023) reports that chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have replaced malnutrition and infectious diseases as major health issues in Saint Kitts and Nevis⁴. Obesity threatens the health of both children and adults throughout the Federation. Over a quarter (26%) of school-age children in the federation are obese, putting them at risk of diabetes and hypertension. There is an estimated 33.6% of adult women (aged 18 years and over) and 18.1% of adult men living with obesity. The problem is exacerbated by the dependence on imported processed foods relative to the availability and cost of nutritious foods such as fruit and vegetables. Poverty exacerbates these issues and creates barriers to food security, with the poorest quintiles spending more on food (40.6 percent of total household expenditure) compared to the national average.

The Ministry of Health places a strong focus on key areas as delineated in the National Strategic Plan for; one such priority area is Non-Communicable Diseases. Robust activities include influencing lifestyle changes, scaling-up screening, and detecting new cases of NCDs. Epidemiological statistics indicate that over the period 2015 to 2020, the incidence of new cases of diabetes and hypertension decreased by 46.9% and 44.7% respectively. In addition, the average mortality data associated with diabetes and high blood pressure decreased from 83% to 63%.⁵

Efforts continue to promote NCD-related initiatives which include:

- The development of the National Multi-Sectoral Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs
- Completion of a population-based health survey (STEPS Survey) in collaboration with PAHO
- Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) – refresher training for 6 facilitators.
- Metabolic Disease Project. Over 26 hours of workshops for nurses, doctors and social workers were conducted in 2021. The program engages a community health screening programme, to date, over 2,000 persons across the Federation have benefited from screening.

⁴ UNICEF (2017), Situation Analysis of Children in the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean

⁵ <https://www.sknis.gov.kn/2020/12/17/robust-outreach-activities-to-reduce-the-incidence-and-impact-of-ncds-have-realised-significant-returns/> [accessed 25.8.22]

- Food Consumption project (“Improving Household Nutrition Security and Public Health”). The UWI and FAO funded project was conducted in 2021 to capture home-based dietary consumption with a view to improving local food systems.
- Health Promotion Unit Media campaign in collaboration with a local public health NGO to raise awareness of the harmful effects of sugar sweetened beverages, and the importance of drinking water.
- SKN Moves program, launched in 2019 focuses on healthy eating, increased physical activity and regular health screenings.
- Publication of SKN Manual of Food Portion Quantification in September 2021.
- Production and launch of “In Ya Kitchen Cookbook” with simple and healthy recipes designed to encourage the use of locally grown produce, and to assist in food budget management.

In October 2019, the Ministry of Health conducted a widespread public awareness/education programme geared toward sensitizing parents and adolescents to the Human Papilloma Vaccine (HPV). Targeted at grade six students, 90% coverage was reached in all primary schools. Children received their second and final dose in April/May of 2020. It is envisioned that a drastic decrease in the incidence of the related strain of cervical cancer will be seen in a few years, as efforts persist to mitigate against NCDs in the Federation.

According to national guidelines, all pregnant women accessing care within the public health system are screened for HIV, Hepatitis B, Syphilis and HTLV 1 and HTLV 2 as a means of preventing Mother to Child Transmission. Other health screenings are conducted to:

- Monitor the progress of the pregnancy to ensure good maternal health and normal foetal development
- Identify deviation from the normal and provide early and appropriate treatment intervention to ensure that the woman reaches the end of her pregnancy physically and psychologically prepared for labour and delivery.
- During pregnancy, women are only vaccinated with the Diphtheria and Tetanus, Influenza and, most recently, the COVID-19 vaccines.

During pregnancy, all women are engaged in educational sessions that help to equip them with essential knowledge and skills and to identify support mechanisms to manage the post-natal period successfully.

During the last five years PAHO provided technical assistance in key areas such as combatting NCDs and cervical cancer prevention. Annual pap smear screening forms part of a woman’s preventive health care plan. Early detection of abnormal changes in the cervix will therefore lead to early intervention and prevent loss of life.

Further progress attained by the Ministry of Health pertaining to women’s health⁶ includes the development of a "Maternal, Newborn, Child & Adolescent Health Guidelines Manual" in collaboration with PAHO/WHO which will guide the direction of maternal and child health practices in the Federation; and the commissioning of a Maternity Guide Manual, consisting of

⁶ Government of St. Kitts and Nevis, Estimates 2021, p.14-11 [accessed 30.8.22]

antenatal, intra-natal and postnatal information, including benefits of breastfeeding which will assist in achieving the 'baby-friendly hospital' status to promote healthier babies and individuals.

Family Planning Services

Women accessing the family planning service are provided with all necessary information to guide them toward choosing the contraceptive method that is best suited for them to delay/prevent unwanted/unplanned pregnancies.

Schoolchildren can only access family planning services with parental consent. The emergency contraception is not available within the public health care system and does not provide services for abortion. Abortion remains illegal in St. Kitts and Nevis.

NGO contributions to women's health empowerment

The role of NGOs has been instrumental to women's healthcare in the Federation. Lake Health and Wellbeing have made significant contributions to women's health empowerment over the past few years as summarised below:

- Fibroids Qualitative Research Project (2020) to explore the experiences of a random cohort of women in St Kitts and Nevis living with fibroids, a common chronic reproductive condition indicative of other women health concerns like endometriosis and PCOS. The project produced a report⁷ with 19 evidence-based recommendations aimed at multiple sectors. The research provided a comprehensive look at the fibroids experience in St Kitts and Nevis and identified gaps in the support, medical care and information for women living with menstrual disorders like fibroids. This work then informed other projects.
- The COVID-19, NCDs, and Gender Qualitative Research Project (2021)⁸ to explore the gendered experience of living people with NCDs both before and after the pandemic. The project identified that single mothers on a low income who were living with an NCD were the most vulnerable before and during the pandemic. The work led to the EmpowHer project.

Other initiatives based on the above-mentioned research projects include a Fibroids Educational Webinar Series (2021-2022)⁹ which empowered over 100 women with information on managing fibroids; EmpowHer Project (2022-2023)¹⁰, Funded by the Republic of China (Taiwan) and supported by the Department of Gender Affairs empowered 52 women living with NCDs through capacity-building workshops. The Menstrual Health Education Project¹¹ (2022 to present) aimed to empower young girls (and boys) by tackling the stigma and misinformation around menstruation and reached over 500 children in the Federation. An Endometriosis Film Screening and Panel Discussion¹² (2023) involved the screening of "Below the Belt," an American documentary on endometriosis, followed by a multi-sectoral panel discussion. The event brought

⁷ [A significant burden: A qualitative exploration of the experience of women living with fibroids in St. Kitts and Nevis - Abi Begho, Fanta Waterman, 2023 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

⁸ Research report: https://lakehealthandwellbeing.com/Gender_Lens_on_COVID_NCDs_Final_1.

Policy report: https://lakehealthandwellbeing.com/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/COVID_impact_assessment_4.pdf

Digital framework https://lakehealthandwellbeing.com/xerte/play.php?template_id=1#page1

⁹ [Fibroids Event Series - Lake Health and Wellbeing](#)

¹⁰ [EmpowHer - Lake Health and Wellbeing](#)

¹¹ [Our New Menstrual Health Education Project - Lake Health and Wellbeing](#);

¹² [Below the Belt: St Kitts Premiere and Panel Discussion - Lake Health and Wellbeing](#)

together 60 women, providing a platform to learn, raise concerns, and share experiences. The event resulted in a short report with recommendations.

This work has contributed to empowering women with the information and skills needed to make informed decisions about their health. This empowerment is vital for women to gain agency, take control of their health, and fully participate in society, thus advancing gender equality and equity. Lake Health and Wellbeing continues to make a significant contribution to the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis.

The Business and Professional Women’s Club, (BPW)¹³ partnered with the Ministry of Health to host wellness clinics. The sessions were held on a Saturday morning and arrangements made to open health clinics at which screenings were provided for cervical cancer, blood pressure, diabetes, and eye health. Although such services are available free of charge at healthcare clinics, the wellness clinics provided access to women unable to attend clinics during the week due to employment commitments. Over 400 persons were tested. One further example includes a footcare clinic for senior citizens.

13. **Actions to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls**

Initiatives undertaken to achieve improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls include an analysis of the data on females in TVET programmes locally reveals that females continue to be under-representation in traditionally male-dominated programmes. To combat this, the Ministry of Education has increased marketing and promotion to attract females into these programmes. This has seen female enrollment in automotive, welding, electrical and construction at the Advanced Vocational Education Centre (AVEC).

Females overall continue to be the most dominant group of trainees in TVET programmes. Scholarships have been provided for studies in traditionally male-dominated areas. Successes in agriculture (and related areas) include five females obtaining bachelors degrees, and one diploma in Aquaculture. One female completed a bachelors degree in Construction Engineering.

The table below shows areas of training for students of the National Skills Training Programme. The sex-disaggregated data shows, that in 2022, female students are heavily outnumber males and tend to be concentrated in areas such as cosmetology, sewing, and food preparation.

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-p-OKMVKidI> [accessed 14.9.22]

Table 5: National Skills Training Programme -Enrolment by Sex (2022)

Training Area	M	F	Total
Cosmetology	0	19	19
Carpentry	4	1	5
Cake & Pastry & Agro Processing	4	25	34
Electrical	7	2	9
Mechanic	4	3	7
Plumbing	6	2	8
Sewing	2	14	16
Small Engine Repairs	1	0	1

Source: Ministry of Education

The table below shows very low numbers of female enrollment in male-dominated programmes.

Table 6: Female Enrolment in Male Dominated Programmes at AVEC (2019-2023)

Female Enrolment in Male-Dominated Programmes at AVEC						
PROGRAMME	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
General Construction	0	0	0	0	0	0
Welding/ Metal Fabrication	0	1	0	1	1	3
Electricity/Electronics	0	0	3	1	0	4
Air Conditioning & Refrigeration	0	0	0	1	0	1
Motor Vehicle Repairs	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	1	4	3	1	9

Source: Ministry of Education

To support the access and participation of children from low-income households, the government have implemented social assistance programmes to defray the costs of school meals, textbooks, examinations, and uniforms.

At tertiary level, females enter institutions of higher learning in greater numbers than males, resulting in more women professionals than men.

In April 2023 the Government partnered with the Development Bank of St. Kitts and Nevis to launch the Graduate Finance Project, offering 5% interest on student loans to new students on a maximum of EC\$100,000 for a grace period of 4 years and 3 months, with a 15-year repayment term. In June of 2023, the Government and the Development Bank of St. Kitts and Nevis partnered to reduce interest rates of existing student loans from 9% to 5%. Although the data is

not disaggregated by sex, the scheme benefited approximately 1,129 students. Both initiatives contributed to improving access to tertiary education while reducing the initial debt burden.

Programming for teen mothers

Teen mothers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society who face many challenges, including social stigma, poverty, and exclusion. Project Viola was established by the Department of Gender Affairs (St. Kitts), following a policy decision of the St. Kitts and Nevis Federal Cabinet in 1997 that reiterated the right of teenage mothers to complete their mainstream education. The programme provides essential support services to teen mothers, including access to counselling, childcare, social support, education, and economic empowerment initiatives.

The NGM continues to provide ongoing support for teen mothers through the Project Viola and Second Chance Programmes in St. Kitts and Nevis respectively. Annual Capacity Building Workshops continue to equip participants with personal and career development skills, skills training, and work experience through job attachment. Assistance is provided to remove financial barriers to education, e.g. cost of daycare for babies, books and uniforms. A scholarship programme is also available to assist participants wishing to pursue tertiary education, including tuition costs (where applicable). Project Viola is recognised by UNICEF as a best practice model in the Caribbean region.

In 2024, services for young women will be expanded with the introduction of a shadow mentorship programme designed to provide teen mothers with valuable insights into career paths in which they have expressed an interest. Participants will be matched with professionals and supported to explore career interests, enhance career readiness, and receive inspiration to pursue their goals.

Training in Non-Traditional Skills

The NGM continues to offer training in non-traditional skills for women in several areas traditionally dominated by men. Classes cover plumbing, auto mechanics, welding, electricity, and tiling are offered and are well received with sessions over-subscribed due to high demand. Key public and private sector partnerships were formed to deliver the training. To celebrate International Women's Day in 2024, 150 places were made available to women. Evaluation of the activities revealed that the participants would wish to see more activities in future.

14. Economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

The Voluntary National Review reported that the COVID-19 pandemic deepened existing inequalities, hitting the poorest and most vulnerable in society hardest as they lacked the resources and tools to cope with the economic downturn. The government response included direct cash transfers to the most vulnerable and poor, including the unemployed, the informally employed and elderly. As at March 2023, figures show 4,694 beneficiaries received cash transfers

from the Poverty Alleviation Programme, of which 346 were unemployed, 277 disabled, 1,898 elder and 2,173 low income employees¹⁴.

Ministry of Education figures show that, across up to 30 educational institutions, 3,504 student devices were distributed. Sex disaggregated data is not currently available.

Freedom from violence, stigma, and stereotypes

15. Forms of gender-based violence prioritized for action

Domestic violence is the most common form of gender-based violence which predominantly affects women and girls. National data from the Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police force show a steady increase in the incidence of domestic violence. In the period 2019 to 2022 women represented over 74% of all complainants of domestic violence matters. Data on the perpetrator-victim relationship revealed that current partners were the offenders in 40% of reported cases in 2021; and 48% in the first half of 2022. Due to the existing culture of silence, many incidents are not officially reported to the police. Domestic violence comparative statistics on major crimes, compiled by the Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police Force show, for the period 2020 to 2023, a steady increase in reported cases across the Federation. Domestic violence comparative statistics for the period 2020 to 2023 show that domestic-related crimes accounted for 9% of all major crimes.

Table 7: St. Kitts and Nevis - Domestic Violence Comparative Statistics (2020-2023)

Year	No. of major crimes	No. Domestic-related	% Domestic-Related
2020	1126	94	8%
2021	1205	127	11%
2022	1349	99	7%
2023	1265	109	9%
Total	4945	429	9%

Source: Extracted from data from the Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police Force

16. Actions prioritized to address gender-based violence

Legislative and constitutional framework

Equality before the law is a fundamental right as provided under Chapter 11 of the Constitution.

Gender-based violence is an offence under the Offences Against the Persons Act, which will be dealt with strictly as a crime and not through mediation. Furthermore, only civil matters are settled through mediation.

¹⁴ <https://www.sknis.gov.kn/2023/03/02/close-to-five-thousand-pap-beneficiaries-paid-as-the-evaluation-of-the-programme-continues/> [accessed 27.5.24]

The Domestic Violence Act, 2014 provided protection for victims of domestic violence, including violence against women and children, and made provision for the granting of protection orders. Under the Act, the High Court was the primary court of adjudication for victims. The successful passage of the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, 2022 provided much-needed changes to the jurisdiction of the Courts to include both the Magistrates and the High Court. Subsequently, individuals have easier access to justice through Magistrate's Court while still having the option of High Court hearings for more serious grievances and matters. The amendment benefitted complainants unable to afford the legal fees associated with High Court matters.

The Domestic Violence Amendment Act, 2022 expanded the following definitions contained in the Act:

The definition of "Court" was replaced as follows:

- (a) "the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court or any Court with similar jurisdiction established in succession to that Court; or*
- (b) the Magistrate's Court or any Court with similar jurisdiction established in succession to that Court"*

The amended Act also replaced the definition of "economic abuse" as indicated below:

- (a) "the avoidance of financial obligations owed to the applicant and child or dependent of the respondent, including mortgage or rental obligations; or*
- (b) situations where, without the consent of the applicant, the respondent exercises full access and control over the financial resources of the applicant in a manner that is not in the best interest of the applicant"*

In August 2022, the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court delivered a judgement decriminalizing certain consensual sexual conduct between adults (18 years and older) in private in St. Kitts and Nevis. The judgement was delivered following a constitutional motion brought by a citizen of the Federation and NGO, the St. Kitts & Nevis Alliance for Equality. The High Court judgement declared that buggery and related crimes in the Offences Against the Persons Act are no longer criminal offences.

Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints and Response Protocol

The formal launch of the Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints and Response Protocol in 2018 was a significant development. The Department of Gender Affairs has responsibility for the protocol, which formally sets out the roles and responsibilities of the key agencies involved in service provision. The protocol aims to improve domestic violence programmes and enhance support for them by identifying and promoting best practice.

In 2019 two, one-day workshops held in St. Kitts and in Nevis were attended by 80 stakeholders. The PAHO-sponsored implementation activities educated stakeholders on their roles, responsibilities, and the procedures contained in the protocol. In addition, the workshop provided the agencies with participatory opportunities to review the various intake forms in the protocol and to network. The main lessons from the consultation highlighted the need for regular sensitization and continuous training, quality data collection, good working relationships, and clear operating procedures.

Further sensitisation and awareness raising was conducted with senior management teams of relevant ministries in 2023. Domestic Violence Awareness workshops equip persons with information to combat the challenges that are faced and empower individuals to make healthier decisions in their homes and communities.

Victims of domestic violence may file reports at any police station or the Special Victims Unit. All police officers are required to be properly trained in gender-sensitive interviewing and evidence collection. When reports of gender-based violence are made, the victims are interviewed at length and a comprehensive statement is recorded outlining what transpired. If the victim was injured in the incident a medical form is issued. Medical treatment for victims is free and accessible with the issuance of the police medical form. The victim is given the option as to how the police can proceed, by taking the matter to court etc. The Department of Gender Affairs (Nevis) hosted a series of interdepartmental training workshops in the first quarter of 2022 which included members of the police force on Nevis. Training of police officers in the areas of domestic violence and use of the Domestic Violence Protocol is an ongoing practice.

Provisions contained in the Gender Policy

Under the national Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan, the domain 'Elimination of Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination for Human Security' speaks to the eradication of gender-based violence against women. The federation is party to two main treaties in this area: the Convention of Belem do Para' and the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women). The goals of which are to 'implement a multi-sectoral public health approach to prevent gender-based violence and discrimination and to ensure protections and recourse according to human rights and legislation'; corresponding strategic activities include the implementation of a federal plan for the prevention, punishment, and eradication of violence against women; strengthened reporting, support for victims and rehabilitation of perpetrators; in addition to heightened public awareness.

The domain 'Rule of Law, Justice and Gender Rights' seeks to strengthen legislative reforms and access to justice.

Intentional Injuries Surveillance System

The Intentional Injuries Surveillance System (IISS) is a PAHO-funded project that will allow for uniform information-capture and reporting. In 2019, the Ministry conducted an assessment of the current capacities and systems for data collection. Based on the recommendations resulting from the assessment, a framework was designed for the development of the Intentional Injuries Surveillance System that addresses the gaps and capitalizes on the existing systems. Work on this

project will allow for data collection, analyses, interpretation, dissemination and use regarding intentional injuries. Findings are expected to inform the development of the IISS. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the progress of this project.

Advocacy for Victims of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence

The Department of Gender Affairs (St. Kitts) manages a dedicated on-call cell phone (1 869 765 5492) which members of the public can call at any time to receive advice or assistance in domestic violence matters. A Case Manager provides victims with advocacy and support throughout each case, including referral to relevant agencies for additional support as appropriate, e.g. counselling, social assistance, legal aid etc. Victims benefit from the provision of pro bono legal services of local lawyers. The Federation is mindful of its migrant community and Spanish translation is available to women who require this service. The Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs provides victims with financial assistance for the processing of the required legal paperwork in domestic violence cases.

In 2023, 22 cases of domestic violence presented to the Department of Gender Affairs in St. Kitts, the complainants were aged between 25 and 41 years; 82% of which were national citizens. The majority of requests were for assistance with food, counselling, and housing.

17. Strategies used to prevent gender-based violence

Public Awareness of Gender-Based Violence

The National Gender Machinery (NGM) observes the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence annually. The 16-Day Campaign commences on 25 November and ends on 10 December (Human Rights Day), and is utilized as an opportunity to raise awareness and educate the general public. Activities include the unveiling of painted murals in public areas across the federation as permanent reminders of the continued fight against gender-based violence and to encourage men and women to break the silence surrounding this taboo subject. Workshops provide opportunities for persons to learn about their rights, ventilate issues and discuss possible solutions. The NGM also works with its partners in the private sector and civil society to engage the public through televised panel discussions, radio programme appearances, school visits, on-the-street interviews, marches and so forth, to increase awareness of the often hidden, but serious nature of gender-based violence.

Addressing sexual harassment

There is no legislation specific to sexual harassment, but complaints may fall under the Protection of Employment Act, 1986. Work is ongoing with the government to draft sexual harassment legislation of such actions.

In 2022, the St. Kitts-Nevis Defence Force introduced its Policy on Sexual Harassment.

The subject of sexual harassment continues to be brought to the fore. Public awareness activities during the 16-Day Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence in 2020 included a live-streamed debate on the CARICOM Model Bill on Sexual Harassment in the annual Mock Parliament session, led by the St. Kitts National Youth Parliament Association (SKNYPA).

Training

In 2023, the Department of Gender Affairs, St. Kitts undertook a number of sensitization training activities. Telephone skills training was delivered to civil society organisations that deal with gender-based violence matters, including sessions for social media personalities and staff of the Department of Gender Affairs at which a legal professional provided training on the legislative provisions and considerations to be taken into account when dealing with victims of domestic violence.

Education

The Cabinet approved the National Safe School Policy in March 2023. This policy addresses issues of school safety, including behavioral interventions to reduce violence in schools.

Parent Programme at the Early Childhood level (also see question 7).

18. Actions taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence

The Electronic Crimes Act (revised 2017) is an act to prohibit unauthorised access to and abuse of computers, computer systems as well as the information contained on those systems; and to provide for related or incidental matters. The Act makes provision for the conviction and punishment for child pornography offences.

19. Measures to resource women's organisations working to prevent and respond to GBV

Recognition is given to the strong partnerships formed with the private sector and civil society, for example pro bono legal services, social activists, and NGO support.

Although there is no government-run shelter for persons fleeing situations of domestic violence, collaborative efforts with civil society and faith-based organizations continue to provide support to victims of gender-based violence. The Government, in 2023 entered into an updated Memorandum of Understanding with a privately-run shelter to provide short-term accommodation for female victims of gender-based violence (including their children aged under 5 years). Victims are referred to the facility and provided with psychosocial and social assistance services, as necessary. Faith-based organisations continue to lend support in temporarily housing victims of domestic violence; one such unit officially opened in 2021.

The Government also may provide rental assistance to women who are victims of domestic violence

20. Addressing the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media

No data available.

21. Addressing violence against marginalized groups of women and girls

The 16-day campaign of activism against gender-based violence raises public awareness through all forms of traditional and digital media including panel discussions, radio interviews, TV appearances and the commissioning of public service announcements featuring marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions

22. Actions and measures to promote women’s participation in public life and decision-making

Women are underrepresented in terms of decision-making and representation in political bodies, most notably Parliament. In 2022, the proportion of women in Parliament improved from 27% in 2021, to 31.2% in October 2022¹⁵. The Nevis Island Administration has a higher proportion of women (55.5%) in its National Assembly. The CEDAW Committee, in its response recommended that the Government improve women’s access and participation, including measures to encourage women to enter diplomatic careers. The CEDAW country report raised the lack of women’s interest in involvement in politics. Many factors contribute to women’s lack of interest or barriers to entering political life.

The 2022 election was the first time in the Federation’s history with seven female candidates campaigning for election. The current Governor General is a female. Since the election, women have been appointed as chairpersons of statutory boards, as well as in prominent leadership roles, including Press Secretary in the Prime Minister’s Office and the Permanent Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations.

23. Actions to increase women’s access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)

The Ministry of Education has worked to improve internet connectivity in schools. Currently, all public schools in St. Kitts have connectivity which is accessible to teachers, staff members, and students for the purpose of instruction. To enhance productivity and to facilitate the integration of technology in learning, teachers and students have been provided with access to digital devices (ie. tablets, laptops). Thus, the education infrastructure supports access to media for all stakeholders, and thereby women and girls benefit at all levels of the system.

It should be noted that the Ministry of Education has its own media unit. As is the case for many education institutions, the media unit is led by a female director and also benefits from female staff writers. Therefore, within our organization women do have access to decision-making in media.

¹⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data (2022). <https://data.ipu.org/>

24. The national gender machinery and measures taken to strengthen it

The Department of Gender Affairs is a unit within the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs. It functions primarily to raise awareness of gender-related issues, especially on behalf of vulnerable populations. This is done through advocacy, education and empowerment which utilise programmes that promote gender equality, growth, and development. The department believes in a multi-agency and holistic approach and has established collaborative working partnerships to facilitate the delivery of its programmes.

Its work is guided by a legislative and policy framework, which is guided by international and regional commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention of Belém do Pará (the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women), which require periodic country reports.

Priority focus areas include the National Gender Policy, the empowerment of women and girls, the reduction of all forms of gender-based violence, poverty elimination, governance and democracy, and programmes for men and boys. Its staff complement was strengthened in 2023 with the appointment of a case manager who primarily deals with cases of domestic violence.

The Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs makes annual contributions to the International Migration Organization (IMO); St. Christopher Children's Home; Support for Shelter Services; UN WOMEN; United Fund for Population Activity (UNFPA); and Support for Mental Health

At the federal ministerial level, the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs is headed by a female Minister with responsibility for Gender Affairs.

25. Other mechanisms and tools used to mainstream gender equality across sectors

The Gender Policy and Action Plan sets out a mechanism to mainstream gender equality across all sectors. The overall co-ordination and implementation of the National Gender Policy shall be led by the National Gender Machinery (NGM). Its implementation requires a robust accountable interagency commitment to gender mainstreaming as an integral component of national development. The Action Plan contains comprehensive guidance on policy strategies to standardize gender mainstreaming; including coordination of a four-component Gender Management System (GMS) comprised of the Cabinet Oversight Body, Gender Focal Points (GFP), Knowledge Management and Learning System; and Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning System.

Some Gender Focal Points have been identified at the executive level within various government ministries, to which the gender policy domains refer. The Action Plan recommends that the NGM and Gender Focal Points prepare a monitoring and evaluation plan.

The nominated Gender Focal Points will be responsible for mainstreaming in the policy-making, planning, programming and service delivery in their respective sectors and delivering the strategies in the action plan. GFPs will identify a support team to advance their mandate. They are tasked with the core responsibility of periodic reporting to the oversight body as the consultative and advisory body to the government on gender equality. The first meeting was an inter-ministerial meeting of GFPs for the preparation of this national review. The first meeting of National Gender Equality Committee is scheduled for July 2024.

The capacity building of gender focal Points is a matter that is receiving attention, and the Government is seeking technical assistance to support national gender-responsive statistical systems and frameworks in the implementation of the GEPAP.

26. Human rights and measures taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality

At present, there is no formal national human rights institution. However, in 2018 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Aviation, established the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-Up (NMRF). This Mechanism is a Cabinet-approved, inter-ministerial committee created to assess and report on the Government's efforts to promote and protect human rights in the Federation. The Committee responds to recommendations from United Nations Treaty Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process

Peaceful and inclusive societies

27. Actions to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies

In March 2020 the Law Commission launched an active laws database online¹⁶. The website, for the first time, places all the laws of St. Kitts Nevis, as well as ordinances of the Nevis Island Assembly online and readily available to legal practitioners and to the general public.

The launch of the St. Kitts and Nevis National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan also makes persons aware of their respective rights.

28. Actions to increase the leadership, representation, and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peace building, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels

The Case Manager attached to the Ministry of Social Services and Gender Affairs provided crisis response to groups of displaced migrants fleeing from countries experiencing humanitarian crises (Haiti). In the last year this included 19 individuals, among whom there were two women (one pregnant), and one child who were provided with advocacy, social assistance, and translation services, where necessary.

¹⁶ <https://lawcommission.gov.kn/> [accessed 24.5.24]

29. Actions to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of human rights

Trafficking and Exploitation of Prostitution

There are no formal reports of women and girls being trafficked in the Federation.

St. Kitts and Nevis has ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol). The Federation has also enacted the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention) Act, Chapter 4.40, 2008, which foresees the creation of a National Task Force to combat human trafficking.

As part of the technical assistance provided by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) within the framework of the ACP-EU Migration Action, an assessment was conducted in 2018, with meetings and training with diverse stakeholders in St. Kitts and Nevis in January and April of 2019. From these meetings, recommendations were provided to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the composition and function of a Task Force and Public Awareness Campaign to combat Smuggling of Migrants (SoM) and Trafficking of Human Beings (THB).

The recommendations outlined the basic aims, structures, and functions of a National Task Force relevant to the current context or situation in St. Kitts and Nevis. There were a number of meetings by the relevant local stakeholders prior to COVID-19 to activate the task force, progress was paused following the onset of the pandemic. The Ministry of National Security was identified as the coordinating body to oversee its implementation.

A database was created, along with a manual to guide its usage by local Government IT experts for data collection from victims of THB and SoM as part of the technical assistance from IOM/ACP-EU. It is envisaged that the database would be expanded in the future to encompass information on investigations, prosecutions, and convictions, as well as on the services and protection received by victims.

30. Actions to eliminate discrimination against violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls

Within the Ministry of Education, access to digital tools as an ongoing strategy aimed at improving the quality of education in the system.

Work is ongoing with the Ministry of Employment and Labour to assess the national situation on child labour. Country Acceleration plans comprise education on the rights of children.

As part of the National Gender Policy Action Plan, gender mainstreaming will be coordinated across government ministries and programming. With the assistance of PAHO, a Gender Sensitization curriculum was revised for children under the age of 12, and a three-day Gender Sensitization Training of Trainers conducted in February 2022. Seventeen stakeholders from

various government ministries and NGOs, including school counselors received training. The gender-sensitive training curriculum is intended to teach children about appropriate behaviours when it comes to issues of sexual conduct, the importance of consent and how to recognize and report experiences of molestation, harm, or abuse.

Environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation

31. Integrating gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies

The Ministry of Education has developed an Education for Sustainable Development country programme. Within this programme the Ministry will develop a national policy and incorporate curriculum enhancements related to ESD. Work on ESD is an opportunity to address issues of environment and climate change through policy and curriculum.

The St. Kitts and Nevis Voluntary National Review (June 2023) notes that as a Small Island Developing State, combatting climate change is a high priority. The country is highly vulnerable to climate change and its associated impacts, including extreme weather which directly impact the tourism, agriculture and fisheries sectors which affect agricultural production, water resources, coastal zones and vulnerable communities and groups. The VNR also reported that the Federation is impacted by drought which ranks as the single most common cause of severe food shortages in developing countries; a key issue for food security. The dry conditions that are projected will likely make rain-fed agriculture difficult and increase food insecurity. Decreased availability and competition for freshwater will likely increase water insecurity, leading to water shortages and increased rationing of water.

Over the past five years, the Federation has undertaken several initiatives to support women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management, aiming to integrate gender perspectives into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and land degradation. The Ministry of Environment, Climate Action, and Constituency Empowerment is ministry led by a female Minister, a female Permanent Secretary, and two of the three directors are females. Events such as International Women's Day have celebrated and recognized women who have contributed significantly to various sectors, including environmental management. This not only highlights the achievements of women but also inspires more participation in leadership roles.

In August 2022, the Nevis Island Administration launched a historic 3-day Agri-preneur Conference aimed to educate women and girls to deal with climate change-related global threats and sustainability. Under the theme 'Empowering Women and Girls through Climate Smart Agriculture.' Recognising the synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); SDG2 No Hunger, SDG 5 Gender Equality; and SDG 13 Life on Land.

Increased activity to raise public awareness is evident. The Department of Environment, issued a press release to mark International Women's Day on 8th March 2024 which looked at the relationship between women and the environment' and recognised that women have historically been stewards of the environment, are who are more likely than men to engage in eco-friendly behaviour; and at 80% make up the majority of those displaced by climate change.

32. **Integrating gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience**

The St. Kitts and Nevis National Gender Equality Policy notes that the 2021 Biennial Update Report (BUR) for Saint Kitts & Nevis conducted assessments with varying publics on the current level of engagement and inclusion of gender issues and vulnerable groups in climate change planning engagement and processes. The Report also assessed ways to enhance their adaptive capacity. Among the findings of relevance to the Policy are:

- Climate change affects and impacts men and women and other vulnerable groups differently (different roles and responsibilities at the household and community levels).
- Women are more exposed and vulnerable to climate change because they are often poorer, receive less education, and are not involved in political and household decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- Shared vulnerabilities of the different groups affect their participation in productive processes and decision-making and hampered climate change awareness.

The Gender Policy promotes a gender-responsive approach to climate change, the environment and sustainable development, and men's and women's equal participation in decision-making on all aspects of the sector.

Despite the challenges faced, women's active contribution in building resilient communities is well documented; mirrored by the 2022 International Women's Day Awards Ceremony that honoured several women who had made significant contributions in the areas of science, the digital, blue, and green economies; and the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Section Four: National institutions and processes

33. **National Strategy or Action plan for gender equality**

National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan

The Saint Kitts and Nevis Gender Equality Policy and accompanying Action Plan (2022-2027) provides a platform for gender equality in all sectors and areas of social, economic, political, and environmental development so that all citizens and residents can reap the benefits of inclusive, sustainable development.

Gender equality and women's empowerment is a stand-alone goal under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls is also an enabler and accelerator for all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental to the universal values of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Together with the human-rights-based approach and Leave No One Behind (LNOB), these three international human rights standards place equality and non-discrimination at the centre of actions to secure economic, social, civil, political, and cultural rights and the right to development for all.

The Gender Equality Policy contains ten pillars or domains corresponding to the agreed international priorities for achieving gender equality. They elaborate on the *Theory of Change* (TOC) and the strategies to achieve the Government's vision for transformative change on gender equality. The ten (10) domains and co-domains, with sub-sector primacies, are:

1. Agents of Socialisation (Culture, Family, Religion, Mass Media)
2. Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food Security
3. Climate Change and the Environment
4. Decent Work and Inclusive Economic Growth (Labour Market Participation and Social Protection, Employment, Productive Resources, and Entrepreneurship, Digital Technologies, Tourism and Services, The Blue Economy (Optional))
5. Education for All
6. Elimination Of Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination For Human Security
7. Health and Well-being (Sexual and Reproductive Health, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), Healthy Outcomes for Men and Boys and Men, COVID-19- Recovery and Resilience)
8. Leadership and Decision-making (Women in Parliament and Politics, Women in Policing and Security Forces, Equal Participation in Society)
9. Rule of Law, Justice, and Gender Rights
10. Special groups for gender mainstreaming (Older Persons, Youth, Persons with Disabilities- PWDs, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex -LGBTI people, Adults in the Justice System, and Migrant (foreign-born) Populations)

Following the launch to stakeholders in 2022; sensitization activities have been conducted with senior management teams of government ministries and Gender Focal Points in 2023 and 2024 respectively. The implementation process of the GEPAP continues in 2024, with plans to create Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) approved for the National Gender Committee, and the hosting of the inaugural meeting of the approved National Gender Committee in 2024.

Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women

In October 2022, the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis formally presented the combined fifth to ninth periodic reports at the 83rd Session of the Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) at the United Nations. The previous review of the Federation's initial to fourth periodic reports was in 2002. The CEDAW Committee recognized progress in legislation, including the High Court ruling rendering unconstitutional all laws that criminalise same-sex intimacy on 29 August 2022. The Committee also welcomed the Federation's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at eliminating discrimination against women and the promotion of gender equality, including poverty alleviation, skills training and empowerment and the national Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan.

34. System for tracking the proportion of national budget invested in gender equality and the empowerment of women

No data available.

35. Formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in implementing and monitoring the BPfA

The Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs is responsible for coordinating the National Review. A participatory approach was adopted to ensure that a wide range of perspectives are represented in the review process. Stakeholders from the public sector, private sector, NGOs, and civil society across the Federation were invited to participate in the preparation of the national review. In particular, in line with mechanisms outlined in the Gender Policy Action Plan, government ministries were invited to nominate a Gender Focal Point to assist with the data collection and reporting processes. An inter-ministerial meeting of Gender Focal Points was held at which technical support and assistance were provided by UN Women and the UN Country Coordinator for St. Kitts and Nevis.

Information provided in this report is based on content prepared by Gender Focal Points, reporting processes associated with the CEDAW; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Voluntary National Review and other official documents.

36. Stakeholder contribution

Participating stakeholders and Gender Focal Points provided information and data in response to the questions in the review.

37. Action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendation of the CEDAW Committee or recommendation of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms

To date there are no formalized plans for the implementation of human rights mechanisms.

Section 5: Data and Statistics

38. Progress with gender statistics at the national level

The Department of Statistics within the Ministry of Sustainable Development is the agency responsible for the compilation and dissemination of official statistics. This mandate covers the broad areas of commerce, industrial production, and the socio-economic conditions of households/persons. The Department of Statistics is the only institution engaged in the generation of data nationally. Examples include demographic, social, economic and environment statistics, including the Census.

Although other government bodies do collect data; this is done locally, using methods and systems for their own organisations and may not be in the format required for reporting needs, e.g sex disaggregated data in particular. This is an area that requires attention.

39. Priorities for strengthening national gender statistics

The St. Kitts and Nevis Voluntary National Review of 2023 reported that the datamining of the housing (NHC and NHLDC), PAP and STEP databases provides an opportunity for the GoSKN to strengthen the multidimensional framework in alleviating poverty and improve the targeting of the most vulnerable. Improved targeting will eliminate waste and release additional resources for development and poverty reduction.

40. Gender-specific indicators prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs

As it pertains to Gender mainstreaming a uniformed approach needs to be filtered throughout all labour administrative practices and legislation to promote awareness and institutionalization. There is recognition that work still needs to be done surrounding most areas. SDG1, SG4, SDG 5, SDG8, SDG16, all encompasses Gender specific goals.

The Voluntary National Review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for St. Kitts and Nevis was formally presented in June 2023. The review captured the Federation’s progress in its achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets under 5 categories. The gender-specific goals highlighted in the VNR are illustrated in the table below.

Table 8: Categories of SDGs in the St. Kitts and Nevis Voluntary National Review (2023)

Category	SDG #	Area
People	1	No Poverty
	2	Zero Hunger
	3	Health
	4	Quality Education
	5	Gender Equality
Prosperity	7	Affordable and Clean Energy
	8	Decent Work and Economic Growth
	9	Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
	10	Reduced inequalities
	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
Planet	6	Clean Water and Sanitation
	12	Responsible Consumption and Production
	13	Climate Action
	14	Life Below Water
	15	Life on Land
Peace	16	Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
Partnership	17	Partnership for the Goals

Under SDG 5 (Gender Equality) the VNR noted the following:

Women in parliament 31.2%
 Females in tertiary education 66.5%

41. Data disaggregations routinely provided by major surveys

The Census for the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis was conducted in 2022, processing of the data is currently being finalized. Data available on the Department Statistics portal include demographic, social, economic, and environmental statistics and comprise data on education, health, labour force etc.

Section Six: Conclusions and Next Steps

The National Gender Machinery (NGM) functions under a legislative and policy framework, which is guided by international and regional commitments which require periodic country reports, the BPfA is one such example.

This review shows the progress that the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis has made over the last five years towards implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The analysis shows increased and improved measures towards gender equality and women's empowerment including advancements in social protection, education, action on environment and climate change; legislative reviews and amendment; and the greater recognition of the need to highlight gender-based violence and measures to combat this.

The Government's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment is evident through the development of the National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan, a key achievement. With a focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 5 *"Gender Equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world."* The process for the BPfA review has provided an opportunity for further collaboration, and for stakeholders to take stock of the country's successes and challenges.

The sensitization of multi-disciplinary stakeholders on the national Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan, and its implementation; including the nomination of Gender Focal Points is key to its further development, including the organizational structures required for its functionality.

Existing challenges in the form of limitations for robust and quality data in some instances require further attention. In spite of the impact of external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn, which have negatively impacted women, the Government of the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis continues to work towards creating an environment conducive for meaningful contributions and women's empowerment in its commitment to achieve gender equality.

List of Documents Consulted

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Combined fifth to ninth periodic reports submitted by Saint Kitts and Nevis (2020)

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) - Replies of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the list of issues and questions in relation to its combined fifth to ninth periodic reports (2022)

Government of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and Nevis. Estimates for the Year 2024, Volume 2

Government of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and Nevis. Estimates for the Year 2023, Volume 2

Government of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and Nevis. Estimates for the Year 2022, Volume 2

Government of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and Nevis. Estimates for the Year 2021, Volume 2

Government of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and Nevis. Estimates for the Year 2020, Volume 2

Saint Kitts and Nevis National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan (2021)

St. Kitts and Nevis Voluntary National Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2023)