





**NATIONAL POLICY ON  
GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT**

***REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO***

**SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

**DRAFT DOCUMENT**

***REVISED BY THE GENDER AFFAIRS DIVISION***  
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## Introduction

The comprehensive Policy Framework comprises four (4) parts namely,

- Part 1: The National Policy on Gender and Development,
- Part 2: The National Gender and Development Action Plan,
- Part 3: The Situational Analysis and
- Part 4: The Policy Formulation Process

**Part Three** examines situation of men and women in Trinidad and Tobago from a gender perspectives, as well as the national and international context within which the National Policy on Gender and Development is to be implemented. The situational analysis provides empirical evidence for the emerging areas of critical concern, which forms the basis for specific policy choices made within given sectors.

The situational analysis was developed from extensive and exhaustive research and consultative processes. Every attempt was made to be inclusive and to allow for participation by all sectors of society through a rigorous series of consultations in Trinidad and Tobago. As such, the methodology included the preparation of a concept paper to facilitate public education, training of facilitators and rapporteurs, and the execution of a first major National Consultation that involved all stakeholders entitled “Building Consensus: Shaping the Vision”. A series of seven regional consultations paralleled by ten interest group consultations was then embarked upon in Trinidad, and an Island-wide Consultation and six interest group Consultations in Tobago. Meetings were held with the Permanent Secretaries of the various Ministries to understand their critical concerns and possible approaches for developing and implementing this sectoral policy. The process also involved in-depth research in selected sectors through the commissioning of six major sector studies. A National Roundtable was held for Senior Public Officers to review gender gaps in each sector and possible strategies to address them. Alongside this process, thorough research was conducted, using available data sets, to identify gender differentials based on a comparative assessment of the situation of men and women in Trinidad and Tobago.

## Situational Analysis

### The National Framework

The identification of 'women' as a constituent in post-war British Colonial and Development Policy dates back to 1939 with the establishment of colonial social and labour policy in Trinidad and Tobago and the then British Colonial Caribbean. For the first time, a special state policy on women and women's welfare was instituted in the Social Welfare Department with Women's Welfare Officers employed by the state to implement programmes for women throughout the country. This phase is identified by Caroline Moser (1993) in her typology of policy approaches to women and gender as the 'welfare approach'. This approach, she argues:

...is the oldest and still the most popular social development policy in the Third World in general and for women in particular. ... Its underlying rationale towards women reflects its origins, which are linked to the residual model of social welfare, first introduced by colonial authorities in many Third World countries prior to independence (Moser, 1999:58).

In Trinidad and Tobago the Women's Work programme was the main activity of the short-lived Social Welfare Department of the Ministry of Labour, and involved the establishment of women's groups throughout the country affiliated with the Federation of Women's Institutes founded in 1946. The main activities included training programmes in handicraft, kitchen gardening, childcare, cottage industries, first-aid, housekeeping and the principles of first-aid. The abolition of the Social Welfare department in 1948 marked the end of the Women's Work programme although some of its activities continued through the Education Extension<sup>1</sup> Department.

In 1974, amidst preparations for International Women's Year (1975), a National Commission on the Status of Women was established under the portfolio of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Cooperatives. This Commission comprised 39 members from various government departments and community-based organizations with a Labour Officer II as its Secretary. One of the main achievements of this Body was the commissioning of a publication reviewing and evaluating the legal status of women in Trinidad and Tobago prepared by Attorney at Law Stephanie Daly.<sup>2</sup> By 1980, this Commission was further strengthened and streamlined to 19 women members, with an annual subvention of \$100,000 and an Administrative Officer within the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Cooperatives assigned as Secretary/Member (Reddock, 1988: 500).

In 1986, the Women's Bureau was established within the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and the Status of Women, which was later named the Ministry of Social

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<sup>1</sup> This later developed into the Community Development Division.

<sup>2</sup> Stephanie Daly, *The Legal Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago*, Commission on the Status of Women, 1975.

Development, and Family Services. The Sexual Offences Act was enacted in this same year and an Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Integration of Women in Development was established in 1987. This National Machinery produced a National Policy Statement on Women by July 1989. The Government of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1990<sup>3</sup>.

In 1991, the Women's Affairs Division (WAD) came into being and from 1993 to 1994, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank entered into a Technical Cooperation Agreement aimed at the institutional strengthening of the Division. Specialist Staff was recruited with the responsibility of executing the Institutional Strengthening Agreement comprising of six major Consultancies. Under the Planning and Development Consultancy the framework for a gender policy was developed. The WAD also led the process of preparing a National Report and the participation of Trinidad and Tobago at the United Nations Fourth World Conference for Women, held in Beijing, China in September 1995.

In the post-Beijing period, the name and mandate of the Division was changed to embrace a gender and development approach. Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Minister's Meeting (WAMM5) in 1996. This period saw the establishment of a National Domestic Violence Hotline and Unit, a Male Support Programme, increased efforts to mainstream gender issues and develop a National Policy on Gender and Development.

In 2000 Trinidad and Tobago reiterated its commitment to the promotion of gender equity and equality by its active participation at the United Nations Beijing +5 Conference in New York. In the same year a Multi-Sectoral Cabinet Committee was appointed to develop a National Policy on Gender within a two month time frame, however the Committee unable to complete such a task within the period.

In 2002, the Government launched the current project to develop a National Policy on Gender, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, the Canadian International Development Agency (CARICOM Gender Equity Fund), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Government's Vision 2020 National Policy Framework., as expressed in the Social and Economic Framework 2003-2005, established this country's intention to achieve developed country status by the year 2020. Twenty-seven (27) Sub-committees were established, to articulate the strategic action necessary to realise this vision. The Sub-committee on Gender and Development (2005) in its Report identified the need to ensure that state agencies are equipped to conduct gender analysis to avoid unintended outcomes in development. It advanced that gender and development must be a cross-cutting issue, integrated by every sector, and in the efforts of every Sub-committee in identifying strategic action to advance Trinidad and Tobago to develop country status by 2020.

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<sup>3</sup> The CEDAW was signed in 1985.

## **Tobago**

Up to 1888, Tobago's history was separate from Trinidad's. The island had its own institutions of government. In that year it was administratively joined to Trinidad and governed from Port of Spain from that time. In 1980, an Act of Parliament established the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) 'for the purpose of making better provision for the administration of the island.'<sup>4</sup> In 1996, this Act was replaced by the Tobago House of Assembly Act, which established the Assembly with twelve elected Assemblymen (sic), four appointed Councillors and a presiding Officer. Chief and Deputy Chief Secretaries are elected from among the Assembly. The Tobago House of Assembly is responsible for formulating and implementing policy on most aspects of governance<sup>5</sup> excluding national security, immigration and the Judiciary among others, which remain the responsibility of the national government.

### **Gender Machinery – Tobago**

In 1999, a Gender Unit was established in the Division of Health and Social Services of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), this Unit embarked upon a Gender Mainstreaming Project funded by CIDA, which produced a strategic plan and cooperated with the Policy and Research Development Institute (PDRI) of the THA in the formulation of a policy on gender. The Unit also collaborated with the UNDP on a Gender Development Programme for Tobago. Although the Unit has limited human and social resources it established a 24-hour Tobago Crisis hotline, an information and resource centre and provided counselling services to survivors and perpetrators of gender-based violence as well as to persons who were in need of critical social support.<sup>6</sup>

### **International Framework**

Gender and development is guided by several international mandates. These include *inter alia*, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (CIM/OAS) Plan of Action and the Belém do Para Convention for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The following Table summarizes these and other international commitments:

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<sup>4</sup> Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs, Initial, Second and Third Periodic Report of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, December 2000, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> This includes – Finance, State Lands, Land and Marine Parks, Tourism, Sports, Culture and the Arts, Community Development, Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Production, Forestry, Town and Country Planning, the Environment, Customs and Excise, Health, Social Services and Housing.

<sup>6</sup> Initial, Second and Third Periodic Report, p. 35.

**Table 1: International Commitments/Agreements for Gender Equality**

International Instrument	Date of Signature/ Adoption	Date of Ratification	Date of Accession	Entry in Force
Charter of the United Nations	18, September 1962			18, September 1962
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights		1978	7 December 1978	8, March 1979
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	1985	11, February 1990		
The Beijing Platform for Action	September 1995			
Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women	23, February 1994			
Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict	14, December 1974			
Convention on the Rights of the Child	30, August 1990	5, December 1991		4, January 1992
Charter of the Organization of American States	13, March 1967			
Inter American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man	13, March 1967 (Upon signing the Charter of the OAS)			
Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women- Convention of Belem do Para	3, November 1995	8 May 1996	8 May 1996	8 May 1996
The United Nations Millennium Development Goals	15 <sup>th</sup> September 2005			

## Population

The population of Trinidad and Tobago according to the 2000 Census was 1,262,366 with 633,051 or 50.1% male and 629,315 or 49.9% female (UNDP, 2000,161). With respect to ethno-demographics, people who for census purposes define themselves as Afro-Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians comprise the majority of the population, around 40% each. The “mixed” group appears to have increased significantly since the 1990 census to 18.4 per cent, while the numbers of other minorities -White/Caucasian, Chinese, Syrian, Lebanese, though small in number, are highly represented in the social and economic elite. Small numbers of mixed descendents of indigenous people also exist, mainly in the north-eastern town of Arima. The largest religious groupings are Roman Catholics and Hindus while the remainder include Muslims, members of other Christian denominations including Anglicans, Seventh Day Adventists, Pentecostals, Evangelicals and Afro-Christian groups or have no religious affiliation.

**Table 2**  
**Trinidad and Tobago Total Population by Sex, 2000**

TRINIDAD				TOBAGO				Total Population
Male	Female	Both Sexes	Sex Ratio	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Sex Ratio	
606,283	601,999	1,208,282	100.71	26,768	27,316	54,084	97.99	1,262,366

Source: Trinidad and Tobago Population Census, 2000 – [www.cso.gov.tt/statistics](http://www.cso.gov.tt/statistics)

In relation to other demographic characteristics, the sex ratio in Trinidad is relatively even. This is less so for Tobago. Fertility levels however, have undergone a transition. Prior to the 1960s, the crude birth rates were generally in excess of 30 live births per 1,000-estimated mid-year population. This rate declined until the 1980s when there was an increase but from 1985 it declined once more from 28.6 in 1985 to 18.6 in 1992. Using another measure, Total Fertility Rates were estimated to be 5.4 in 1960, 3.6 in 1970, 3.3 in 1980 and 2.4 in 1990. In the 1990s these declined even further from 1.9 in 1994 to 1.7 in 1997 (T&T, CSO, 1996:31).

Rates of maternal mortality have also declined over the decade of the 1990s falling from 76.2 in 1994<sup>7</sup> to 70.4 in 2001 (PAHO/WHO: 2001).

**Table 3**  
**Age/Sex Distribution, 1990**

Age Group	Male	Female	Both Sexes
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<sup>7</sup> This was apparently a sharp increase from 49.18 in 1991; 60.7 in 1992; 66.40 in 1993 (Report to CEDAW, 2000:91).

0-14	32.6%	31.9%	32.2%
15-29	26.3%	25.9%	26.1%
30-44	19.3%	19.1%	19.2%
45-59	10.2%	10.4%	10.3%
60 and over	7.9%	8.9%	8.4%
Not Stated	3.7%	3.6%	3.7%
TOTAL	584,445	585,127	1,169,572

Source: The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office, *Population and Housing Census Demographic Report, Volume 11*, 1990, Port of Spain, pp.40-41.

The overall state of gender equity in Trinidad and Tobago compares favourably with other medium-income developing countries with respect to such indicators such as life expectancy, maternal mortality and the level of education. The Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>8</sup> ranking for 2000 was 50 out of 174 countries, with a Gender-related Development Index (GDI)<sup>9</sup> of 48 and a Gender Empowerment Index (GEM) of 22. However, negative gender ideologies and practices continue to affect gender relations as well as the overall quality of life. This is further affected by differences of age, geographic location (urban-rural), economic status, levels of interpersonal and criminal violence.

## Education

Commitment to education has always been significant in Trinidad and Tobago and for the colonial powers; education in English language was one way of establishing British values. By 1921, therefore, a Compulsory Education Ordinance was passed for Port of Spain and St. James, although not implemented until 1935. By the 1940s compulsory primary school attendance for both sexes was in force, although not always in practice and by 2000, universal secondary enrolment was put in place.

The Education Code of 1935 facilitated the more systematic implementation of sex stereotyping in educational opportunity for girls and boys. For example, increased attention was paid to the “provision for instruction in domestic science for primary school girls at special approved centres,” while boys were prepared for a wider range of technical and academic pursuits. Additionally, married women were excluded from

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<sup>8</sup>HDI - A composite index constructed by the UNDP since 1990, which measures average achievement in basic human development using life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rates, combined educational enrolment ratios and adjusted per capita income per person in \$US (UNDP, 2000,147).

<sup>9</sup>GDI - Composite measures of achievements in the same variables as the HDI, but taking into account the inequality in achievement between women and men.

*permanent* employment as teachers and civil servants until 1961. After 1935, sex stereotyping became an essential feature shaping education, career goals and opportunities for employment although to a lesser extent than in some societies.

Although it did call for equal opportunity in education for both sexes, in 1945, the West India Royal Commission (WIRC) constituted to investigate the causes of social and labour unrest in the British colonial Caribbean in the 1930s, recommended that, “if there are to be happy marriages, girls must be able to be companions to their husbands and therefore need every opportunity for as wide a cultural education as possible (WIRC, 1945: cited in Reddock, 1994:229). This education however, was to direct girls to specific women’s careers and to be good wives and mothers (Campbell, 1985).

Today, Trinidad and Tobago is perceived as a country with a relatively high level of education. By 2000, 99.9% of the population was recorded as enrolled at primary level (UNDP, 2000) and 71.5% secondary level education in 1997. By 2000, opportunities were expanded to all secondary age children. In the case of primary education, this was 112% and 120% and 100% and 102% for secondary education (UNDP, 1998:131).

These figures for school enrolment contrast with recent studies of functional literacy, which suggest that in spite of higher rates of school enrolment and to a lesser extent school attendance, illiteracy still exists in some circumstances. Whereas official data using the criteria ‘years of schooling’ give Trinidad and Tobago high literacy rates<sup>10</sup>, smaller surveys based on literacy tests have had different results. It was found that overall an estimated 12.6% of the population 15 years and over was illiterate; while a further 8.7% were seen to be ‘peripherally illiterate’. Interestingly, 16.2% of persons currently working were found to be illiterate (ALTA, 1994; St. Bernard and Salim, 1995:xi). Among younger persons aged 15-24 years and 25-39 years, there were higher levels of illiteracy among men than among women. With respect to older persons aged 40-54 years and 55 years and older, the situation is reversed with women having higher levels of illiteracy than men. Therefore although it was found that variations in the literacy rate between the sexes were minimal, the majority of those who *had not* gone to any schools were females yet those more likely to have 10 or more years of schooling were also female (ALTA, 1994:12).

**Table 4**  
**Highest Level of Educational Attainment – 1990**

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>
NONE	10.5%	11.5%	11.0%

<sup>10</sup> Trinidad and Tobago is credited with a literacy rate of 97 percent of the female population over 15 years old, as opposed to 99 per cent of the male population over 15 years of age. In this case, literacy is measured in terms of the years of primary schooling and the administration of written tests in Trinidad and Tobago.

Nursery/ Kindergarten	3.0%	2.9%	2.9%
Primary	48.8%	46.9%	47.9%
Secondary	33.4%	34.9%	34.2%
University	2.2%	1.6%	1.9%
Other	0.8%	1.0%	0.9%
Not Stated	1.3%	1.1%	1.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>560,934</b>	<b>564,194</b>	<b>1,125,128</b>

Source: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office, *Population and Housing Census Demographic Report, Volume 11*, 1990, pp.198, 214, 230.

According to these figures the levels of educational attainment are relatively similar between the sexes except for slight differences, although this may have changed since that time. There has been much concern however over the perception of male under-achievement in education. In particular, the lower levels of secondary school enrolment are one manifestation of this situation.

**Table 5**  
**Enrolment in Government and Assisted Primary Schools 1999/2000**

**Trinidad and Tobago**

<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>
<b>83,051 50.9%</b>	<b>80,155 49.1%</b>	<b>163,206</b>

**Tobago**

<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>
<b>3,642 51.3%</b>	<b>3,458 48.7%</b>	<b>7,100</b>

Source: Trinidad and Tobago Central Statistical Office, *Annual Statistical Digest*, 2000, 57pp.

**Table 6**  
**Enrolment in Public Secondary Education, 1999/2000**

**Trinidad and Tobago**

<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>
<b>51,471 48.8%</b>	<b>54,071 51.2%</b>	<b>105, 542</b>

## Tobago

Male	Female	Both Sexes
1,553 47.2%	1,737 52.8%	3,290

Trinidad and Tobago Population Census 2000, [www.cso.gov.tt/statistics](http://www.cso.gov.tt/statistics)

In 1990 there were still more females who had received no education but this was primarily in the higher age groups and males exceeded females among the university educated population (2.2% and 1.6% respectively) which overall was an extremely small proportion of the population (See Table 4). These figures, however, reflected a changing situation in that since that time the number of females registered and graduating from the University of the West Indies (UWI) has come to exceed that of males. In 2001-2002, females comprised 60% of students enrolled in undergraduate degree programmes, 66% of certificate programmes, 82% of diplomas, 61% of advanced diplomas, 54% of higher degrees and 66% of specially admitted students at the St. Augustine campus. There were 2,608 (38%) male and 4,339 (61%) female Trinidad and Tobago students enrolled overall in UWI on all three campuses (UWI, 2003:124 &130)<sup>11</sup>.

At UWI, female students are now equal to or exceed males in previously male-dominated fields such as the physical and natural sciences. One exception in this regard is engineering although female enrolment has also increased in this area. What is interesting is that as females extend their options, males appear to be reducing theirs. Numbers of males have been declining in the Humanities, Education, Social Sciences, Agriculture and others. Data for students who pursue higher education overseas are not easily available.

**Table 7**  
**Trinidad and Tobago Graduates from the University of the West Indies 1991-92 – 1999-2000**

Degree	1991/92		1995/6		1999/2000	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
B.Sc Agriculture	28	28	23	37	19	60(76%)
B.A. Humanities	34	100	53	140	50	171(77%)
B.Sc Engineering	67	10	126	39	157	41(21%)
B.Sc Natural Science	71	96	80	99	98	149(60%)
B.Sc Social Science	66	111	141	290	164	337(67%)
MBBS Medical	28	6	49	36	43	42(49%)

<sup>11</sup> UWI, The Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council, Mona, April 2003.

Sciences					
Education	-	-	43	132	89 221(71%)

Source: T&T, Central Statistical Office *Annual Statistical Digest*, 2000, p. 65

Much attention has been given to the lower numbers of males among UWI graduates and other levels of the education system. Research is ongoing to better understand this trend.<sup>12</sup> It must be stressed, however, that the university-educated population is an extremely small proportion of the national population, therefore, educational attainment levels of most women *as with most* men leaves much room for improvement.

This is especially so as males still dominate other forms of tertiary education, for example, the broad range of technical/ vocational education, which is a distinct advantage, bearing in mind the energy and industrial base of the economy. Young girls in secondary schools are sometimes discouraged or not allowed to do technical and applied science subjects such as woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing, information technology etc. Similarly, course enrolment at trade schools, technical institutes and the new community college, COSTATT<sup>13</sup> are largely gender differentiated and girls and boys are directed into sex-stereotyped occupations. A new technology-based University of Trinidad and Tobago is in the planning stage. Serious efforts will need to be made if this trend is to be deterred.

The options for young men are still greater than for young women who do not successfully complete formal education. Women are still largely excluded from most of the skilled trades except dressmaking, business studies and catering while due to ideological and discriminatory factors, options such as auto mechanics, electrical work, refrigeration, plumbing, carpentry, masonry and so on exist for young males. The sexual division of labour in the technical and skilled trades still operates very strongly and so affects the majority of the population, therefore there is less incentive for boys to complete formal secondary education. Overall, therefore, taking *all* forms of tertiary education into consideration, in 2000, the ratio of female to male tertiary students was 72% and female tertiary science students comprised 38.2% of all female tertiary students (UNDP, 2000:255).

**Table 8**  
**Enrolment in Technical and Vocational (Craft) Schools by Course and Sex – 1999/2000**

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<sup>12</sup> The CDB funded research project – *Gender Differentials in Educational Performance at the Secondary and Tertiary Levels of Caribbean Education Systems*. Is ongoing, coordinated by the Regional Coordinating Unit, Centre for Gender and Development Studies UWI, located on the Mona Campus.

<sup>13</sup> COSTATT – College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago.

<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>MALE</b>		<b>FEMALE</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
Graphic Design and Applied Arts	33	34%	64	66%	97
Mechanical/ Building Engineering	358	95.7%	16	4.3%	374
<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>MALE</b>		<b>FEMALE</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
Mechanical/ Production Engineering	461	94.3%	28	5.7%	489
Civil Engineering/ Surveying & Construction	173	94%	11	6%	184
Home Economics	22 (tailoring) 15.6%		118	64%	141
Distributive Education & Management	23	11.8%	172	88.2%	195
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,101</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>1,480</b>

Source: The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Central Statistical Office, *Annual Statistical Digest, 2000*, pp. 64-65.

### **Literacy and Employment**

It is interesting to note that in spite of equal levels of illiteracy, illiterate men had more opportunities for employment than illiterate women. As a result, the ALTA survey found that despite similar illiteracy rates, 95% of illiterate women were recorded as ‘keeping house’ during the time of the survey while 60% of illiterate males were working during that same period (ALTA, 1994:15). The report went on to detail that of those who had been working in the previous week 62% were male, while 46% of those who were ‘keeping house’ were female (ALTA, 1994:14). The highest illiteracy rates were found among those ‘keeping house’. It is not surprising therefore that women comprise a larger proportion of those attending ALTA’s literacy classes<sup>14</sup>.

Those who were unemployed (and wanted to work) were slightly less literate than those who were working (76 %) but more were classified as functionally illiterate<sup>15</sup> (14.3 per cent). There was less disparity in the illiteracy rates between Afro-Trinidadian men, (8.8 %) and women (9.0 %), than for Indo-Trinidadian men (19.8 %) and women (16.3 %). The above suggests that the negative impact of illiteracy on women’s employment is

<sup>14</sup> It is also stated that high levels of illiteracy are found among the prison population, the majority of whom are male. We have not been able to locate statistics on this however.

<sup>15</sup> Functional literacy according to ALTA is the “Ability to read and answer two multiple choice questions and ability to read an instruction and to write a simple sentence in response.” Functional illiteracy is the “Ability to perform at least one of the tasks referred to above or read at least 3 out of 5 simple words”. Illiterate refers to the “inability to perform any of the tasks, that is unable to read or write English (ALTA, 1994:4).

greater than on men. Additionally it suggests that for poor women, being a housewife is not simply a matter of choice. The ethnic differences are partly the result of rural poverty, as Indo-Trinidadians tend to predominate in rural areas, but more importantly as a legacy of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century when young Indian girls tended to be removed from school at puberty or not to have been sent to school at all.

### **Employment and Economics**

In spite of their higher educational qualifications, women continue to comprise the majority of the unemployed, underpaid in every sector of employment, except when employed by the State, and in every occupational group. Women's participation rate in the labour force in 2000 stood at 38.6%, compared with 61.4 % for men. It should be noted however that unemployed women are often hidden in the categories 'not in the labour force' or 'economically inactive - home duties' and so do not appear in unemployment figures. Unlike unemployed men, unemployed women have the option of defining themselves as housewives *or* as unemployed. Increasingly, many women are doing the latter. However, often when female unemployment figures increase, so too do figures of those 'not in the labour force'.

The majority of women tend to be employed in the lower professional categories – teachers, nurses, administrative, secretarial and the financial services, in manufacturing and other areas of personal service including sales, shop and store clerks, workers in catering establishments or in private homes. Men on the other hand are employed as craft and related workers, machine operators and assemblers and technical workers. In the generally declining agricultural sector, once the largest area of female employment, their participation is now limited and largely invisible.

Self-employment or own-account work for women has also been important especially in the area of personal service and sales, especially in the so-called informal sector but official statistics record women as only 31 % of own-account workers in 2000. Sex work, usually associated with urban centres and the tourist industry is also significant for women and increasingly for men. Not easily measured, this sector offers few protections. Fewer women than men are employed as legislators, managers, senior officials, and professionals. Relative to their proportion in the population, women are also over represented in the clerical category (T&T, CSO, 1995).

**Table 9**  
**Labour force by Sex and Occupation, Trinidad and Tobago**

<b>MALE ('000)</b>												
Occupation	200	200	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199

	1	0	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Legislative, senior officials and managers	23.8	22.2	19.7	18.7	18.6	17.5	18.5	17.8	19.6	18.0	15.6
Professionals	9.6	8.4	9.2	10.0	9.5	8.5	7.8	7.4	9.8	8.4	9.2
Technicians and associate professionals	27.4	25.4	24.3	25.1	25.4	24.0	20.4	21.7	21.4	18.7	19.1
Clerks	16.1	14.8	14.7	15.2	15.2	15.1	15.7	15.5	15.8	14.3	14.8
Service workers * and shop sales workers	35.8	38.2	37.2	38.2	35.9	35.3	33.4	33.0	30.6	32.3	34.3
Agriculture, forestry and fishery workers	16.6	14.4	14.8	14.3	16.0	17.0	17.5	17.7	15.2	15.6	17.2
Craft and related workers	88.4	88.0	85.3	82.9	79.9	76.9	78.5	70.9	71.2	70.9	70.1
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	45.8	45.9	43.9	42.6	38.9	36.1	38.2	35.8	37.2	37.1	37.0
Elementary occupations	92.2	95.4	98.6	97.3	96.2	95.2	96.8	99.0	97.0	4	97.1
Not stated	1.0	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.5
Total	356.	353.	348.	344.	335.	325.	327.	319.	318.	318.	315.
Total	7	0	0	6	8	7	0	1	0	0	1

#### **FEMALE ('000)**

	200	200	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199
Occupation	1	0	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Legislative, senior officials and managers	15.8	14.5	14.2	12.8	13.3	12.6	12.2	10.3	10.8	9.2	8.8
Professionals	7.5	6.7	7.0	6.4	6.0	5.7	5.6	5.0	6.0	5.9	6.5
Technicians and associate professionals	31.8	30.2	30.8	30.5	28.1	28.1	25.7	24.3	23.5	23.5	20.7
Clerks	48.7	49.2	48.0	49.1	45.5	45.0	43.9	43.7	40.7	45.5	37.7
Service workers * and shop sales workers	49.2	50.4	44.8	45.0	41.8	39.7	37.1	34.6	35.3	35.7	33.9
Agriculture, forestry and fishery workers	2.6	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.9	2.1	2.2	2.7
Craft and related workers	11.2	12.0	11.5	11.4	12.1	10.8	9.8	9.5	10.3	9.9	10.5
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	5.4	6.1	6.3	6.7	6.2	6.3	6.4	5.9	5.8	5.7	4.8
Elementary occupations	46.8	48.2	50.5	50.1	50.0	54.0	50.9	53.8	51.6	49.4	47.5
Not stated	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
Total	219.	219.	215.	214.	205.	204.	194.	190.	186.	187.	177.
Total	8	7	4	1	2	7	0	3	4	2	1

Source: *Continuous Sample Surveys of Population*, Central Statistical Office, Trinidad and Tobago, various years. Taken from M. Rowley and Monica Paul McLean, Social Sector Report, National Gender Policy and Action Plan, 2003, p. 33.

The 1992 *Survey of Living Conditions* noted that long-term unemployment was a greater problem for women than for men. For example, whereas youth unemployment was

serious for both sexes, for males this persisted until age 30, while for females it continued until ages 31-40. It also noted that older women tend to have higher unemployment rates (T&T CSO, 1992:xiii). This has resulted in large-scale migration of women to the United States and to a lesser extent, Canada, often leaving behind children with relatives, friends or on their own. This has had serious implications for youth delinquency and poor educational performance, and may be a serious contributor to young male criminality (World Bank, 1995:11-65).

In spite of the increases in women in the labour force therefore, there are still more men in paid and self-employment than women. The numbers of males employed exceeds that of females in every category except one, even in the state sector where the numbers of women employed have grown over the years. Women exceed men only as unpaid workers (T&TCSO, 2001:64-64.) See Table 10 below.

**Table 10**  
**Type of Worker by Sex, 1999-2001**

Type of Worker	1999		2000		2001	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Paid Employee</b>	231,600	142,300	236,800	149,200	242,100	150,500 (62.0%)
	(62.0%)	(38.1%)			(38.3%)	
Gov't/Statutory Board	61,600	38,000	59,400	39,900	63,700	42,200 (60.1%)
	(62.0%)	(38.2%)			(39.8)	
State Enterprise	20,800	4,300	19,900	5,400	21,300	6,000
	(82.9%)	(17.1%)			(78.0%)	(22.0%)
Non-Governmental/ Private Sector	149,300	100,000	157,500	103,900	157,000	102,300 (39.5%)
	(59.9%)	(40.1%)			(60.5%)	
<b>Self-Employed</b>						
Employer	15,900	4,200	18,900	4,800	20,900	6,000
	(79.1%)	(20.9%)			(78.0%)	(22.3%)
Own Account	56,400		56,000		58,400	

Worker	25,200 (69.1%) (30.9%)	25,800	26,300 (69.0%) (31.1%)
Unpaid Worker	2,600 6,200 (29.5%) (70.5%)	1,800 5,400	1,400 4,100 (25.5%) (74.5%)
Learner/Apprentice	3,400 1,300 (72.3%) (27.7%)	2,900 900	2,800 900 (75.7%) (24.3%)

Source: Trinidad and Tobago Central Statistical Office, *Labour Force Report 2001*, pp. 64

### Pay and Other Conditions of Service

In spite of the relative increases in women's labour force participation, their high levels of educational attainment and increased participation in various professional fields, women continue to fall at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder and face discrimination in the level of wages which accrue to them when compared to men. No equal pay legislation exists. In all occupational groups, women still earn less than men sometimes by as much as 50% less as shown in Table 11 below.

**Table 11**  
**Women's Average Income as a percentage of Men's in Occupational Groups, 1998-2000**

<b>Occupational Group</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Legislators, Senior Officers, Managers	52.9	52.3	52.8
Professionals	75.6	80.6	73.5
Technicians & Associate Professionals	76.7	79.7	84.1
Clerks	86.6	85.9	87.8
Service Workers incl. Defence Force and Shop/Sales Workers	50.2	53.5	57.7
Agricultural, Forestry &	52.9	67.3	68.7

Fishery Workers			
Craft and Related Workers	50.0	47.3	55.2
Plant and Machine Operators & Assemblers	54.9	64.8	64.9
Elementary Occupations	61.9	64.1	64.4

Source: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office, Labour Force Reports 1998-2001 [www.cso.gov.tt/statistics](http://www.cso.gov.tt/statistics)

**Table 12**  
**Average Monthly Income by Type of Worker by Sex, 2001**

<b>Sector of Employment</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>% Difference</b>
<b>Paid Employee</b>	2,574	2,729	2,328	14.6%
Public Sector/Statutory Board	3,274	3,267	3,284	-0.5%
State Enterprise	3,664	3,743	3,382	9.6%
Non Government (Private Sector)	2,163	2,361	1,865	21.0%
<b>Self-Employed</b>				
Employer	3,328	3,457	2,868	17.0%
Own Account Worker	1,573	1,750	1,190	32%
Learner/Apprentice	807	813	783	3.6%

Source: Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office, *Continuous Sample Survey of the Population, Labour Force Report 2001*, pp.60-62.

The table above shows that wage differentials are greater in the private and non-governmental sector than in the public sector. This may be due to the lower rates of unionisation as well as less monitoring of conditions of work or adherence to labour legislation. Indeed in the public sector where opportunities for career advancement are greater for women, income levels are relatively equal with a very slight negative difference for men (0.5%). These data support the United Nations' observation that throughout the world, women have greater chances of career advancement in the public or state sector.<sup>16</sup> Few women have been able to ascend to the top positions in the private sector. The thrust toward privatisation of state sector activities therefore cannot be seen

<sup>16</sup> The United Nations, (1990) *The Worlds Women: Trends and Statistics*, New York,

as a gender-neutral macro-economic policy but one with serious implications for gender equity.

There are more than twice the numbers of self-employed men than women. Self employed<sup>17</sup> women also earn substantially less than self-employed men, again supporting a trend noted by the United Nations when it states:

All over the world, self-employment provides some women and men, especially those who have failed to secure paid jobs, with a means of contributing income to the family . . . Sometimes self-employment makes it easier for women to combine family responsibilities and unpaid subsistence work with income-earning activities. *On the other hand, it can imply a high level of job insecurity and does carry with it a lack of such protections as maternity leave and parental leave* (UN, 2000:116, emphasis added).

The report continued to note that this trend toward increasing self-employment (or micro-enterprise development) was closely associated with the introduction of neo-liberal economic practices initially through structural adjustment programmes and the decline in paid work. In such instances poor women and men are forced to create their own income-earning opportunities (UN, 2000:116).

Conditions of work vary across sectors and within sectors. As we see above, wage differentials exist, and are especially sharp in the private sector. Trade union organization is legal, but varies across sectors. Many female-dominated occupations e.g. teachers, nurses, public servants, bank employees, etc. are unionised. A 1999 survey carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Cooperatives found that women accounted for 26,770 or 44% of the 61,345 members of 28 trade unions. However men still dominate in the leadership of these organizations. The 1999 survey found that women held 7.5% of executive positions in eight trade unions. This situation has not changed leading the Banking and Insurance Workers Union website to say in 2004:

There are 35 labour unions in Trinidad and Tobago of this only 8 unions have women on the Executive. Of the 8 unions only one has a woman holding one of the power-positions in the Union (<http://www.bigwu.org/library>).

While there is no specific legislation on sexual harassment exists, remedy for some types can be secured under the Sexual Offences Act 2000. A CARICOM Model Legislation on Sexual Harassment has been prepared to assist member states in preparing such legislation. Several Unions have made sexual harassment measures a part of their collective agreements, some companies have sexual harassment policies in place, and the Industrial Court using the Industrial Relations Act has successfully adjudicated a number of cases, but this continues to be an area of much concern and lack of clarity. In 1998, the

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<sup>17</sup> Referred to as own-account workers in the survey.

Tobago House of Assembly passed a motion adopting a Sexual Harassment Policy for all its employees.<sup>18</sup>

In 1998 the Maternity Protection Act came into force, providing women with a paid leave of 13 weeks every two years. The initial period of leave can be extended by up to 12 weeks for medical reasons, the first six weeks with half the monthly salary and the last six weeks with no salary. Payments are to be covered by the employer and the national insurance scheme such that there is no loss of earnings. Collective agreements with individual employers may not provide less than these provisions. Cases of women, especially temporary and casual workers, being fired when pregnant still surface, as well as cases of workers not being paid full benefits especially in small establishments and private homes. In some collective agreements, provisions may be made for 2-4 days paternity leave for fathers on the birth of a child.

### **Inheritance and Property Rights**

A Succession Act was passed by Parliament in 1981 but it has not yet been proclaimed<sup>19</sup>. This replaced the 1972 Wills and Probate Act and allows wives to contest wills if they are excluded and to apply to the court for maintenance. Legislation on Property Rights was also passed, revising provisions on real property and women's property rights but this too was never proclaimed. The 1998 Cohabitation Relations Act, which made legal provisions for 'common-law' spouses, does not allow for inheritance.

### **Marriage and Union Status**

Of the population 15 years and over, 44% of men and 37.6% of females respectively, were never married (CSO 1990). Similar proportions or 43.3 % of both sexes were identified in national statistics as married. More females (8.4%) were widowed than males (2.6%) and this was especially the case for older women. Very small numbers were divorced or legally separated. An examination of data for union status of women 15 years and over however gives a more meaningful picture of women's intimate relationships. Indeed, marital status data more so reflects the legal status and not the actual situation in which the majority of women are living.

In 1990, 43% of women were identified as being in a married union, while 22.6%, close to one quarter of the population, had never been in a union. Free unions, locally referred to as common-law unions, accounted for 10.8%, while only 1.5% was identified as being in visiting unions. 8% were no longer living with their spouse and 3.8% were no longer

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<sup>18</sup> In the debate supporting the motion, Secretary for Health and Social Services, Judy Bobb, identified it as a gender issue, which should be expanded beyond the workplace to schools and other areas.

<sup>19</sup> 'Proclaimed' means that the act was never put into effect by proclamation by the president, usually because certain necessary regulations and mechanisms had not yet been put in place.

living with their common-law partner.<sup>20</sup> In addition to ethnic differences in union status, class and religious differences also occur. Legal marriages tend to predominate among the upper and middle-classes, while, this diverse range of union status exists among all economic groups. A minority of Muslims practise informal polygamy.

A 1994 study of Family in Trinidad and Tobago, found that out of a total of 1,973 households, 34% or just over one-third, comprised a nuclear family - husband, wife and children. This was the largest grouping followed by 15.7 % other extended households and 13.9% single-person households. Grandmother extended households accounted for 5.7% of the sample. When combined, all extended households would be 21.4% or just over one-fifth of the sample (St. Bernard, 1997:108).

Looking at predominantly African-descended Tobago separately, the situation is much more stark. Nuclear families account for only 22.5% of the sample, less than one quarter, while extended families - 13.8% grandmother extended and 21.3% other extended are the most significant other grouping. Together, extended families accounted for 35.1% of the sample. St. Bernard found that generally, single mother and grandmother families tend to be in dire economic circumstances and extended families may be a response to economic need. In a 1997 study, he found that 52% of single parent and 44.1% of the grandmother families were estimated to have no one working on a full-time basis, although extra-household assistance may be available (St. Bernard, 1997:111).

Interestingly female single parent households were less significant in Tobago accounting for only 5% of the sample, most likely because single mothers continue to reside in extended family households. This contrasts greatly with predominantly African-descended areas of Trinidad. What is also intriguing is that Tobago is the only area where the proportion of male single-parent households (6.3%) exceeded that of female single parent households (5%), although only slightly. These differences could be due to a number of factors including migration of mothers to Trinidad to work, poverty and problems of economic scarcity in addition to the cultural factors.

The proportions of nuclear families are highest in predominantly Indian-descended communities, but still in all cases this was less than 50%. Extended households and single person households followed respectively. Extended households were significant for all parts of the country, however the internal structures and power dynamics may differ significantly. For example, whereas Afro-Trinidadian extended households tend to be matrilineal, Indo-Trinidadian households tend to be patrilineal.

## **Family and Domestic Law**

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<sup>20</sup> CARICOM, 1990-1991. Data on union status however are not collected for men as it was originally seen as a mechanism for gaining fertility related information.

Over the past two decades, a spate of legislation such as the Matrimonial Proceedings Act of 1972, the Status of Children's Act, the Family Law Act of 1983 and the Cohabital Relationships Act, 1998, have been implemented reflecting significant attitudinal changes towards the status of women and children in the family. As such, the concept of illegitimacy has been abolished; persons enjoy relatively easy access to divorce and judicial separation based on no-fault grounds; common-law unions of over three years duration have been granted legal recognition and the law provides for equality of treatment between mothers and fathers with reference to rights and responsibilities towards children particularly in relation to custody and maintenance. A Family Court Bill was passed and a Family Court system was officially launched on May 12, 2004 as a pilot project in St George Magisterial District and Port of Spain High Court Jurisdiction for an initial period of two years. The Family Court is now air-marked for expansion, with a Court to be shortly established in the Victoria West Magisterial District and San Fernando High Court Jurisdiction.

The legislative framework has improved significantly over the last two decades due to governmental action, international mandates, and the lobby of the women's movement. Notable introduction and revision of legislation include the Sexual Offences Act (1986, 2000), the Domestic Violence Act (1991,1999) and the Attachment of Earnings Act (1988, 1995), the Maternity Protection Act (1998), the Cohabital Relationships Act (1998), the Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004). Public education and strategies to improve the efficient implementation of these provisions are continuously required to promote gender equity and equality

## **Health**

The availability of basic health and social services such as access to clean water, improved consistently since the post-war period. Immunization and access to pre and antenatal health has gone a long way towards providing this. In 1996, according to some sources, 98% of women received pre-natal care and a similar proportion had deliveries performed by a skilled attendant (United Nations, 2000:91). Between 1970 and 1990 for example, the crude death rate declined from 7.7% to 6.6% and overall life expectancy increased from 65.7 to 70.1 (World Bank, 1995:49). Women's life expectancy in 1998 was 76.4 (UNDP, 2000:161). In 1990, life expectancy at birth was 70.9 years for women, and 65.7 for men while the infant mortality rate was 24.98 deaths/1,000 births. By 1998, estimates of life expectancy placed this at 76.5 for females and 71.7 for males (UNDP, 2000:161). The 1995 World Bank study suggests that in spite of these gains:

...the health status of the population still falls below that of many middle income countries, largely due to limited preventative care and the low quality of services offered in both the public and private sector. Nearly 50 percent of the population still dies before they have reached the age of 65 with many of these deaths avoidable (World Bank, 1995:49).

The last decade has seen significant increases in state spending on health and social service delivery. Health sector reform has been ongoing with the provision of increased

numbers of health facilities and resources, and measures to improve access to quality health care and to drugs, especially for chronic diseases.

## **Reproductive Health**

Significant strides have been made in the development of Health and Family Life (HFLE) curricula and the training of educators to facilitate teaching on this subject area in schools, however this is not universal. Teenage sexual activity is cause for much concern; and concerted action is required to expose more children and youth to health and family life education, and sex education in particular. Teenage pregnancy rates are high in urban areas. 13.5% of all live and stillbirth deliveries were to teenagers, with an age-specific fertility rate of 45.9% (PAHO/WHO, 2001:3).<sup>21</sup> The incidence of STIs is also relatively high among teens and young adults.

In Trinidad and Tobago, fertility levels have undergone a transition. Contraception is widely available through local clinics of government health centres, the Family Planning Association, and through the private sector. Contraceptive use among married women was 58% between 1985/1990 however in the age group 15-19, 22 births occurred per 1000 women (United Nations, 2000:48). According to a Family Planning Association 2000 report, oral contraceptives are the main method used, in 1998 it accounted for 49.5% (FPATT, 2000).

The infant mortality rate in 2000 was 16.2 per 1000 live births. Breast cancer mortality rates have been on the increase (17.6 per 100,000 in 1990 to 19.5 in 1994) while cervical cancers have been on the decline (9.1 in 1990 to 7.7 in 1994). Specific men's reproductive health issues are also significant. Central among these are the prevalence of prostate cancer and the tendency for men to visit health institutions less frequently for preventative screening.

## **Diseases and Disorders**

HIV/AIDS has become a major cause of mortality in Trinidad and Tobago over the last two decades. Between 1983-1996, there was a steady increase from 8 cases in 1983 to approximately 350 cases in 1996. While initially prevalent among men, the incidence of HIV/AIDS among women aged 15 through 19 has doubled between 1989 and 1990. In 1996, the female to male infection ratio was 5:1, in 1997, women accounted for 45 per cent of all new cases. Data also suggests that females are infected at earlier ages than males and are at greater risk of infection as well as mortality (Brathwaite, 1998:1) as women comprised 33% of adults who had died by the end of 1997(United Nations, 2000:81).

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<sup>21</sup> The Family Planning Association (FPA) has been involved in community and school outreach programmes on sex education, but this does not had universal reach. Special programmes have been established for young women and men visiting the offices of the FPA.

The main causes of death are heart disease, cancer, diabetes, cerebrovascular disease and injuries, which could include injuries from accidents as well as criminal and sexual violence. Death from external causes was especially significant for males where the tendency for at-risk behaviour results in higher levels of injury and accidents. The main causes of death were as follows:

**Table 13**  
**Main Causes of Mortality by Sex**  
**Age Groups 24-44 and 45-64 Years, 1994**

<b>Causes of Death</b>	<b>25 – 44 Male</b>	<b>25 – 44 Female</b>	<b>45 – 64 Male</b>	<b>45 – 64 Female</b>
Diseases of the circulatory System	14.2%	20.1%	39.8%	39.5%
Cancer (Malignant Neoplasms)	10.6%	19.1%	12.1%	20.5%
External Causes-	31.2%(motor vehicle accidents, 18.3%; suicide, 24.8%; and homicide, 31.7%)	13.2% (homicides and suicides are responsible for 67.8% of these deaths)	9.1%	2.2%
Diabetes			17.0%	21.2%

Source: Adapted from “Trinidad and Tobago” in *Health in the Americas, Volume II*, 1998, p 486.

A 1994-1995 National Survey of Health found the following:

- More males (41.8%) rated their health as excellent or very good than females (31.4%).
- More females (25.2%) reported being affected by long-standing illness, disability or infirmity than males (18.7%).
- Males reported a higher prevalence of injury than females, 14.3% compared to 7.4% for females. In Tobago this was even greater, 24.5% for males and 7.5% for females.
- The prevalence of Angina Pectoris, a high indicator of the risk of heart disease was varied with ethnicity and gender. Generally the prevalence was 4.6% for males and 7.6% for females. The incidence was higher for persons of Indian

origin than for persons of African origin. Afro-Trinidadian males in general have a low incidence of 3% while Indo-Trinidadian males had an incidence of 6.7%. For female it was 6.7% and 8.5% respectively.

- The prevalence of Diabetes Mellitus was 9.6% for males and 12.6% for females 35 years and over. The highest prevalence was among Indo-Trinidadian females of 17%.
- The rate of hypertension was generally high in the population but especially so among females who had a rate of 28.1% in relation to males which was 18.2%. This difference remained consistent across all ages and among all ethnic groups. One-third of all males and one-half of all females reported high blood pressure.
- Smoking is a predominantly male activity with 28.8% of males reporting current smoking and 5.1% of females<sup>22</sup>.
- 10.5% of male drinkers consumed more than 21 drinks in the previous week while 3.6% of females consumed 14 drinks during the same time period.
- More males were involved in leisure type exercise 16.6% as opposed to females, 5.9%.

In conclusion the report summarized:

The association of gender with health status is seen throughout...Males have higher risks of injury but for almost all categories of morbidity explored more women report morbidity, disability and perceived ill health. In many cases this was apparently linked to lifestyle. Women have higher rates of obesity and do not exercise regularly. They tend to have lower indices of socio-economic status...<sup>23</sup>

There is increasing concern about the rising incidence of old and new communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. In relation to the latter there is particular concern over the disturbing projections for women where in Trinidad and Tobago in 1997, the number of women at risk of transferring HIV to a child is expected to increase from 33,766 in 1997 to 49,970 in 2005, an increase of 48% (Camara, Nicholls, McLean et al, n.d: 81). A Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) survey found that in calculating the costs of HIV/AIDS care, the unpaid services of women who care for AIDS patients is not included in the accounting practices of most countries of the region and the world (Camara, Nicholls, McLean et al, n.d.24).

## **Gender Based Violence**

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid and PAHO/WHO, Trinidad and Tobago in *Health of the Americas*, p. 489.

<sup>23</sup> Trinidad and Tobago National Health Survey, 1994-1995, p. 115.

Gender-based violence has emerged as a public policy issue in the Caribbean, largely due to advocacy raising throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. It is recognised that violence against women is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. Trinidad and Tobago has ratified various international conventions such as the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belem do Para Convention) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This country is also a signatory to the World Commission on Human Rights (WCHR) and Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference of Women. State protection of victims of domestic violence and the provision of legal and social remedy for violations to their persons have improved. However, concerted action must continue to treat with the fundamentally entrenched attitudes and behaviours, that promote unequal gender relations between men and women and which perpetuate gender based violence.

During the first years of the 1991 Domestic Violence Act, August 1991 to April 1994, 8,297 applications for protection orders were made, of these 3,258 were granted (Report to CEDAW, 2000:320). Between 1991 and 1993, violence against women and children continued to rise. Charges of rape and serious indecency rose from 185 to 250 between September and November of 1995, while between January and October of 1994, 23 women were murdered and in the same period for 1995, 12 women and 7 children were the victims of domestic violence (Reddock and Barclay, 2000). A new Domestic Violence Act was enacted in 1999, amidst continued and increased incidences, proving the inherent difficulty in treating with this scourge. Laws on their own have proved inadequate in eliminating, or even drastically curtailing, violence against women, rooted in the widespread acceptance of structural inequality between men and women..

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion therefore, efforts aimed at transforming the inequitable and counter-productive gender relations described above should not be directed only in the area of macro-economic and social policies and interventions although these are extremely important. The transformations required cannot be achieved without commensurate attention to the much more challenging and fundamentally entrenched issues such as patterns of gender socialisation of children at home, school and in the community, unequal power relations between men and women in households and workplaces, the culture of violence in the home and society, and the generalization of an ethic of equity and fairness. All of these issues need to be addressed if the changes required are to be achieved.

When subject to gender analysis, different strategies may need to be applied for males and females, and boys and girls in all sectors. Additionally, it must be noted that presumed gender-neutral strategies may impact men and women differently. In addition, while more legislative reform is still required, much greater effort is needed to ensure public education and awareness among legal practitioners at all levels as well as from members of the public in all social and geographical locations.

A National Policy on Gender and Development needs to identify different priorities and strategies for promoting gender equality between men and women and boys and girls regardless of age, class, ethnicity and religion in all communities and geographical areas in addition to overall national goals and objectives. In particular, the special needs of women and men who are disabled, the elderly, vulnerable youth, and the urban and rural poor, need to be particularly considered.

The systems of data gathering, collation and analysis need to be substantially revised and upgraded so that data required for strategic decision-making and implementation are available disaggregated by sex, in a timely, reliable and consistent fashion.

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