History of the Development of the Gender Affairs Division

28 April, 2010
Abbreviations

BPfA     Beijing Platform for Action
CBO      Community Based Organisation
CEDAW    Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CIM      Inter-American Commission of Women
CSW      Commission on the Status of Women (UN)
CWNA     Caribbean Women’s National Assembly
FLS      (Nairobi) Forward Looking Strategies
GAD      Gender Affairs Division
GaD      Gender and Development
IDB      Inter-American Development Bank
NCSW     National Commission on the Status of Women (Trinidad and Tobago)
NGO      Non-Governmental Organisation
OAS      Organisation of American States
PAHO/WHO Pan American Health organisation/ World Health Organisation
UNFPA    United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM   United Nations Development Fund for Women
WAD      Women and Development
WID      Women in Development
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>OAS Representative visits Trinidad and Tobago to discuss establishment of a Women’s Bureau in the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>Women’s Bureau is first established at Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Cooperatives</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>National Commission on the Status of Women convened to plan for celebration of International Women’s Year</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>International Women’s Year and beginning of the Decade for Women</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Permanent National Commission on the Status of Women established</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago is represented at the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya by delegation of 22 persons.</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Women’s Bureau is re-established in the Ministry of Health, Welfare and the Status of Women</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Inter-Ministerial Committee is established as part of the National Machinery for Women’s Affairs</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>Draft National Policy Statement on Women is developed</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>CEDAW ratified by Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Women’s Affairs Division established at Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women’s Affairs</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Technical Cooperation Agreement signed with IDB to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Women’s Affairs Division</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>First Technical Staff hired for the Women’s Affairs Division</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago attends 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, China with a delegation of 18 persons.</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago hosts WAMM5 – Fifth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women’s Affairs</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Women’s Affairs Division becomes Gender Affairs Division</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Staff Establishment for the Gender Affairs Division is approved by Cabinet</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Cabinet approves project to develop a National Policy on Gender and Development</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>A Gender and Development Sub-Committee makes inputs into Vision 2020</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Draft National Policy on Gender and Development is accepted by Cabinet and Laid in Parliament as a Green Paper for review</td>
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Chapter 1. Towards the Establishment of a National Machinery 1971-1986

1. Foundations

The early women’s movement (1900-1960’s) made great strides for women’s rights and for the establishment of organizations to protect women from discrimination and afford them the opportunity to participate in public life. Both internationally and in Trinidad and Tobago, women’s organizations challenged governments to establish mechanisms to ensure that women achieved equality with men and that their legal and citizenship rights be recognized.

1.2 The International Women’s Movement: 1900-1960’s

Around the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, women in different parts of the world began to organize around issues of women’s citizenship and nationality, property rights, education and the right to employment and economic independence.

By the 1920s, Latin American feminist activists, who were the forerunners in this regard, posited the view that their best “opportunity to effect reform [was] through the passage of resolutions that would oblige signatory governments to raise the issue within their domestic arena” (History of CIM). Subsequently, they established the Pan American Association for the Advancement of Women, taking their concerns to the Pan American Union meeting in Santiago, Chile in 1923. Their lobbying resulted in the Union agreeing to put the question of how to eliminate sex discrimination in legal and civil rights on their agenda.

At the 1928 Pan American Conference held in Havana, the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) was created, making it the first intergovernmental body to specifically address issues related to the status of women. The Inter-American Commission’s work led to the adoption, in 1933, of the Montevideo Convention on the Nationality of Married Women that provided for equality with regard to nationality. In 1938, the Inter-American Commission continued its crusade for women’s rights by preparing the Declaration of Lima in Favour of Women’s Rights and encouraging governments to establish women’s bureaux and revise discriminatory civil codes (Women Go Global, 2000).

The pioneering efforts of Latin American women, the Pan American Union’s Inter-American Commission on Women and international women’s groups at the League of Nations helped to influence the UN Charter. They also inspired the United Nations’ early efforts to adopt international treaties which acted as a catalyst for the promotion of national laws asserting the equal rights of women.

At the 1945 UN Charter Conference, women delegates demanded that the Preamble to the UN Charter be changed from reading “equal rights among men” to “equal rights among men and
women”. They also insisted that the phrase “to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination against race, sex, condition or creed” be incorporated. (Women Go Global, 2000)

On June 21, 1946, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established. Its mandate was to prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on promoting women’s rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields, and to make recommendations to the Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women’s rights. The CSW was also charged with encouraging governments to bring laws into conformity with international conventions and fostering global awareness of women’s rights and obstacles faced by women.

Efforts by the Commission on the Status of Women to establish women’s legal equality coalesced with the consolidation of women’s rights provisions in the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1967.

1.3 1975: International Women’s Year

In 1972, to mark its 25th Anniversary, the CSW recommended that 1975 be designated International Women’s Year (IWY). On December 10, 1974, the General Assembly approved the programme for the IWY, which focused on equality, development and peace, and proposed that an international conference be held in Mexico City that same year. Among the outcomes of the First Women’s Conference in 1975 were: the declaration of the Decade for Women: 1976-1985; the adoption of a Plan of Action for advancing women’s equality; the establishment of a Voluntary Fund to assist in the creation of programs and projects for the least developed nations; and the establishment of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to manage the Voluntary Fund and provide technical assistance to developing nations.
1.4 The Women’s Movement in Trinidad and Tobago: 1900-1960s

In Trinidad and Tobago, the early women’s movement was similarly concerned with the quest for citizenship and political rights, employment and economic independence and education for women. In addition, several women’s groups were key players in the trade union movement of the 1930s. Others were greatly influenced by nationalist ideologies such as the Pan-Africanist movement during the era of transition to self government and independence from the 1950s to the 1970s.

The Home Industries and Women’s Self Help Society was one of the first women’s organizations in Trinidad and Tobago. Established in 1901, this organization, comprising mainly white and coloured upper classes, sought to provide economic support for ‘gentlewomen who had fallen on reduced circumstances’ (Reddock et al. 1993) (Reddock qtd. in Weiringa 1985).

In 1921, Audrey Jeffers founded the first black middle class women’s organization, the Coterie of Social Workers. This organization greatly impacted Trinidad and Tobago’s social landscape by increasing the participation of women in the political, social and economic life of the country and by fostering links with women’s organizations throughout the British West Indies. In 1936, the Coterie hosted a Conference of West Indies and British Guyanese Women in Port of Spain. There, Audrey Jeffers presented a paper entitled “The Urgent Need of Women in Trinidad and Tobago” in which she highlighted the practice of employment discrimination against educated black women. The Coterie was also instrumental in reporting on the situation of women to the 1938-1939 West Indian Commission (Moyne Commission), where they made recommendations for increased educational opportunities for girls, the prevention of colour discrimination for teachers, an improvement in the wages and status of women workers, the provision of child care assistance for working mothers and for measures to ensure that fathers provided child support for illegitimate children.

Audrey Jeffers, herself, was very instrumental in encouraging women’s participation in the political sphere. In 1936, she was the first woman to run for public office and sit on the Port of Spain Municipal Council and in 1946 became the first woman to be appointed to a seat on the Legislative Council. She also helped establish the Caribbean Women’s Association, which acted as a counterpart to the short-lived British West Indian Federation. The Association, formed in April 1956, was given the mandate to encourage women’s active participation in all aspects of social, economic and political life and to remove disabilities affecting women whether legal economic or social. (Reddock, 2004)

The Federation of Women’s Institutes, another significant women’s organization in the local arena, was modelled after the Canadian then British Women’s Institutes Movements of the late 19th century to the Second World War. The Federation was comprised of women’s groups established throughout the country and headed by a national institute. It promoted the
development of home skills to earn money and to participate in community life. Through its affiliation with the Education Extension Department, it also worked closely with the Teachers’ Education and Cultural Association. The Federation was also one of the women’s organizations which sponsored lectures by political hopefuls, including Dr. Eric Williams. By 1955, the Federation had 116 affiliated women’s groups. Other middle-strata women’s organizations such as the Soroptomist’s Club, Business and Professional Women’s Club, and the Young Women’s Christian Association were also modelled after organizations in North America and England.

Meanwhile, women from the working classes were involved in organizing, and often participating in, political and labour activity to secure rights for themselves and for their class as a whole. Many working class organizations from the 1920s, such as the Trinidad Workingmen’s Association/Trinidad Labour Party, had women’s sections and branches and elected their own branch presidents. One such elected president was Daisy Crick, a Butlerite and founding member of the Oilfield Workers Trade Union. These women sections supported their leaders at events, Labour Day celebrations, rallies and demonstrations. Otherwise, they were involved in employment generation, social work and fundraising.

Christina Lewis, another key figure in the trade union movement, was a working class activist from San Fernando and a member of Butler’s party. In November 1954, she founded the Caribbean Women’s National Assembly (CWNA) to organize women of the Caribbean in the struggle for their rights and dignity, legal protection, and social security for their children. In 1956, the CWNA also founded a domestic workers trade union and was the first recorded organization in Trinidad and Tobago to celebrate International Women’s Day on March 8th, 1958.

The action of these women’s organizations had significant impacts on the presentation of several Bills in Parliament which eventually became law. These included:

- The Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Bill
- The Age of Majority Bill
- The Widows and Orphans Pension Extension Bill
2. Emergence of the Women in Development Approach

The Women in Development approach (WID) was the prevailing theory regarding women’s advancement in the 1970’s. This approach would influence the type of interventions designed by governments and development agencies during this period.

2.1 Background

With the increasing numbers of newly independent and developing countries joining the United Nations in the 1960s, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) put less emphasis on legal forms of discrimination and equality and sought to highlight the importance of women’s economic and social development. Such issues as women’s needs in community and rural development, agricultural work, family planning and the impact of scientific and technological advances on women became increasingly prominent on the CSW agenda. The organization emphasized that women and their dependents were disproportionately affected by poverty and drew attention to the role that women’s low status played in perpetuating their disadvantageous position in society (Women Go Global, 2000).

Efforts towards the advancement of women increasingly focused on the roles of women in socio-economic development, both as beneficiaries and as agents of change. Many development theorists had assumed that industrialization would benefit women by opening up employment opportunities, hastening their attainment of equal rights with men. It became clear, however, that most development projects either ignored women or made their situations worse. (Women Go Global, 2000).

2.2 Women in Development Theory

In 1970, Danish economist Ester Boserup’s groundbreaking study, “Women’s Role in Economic Development”, was published. It offered evidence of women’s crucial, yet often unrecognized contribution to national economic activity, and helped to mobilize thinking on Women In Development. Boserup’s book helped legitimize the study of women’s productive roles and was a catalyst for a new approach to improving the position of women worldwide.

The Women in Development (WID) approach sought to make women full economic partners in development by creating opportunities for women to participate in the productive sector. It focused on ways in which women could better be integrated into development initiatives through the development and application of technology and helping women acquire the necessary education and training.
3. OAS encourages establishment of a Women’s Bureau in Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago joined the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1967 as a newly independent nation. On May 15, 1971, Dr. Margaret Ackroyd, a labour specialist from the OAS, arrived in Trinidad for a three-week stay that was to include discussions with Ministry of Labour officials concerning the establishment of a Women’s Bureau in the Ministry. Her visit coincided with a regional seminar sponsored by the OAS on “The Role of Women’s Bureaux in the Ministries of Labour”, which was then being held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The seminar focused on the following issues:

- A lack of awareness of the role of women workers in national development
- The inadequate educational training of women
- Opportunities for girls and women in the field of employment
- Attitudes towards the employment of women
- The special needs of women workers in their dual societal role of worker and mother
- Discriminatory practices in the employment of women
- Lack of basic statistics on the labour force participation of women. (Women’s Role in Society T&T)

Two years prior, members of the OAS passed a resolution at Bonn, of which one of the principal objectives was that the Organization should assist Member States in strengthening women’s bureaux in those countries where they existed and create them where they did not. It was felt that these women’s bureaux would deal chiefly with the problems of working women and the challenges of expanding women’s contribution not only in the realm of the home and child rearing, but to also in the area of national development.

The establishment of a Women’s Bureau in Trinidad was seen as necessary to deal with the problem of underemployment of women, but it was also expected to deal with the broader issues of women’s health, family planning and education. It was posited that the Bureau would facilitate the establishment of child day care services thus addressing a major obstacle to women’s full participation in the workforce, and that it would encourage the formation of an advisory commission composed of women’s groups in society.
4. Establishment of National Machinery for Women’s Affairs

In 1971, Senator Ruby Felix was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women and by July, a draft Charter for a Women’s Commission was being prepared. The Women’s Commission was intended to project new fields and at the same time be a watchdog for all matters, legal, social and economic affecting women. Plans were also underway to set up and staff a Women’s Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives. The Women’s Bureau was to be the first arm of the Commission and the focal point for the evolution of coordinated policies and activities related to the employment and conditions of women at work.

Meeting with women’s organizations at the Ministry of Labour on July 17, 1971, the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives, Errol Mahabir, stated that, in keeping with the recommendations of Dr. Ackroyd, the Women’s Bureau would:

- Assist the Ministry of Labour, and other concerned branches of government in identifying and dealing with the special needs and problems of working women and devising methods of remedy.
- Encourage fact-finding and research directed at pinpointing working women’s needs and throwing light on their economic and social status, and coordinate and publicise data on all aspects of women in the labour force.
- Promote, in cooperation with other public and private bodies, the expansion of women’s employment into new and more varied fields and into higher levels of skill and responsibility and ensure that women have access to facilities for technical and vocational education and training.
- Watch over protective legislation applied only to women to ensure that it is adequately enforced and up to date in the light of advances in scientific and technical knowledge, and help to revise discriminatory laws and practices that unduly limit women’s participation in economic activity.
- Promote special consideration in the most vulnerable categories of women workers, such as those employed in smaller establishments, industrial home workers, domestic servants and women workers in rural communities.
- Develop close contacts and liaisons with non-governmental organizations such as women’s organisations, trade unions and employers associations most closely concerned with women’s employment and with the development of the community and social facilities essential to the exercise of their right (to employment). (Sunday Guardian 18.7.71)
4.1 Early attempts at establishing a Women’s Affairs Bureau, 1971

By July 1971, the Women’s Bureau had begun work towards identifying areas of discrimination in the employment of women throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Located at the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives, the Bureau at this time, had no staff of its own. Various staff from the Ministry provided support for the Bureau’s activities including a Sociologist, Cynthia James, a Legal Advisor, Carol Mahadeo and a Labour Officer, Anella Hutchinson. Senator Ruby Felix, Head of the Bureau, in presenting her report on the first six months of the Bureau’s operation, expressed concern about the lack of staff and funds to effectively carry out its work (Trinidad Guardian 18.6.72).

4.2 The National Commission on the Status of Women 1974-1976

Although plans to develop a draft Charter for a Women’s Commission in Trinidad and Tobago were in the works since 1971, it wasn’t until March 1974 that a National Commission was assembled.

The Secretary General of the United Nations, having declared 1975 “International Women’s Year”, asked Governments to offer their suggestions concerning a draft program to celebrate the international event. These were then submitted to the CSW at its 25th session in 1974.

The National Commission on the Status of Women was thus appointed by Cabinet in March 1974 to “plan appropriate forms of celebration for International Women’s Year as well as to review, evaluate and recommend principles and measures required to ensure the full integration of women in all aspects of national life” (Report of the National Commission on the Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago, 1976).

The Commission was headed by Chairperson Justice Elizabeth Bourne-Hollands, the first female judge in Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. Norma Andrews, Principal Medical Officer-Community Services and Therese Mills, News Editor of the Sunday Guardian both served as Vice-Chairpersons. Several voluntary and religious organizations were represented on the Commission as well as Government Ministries and the News Media. Some of these organisations include; the Jaycees’ League; the Coterie of Social Workers; the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce; the Sanaatan, Dharma Maha Sabha; the University of the West Indies; Trinidad Express Newspapers; and the Ministry of Health. A Labour Officer II from the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives performed the duties of Secretary to the Commission.

The Commission embarked upon an extensive education and publicity campaign for the celebration of International Women’s Year. They organized television programs and radio interviews and published articles and supplements in the newspapers to help educate women
about their rights under the law and social security entitlements available to them and their children. They also highlighted information about the international conventions and events promoting the rights of women such as the First World Conference on Women being held in Mexico City in 1975.

The Commission set about its work by establishing seven Working Groups:

1. The participation of women in political life
2. The Legal Status of women
3. Education and training
4. Employment
5. Women’s participation in the agricultural and service sectors
6. Health and welfare (including family planning services)

Individuals possessing expertise and experience in various fields were co-opted to participate in working groups or to submit papers on specific subjects. One such co-opted member was Stephanie Daly, LL.B, who had prepared a document on “The Legal Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago”. This document, along with the recommendations of the Working Groups, was used to complete the Report of the National Commission on the Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago, which was submitted to the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Cooperatives in February 1976.

Among the recommendations outlined in the Report were:

- Reforms in the law regarding; women’s right to endow the same rights of nationality on their foreign husbands and children; entitlement to property of a deceased in non-legal unions; security benefits and personal taxation independent from husband’s; minimum age of marriage; trials for rape; and types of employment limited to men/boys.
- A public statement to be made by Government that it will ensure the inclusion of women in all statutory bodies, agencies and government commissions and that women would be included in decision making in the country from the community level to the highest political office.
- Women should receive equal pay for equal work and training facilities provided for women wanting to re-enter the labour force.
- Expansion of family planning facilities and improvement of ante-natal and post natal care for women.
- Establishment of day care centres and homes for young unmarried mothers.
- Establishment of a Children’s Authority and introduction of legislation compelling fathers to financially support their children.
- Establishment of a permanent National Commission on the Status of Women that is adequately staffed and financed in order to effect on a continual basis the recommendations of the report.
5. Women and Development, Copenhagen Conference, CEDAW

5.1 Women and Development (WAD) Approach

By mid-decade (1980), it became increasingly evident that the situation of women in the Third World had actually deteriorated, particularly in light of the global recession and structural adjustment programs which saw women’s burden increase with social services being cut. At the same time, some development theorists began to regard the plight of women within the “structure of international and class inequalities” (Rathgeber, 1989 p10). The Women and Development approach (WAD) while still focusing on women’s productive roles also recognized that women were already integrated into development by virtue of their unaccounted for work in the home and contribution to the family income. The sources of disadvantage were seen to be a result of the international economic system which affected both men and women in the lower classes.

5.2 The Second World Conference on Women, Copenhagen, 1980

In 1980, the Second World Conference on Women was held in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen Conference had two main objectives: to review the progress in implementing the goals of the Mexico City Conference at the midpoint of the UN Decade for Women and to update the 1975 World Plan of Action.

Three areas of urgent concern for women: employment, health and education, were dealt with at the conference. These issues came to the fore out of a sense that the broad goals of equality, development and peace enumerated at the Mexico City Conference could not be achieved unless they were refined into specific, highly focused objectives for women (Women Go Global, 2000).

5.3 CARICOM hosts meeting following Copenhagen Conference

Following the Copenhagen Conference, CARICOM hosted the First Meeting of CARICOM Ministers with Responsibility for Integration of Women and Development from April 2-3, 1981. (Trinidad Express 8.5.81 p 22)

At this meeting six priority areas were identified:

- Establishment of National Machinery
- Employment
- Education
- Health
- Research
- Legal Status of Women
5.4 CEDAW

On December 18, 1979, the General Assembly adopted *The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. The CEDAW Convention, as it came to be called, came into force in 1981 with twenty countries ratifying or acceding to it terms. Often described as the first international women’s bill of rights, the 30-article treaty brings together in a comprehensive and legally binding form, internationally accepted principles on the rights of women. It commits governments to take “all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of equality with men” (*Women Go Global, 2000*).

The NCSW’s terms of reference expired, and their work came to an end, with the submission of the Report of National Commission on the Status of Women in February 1976. The Second World Conference on Women was scheduled to take place in Copenhagen in 1980 and there was a need to act on the recommendations stated in the Report and to assess the progress made in the first half of the Decade for Women (1975-1985).

In January 1978, following consultations with women’s groups, Cabinet appointed a committee to formulate proposals for the establishment of a permanent national machinery for promoting women’s rights and increased participation in all aspects of the country’s development. The Committee’s report was submitted in November 1978 and in March 1979, Cabinet approved the establishment of a permanent National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) with the following aims and objectives:

- To promote the extension of full civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to the women of the country.
- To assist government in integrating women into the development process.
- To submit to government, reports on the progress achieved by women in the areas identified above, indicating existing problems and recommending possible solutions.

Their additional functions would include:

- To encourage and prepare women to participate in the development process and in the formulation of plans at the local, regional and national levels relating to their overall involvement.
- To constantly review legislation and make recommendations to government on amendment and enactment of laws related to the status of women.
- To conduct studies on obstacles to women’s exercise of full civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
- To make representation to government concerning the implementation of declarations and ratifications of international conventions and treaties adopted by international and regional bodies.

6.1 Structure of the Commission

Senator Elmina Clarke-Allen, Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives and later Minister in the Ministry of Housing and Resettlement, was appointed Chairman of the Commission. The Chairman was also the Titular Delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and Inter-American Commission.
The other members were appointed to the Commission for a two year period and included:

- A representative of the Ministry of External Affairs who also acted as Alternate Delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and the Inter-American Commission.
- Sixteen persons drawn from various appropriate organizations/associations including the Ministry of Health, the Mothers’ Union, the Sanaatan Dharma Maha Sabha and the Child Welfare League.
- An Administrative Officer V (AOV) from the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives who acted as Secretary to the Commission and was the only permanent member.

6.1 Executing the Work of the Commission

The NCSW acted as an advisory body to the government on all matters related to the status of women. They were also involved in extensive education, advocacy and research.

The NCSW met on a monthly basis at the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives which provided administrative support for the work of the NCSW. An Administrative Officer V (AOV) at the Ministry, Ms. Cynthia Bishop, held the position of Secretary to the Commission. Later she would be replaced by Phyllis Augustus, Administrative Officer IV (AOIV). Additional clerical duties were performed by a clerk/typist.

The NCSW was sometimes referred to as the Women’s Bureau, reflecting an institutional memory of earlier attempts by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives to establish a Women’s Bureau in the Ministry in the 1970’s. The Women’s Bureau then, did not at this time exist in a formal sense but was informally represented by the AOIV and other auxiliary staff sometimes drawn from other parts of the Ministry to assist with research or drafting of legal documents as part of the NCSW’s work.

Apart from monthly meetings, committees were established to which members of the commission were assigned. These included the Monograph, Health and Welfare, Legal Status of Women, Rural Women, Education, Training and Employment Committees. Additionally, individual members were called upon to provide technical inputs into other projects of the Commission including drafting of papers, publications, lectures, training, seminars and piloting of bills.

Some of the projects and activities of the NCSW include the following.

- A 1981 survey of women in management positions (senior technical, professional and administrative) within the public and teaching service, the private sector, the University
of the West Indies and as senators and parliamentary representatives. The focus areas of this study included their relationship with peers, job satisfaction and discrimination in promotional opportunities.

- Over the period 1981-1984, three national conferences with the themes – The status of Women: Organising for Development; The Family is the Heartbeat of the Nation; and Women and Economic Change in the Eighties.
- Assistance in the establishment of child care centres as a support system for working parents.
- Comments on The Occupational Health and Safety Bill with regard to improving conditions for women in industrial setting as well as on the Sexual Offences Bill.
- Production of a weekday radio program titled “Focus on Women”, which ran for a year as well as television programs on issues affecting women.
- Conducting of socio-economic survey on rural women.
- Collaboration with the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) on studies on the processing of raw materials for handicraft.
- Representing Trinidad and Tobago at regional conferences/seminars including: the second Integration of Women in Development Meeting (Guyana 1983); workshop to review and evaluate the UNICEF-UWI Selected Services for Children Program (Barbados 1983); and the seminar on the Integration of Women in Industrial Development Process (Guyana 1984).
- Production of The Developing Legal Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago document in 1982.
7 The Third World Conference on Women – Nairobi, 1985

The Nairobi Conference, held July 15-26, marked the end of the “Decade for Women” and focused on obstacles to achieving the decade’s goals. These obstacles included the persistence of underdevelopment and mass poverty, major factors in the enduring inequality of women and de jure and de facto discrimination against them; the continuation of women’s subordinate roles in development, a consequence of physiological, social and cultural biases; and ongoing threats to international peace, resulting in an arms race, armed conflicts, human rights violations, terrorism and other obstacles to overall progress, especially the advancement of women (Women Go Global).

7.1 Preparations for the Nairobi Conference

In April 1984, in preparation for the Nairobi conference, 20 women from 13 nations in CARICOM attended an eight day workshop/seminar on “Practical Aspects of Conference Diplomacy”. The event, funded by USAID Caribbean Regional Training Project, was held in Trinidad and Tobago and was attended by Heads of Women’s Bureaus and national and regional representatives from NGOs. (Express 29.4.84 p.7)

CARICOM Ministers had also agreed to a Plan of Action to the year 2000. Noting that economic crisis and measures for structural adjustment were likely to adversely affect the condition of women, they agreed that attention should be paid to:

- Family life education.
- Improving the condition of women in lower socio-economic levels, the informal sector and agriculture.
- Employment strategies for young women.
- Extending provisions of social security to include unemployed women

The meeting also noted that there was still much to be accomplished in terms of women’s participation in decision-making and in improving how women saw themselves (Trinidad Express 2.6.85 p5).

7.2 Delegation to the Nairobi Conference

A delegation of 22 persons headed by the Chairman of the NCSW, Elmina Clarke-Allen, was selected to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the Nairobi Conference. The delegation included women from several NGO’s, the University of the West Indies and the NCSW. (See appendix 5)

At the Conference, Minister Elmina Clare-Allen delivered a statement in which she spoke of the continuing challenges to the achievement of women’s equality. She noted:
In appraising the progress achieved in Trinidad and Tobago, we should not be deluded by those few women—proportionately few at any rate—whose positions and occupations make them highly visible, for this tends to cloud the real issues. Rather it is the low self-esteem, which is still so evident in the attitude of many of our women, that is a measure of the distance we need to travel on the road to equality (*United Nations Decade for Women 1976-1985*).

**7.3 The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies**

The major outcome of the Nairobi Conference was the adoption of the *Forward Looking Strategies* (FLS) to 2000. The FLS presented the view that there were no specific women’s issues, but that all issues are women’s and that women should be heard in all discussions of issues. The heart of the document was a series of measures for implementing equality at the national level. “Since countries are at various stages of development”, according to the Strategies, “they should have the option to set their own priorities based on their own development policies and resource capabilities”. There were three basic categories of action: constitutional and legal steps; equality in social participation; and equality in political participation and decision-making (*Women Go Global, 2000*).

The absence of a formal unit within Government itself made it difficult to put into effect many of the Conventions and Plans for Action that had become part of the work of improving the position of women in the country.

The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (FLS), recognising that Women’s issues needed to be mainstreamed at the national level and in all discussions, had called on Governments to map out their own strategies for the advancement of women and to dedicate the required institutional, technical and material resources to strengthen the national machinery.

The FLS also called for greater collaboration with Women’s NGOs and Research Institutes, establishing of technical cooperation agreements with international agencies, consultation with and participation of women in decision making and establishment of national machineries to deal with domestic violence.

Trinidad and Tobago also had not yet ratified the CEDAW Convention; a key treaty that would signal the Government’s commitment to protecting women’s human rights. It thus became clear that there was a need for a focal point within Government for Women and Development issues and that the national machinery needed to include links among all ministries and with the NGOs to effect the full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

8.1 Structure of the National Machinery

On Jan 12, 1987, following the election of a new political administration - the National Alliance for Reconstruction - a Women’s Bureau was established in the newly configured Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and the Status of Women. The Women’s Bureau came under the portfolio of Margaret Hector, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and the Status of Women. After a reshuffling of Ministries the following year, the Women’s Bureau was relocated at the Ministry of Community Development, Welfare and the Status of Women, with Gloria Henry as Minister responsible for the Bureau’s affairs.

Although a newly established entity, the structure of the Women’s Bureau did not change considerably from what obtained at the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives. The Bureau continued to be understaffed with the AOIV heading the work of the Bureau, assisted by an AOII, and a Clerk/Typist. As before, the Bureau received technical support from the Ministry’s staff as needed, and eventually a Research Officer assisted in the work of the Bureau.
The new national machinery also included the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to help mainstream Women and Development into all sectors of government as required by the FLS. The IMC met once a month and contributed to discussions on how to implement the FLS and what should be included in the draft National Policy Statement on Women. However, members appointed to the IMC had some difficulty understanding how issues of ‘women in development’ impacted the work of their Ministries. As such, interest waned and the IMC became defunct.

8.2 Key Initiatives of the Women’s Affairs Bureau

8.2.1 National Policy Statement on Women 1989

One of the major achievements of the Women’s Affairs Bureau during this period was the completion of a Draft National Policy Statement on Women that would guide the work of the Bureau. Several meetings were held with women’s groups and NGOs and with the IMC to discuss what should go into the policy statement.

The resulting document included an introduction, guiding principles and 13 policy objectives. The policy statement noted the increasing number of female-headed households and the unrecognised contribution of women to society and called for increased participation of women in decision-making and the development process. Amongst its policy objectives were: the provision of support social services such as day-care centres and homes for the aged; encouraging NGO participation in development projects; and more efficient compilation of data on women.

The draft, which was completed in February 1988, was shared with NGOs for comment. The NGOs found the document inadequate. They felt that there needed to be a more thorough description of the current status of women in Trinidad and Tobago and that women’s contributions to the social and economic development of the country should be highlighted in the document’s introduction. They also felt that greater detail was required in the treatment of policy provisions and called for inclusion of specific issues including - violence against women, communications media and culture and peace. There were also recommendations concerning the structure of the national machinery including staffing. The National Policy Statement on Women was approved by the Cabinet in 1989.

8.2.2 CEDAW Convention ratified

On 12 January 1990, Trinidad and Tobago ratified the CEDAW Convention. Subsequently, the Women’s Bureau began to hold a series of meetings with the IMC and with NGOs to begin collecting data to complete its First Periodic Report to CEDAW, as required by the Convention. Given its limited human and technical resources, the Women’s Bureau was unable to complete this exercise.
8.2.3 Supporting NGOs

The Women’s Bureau had over the years accumulated information on over 100 NGOs in Trinidad and Tobago. These NGOs were exposed to several training and sensitization workshops and Conferences dealing with topics such as Women’s Health, Education and Politics. At this time there were also several emerging Women’s NGOs such as Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) and The Rape Crisis Society which engaged in activities from research and advocacy to providing support services for victims of domestic violence and rape. The Women’s Bureau often assisted many of these NGOs in providing these services and in conducting various education and retraining programs. Through the government’s then Management Development Centre, the Bureau also facilitated management training and capacity building for other emerging NGOs like the Women’s Resource and Research Centre. NGOs were also regularly consulted for inputs into legislative documents such as the Domestic Violence Act which was enacted by Government in 1991.

8.2.4 Regional Meetings/Conferences

The Bureau partnered with PAHO/WHO for the first Regional Forward Looking Strategies on Women, Health and Development held in Trinidad and Tobago in May 1988.
9. Establishment of a Women’s Affairs Division

In November 1991, there was a change of administration and the People’s National Movement took office. The Women’s Bureau was now located within the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women’s Affairs with Joan Yuille-Williams as Minister.

With the increasing demands on the Bureau to implement the CEDAW Convention, and the increasing number of international and regional Plans of Action calling for strengthening of national machineries, the Women’s Affairs Division was established as the government’s focal point for women and development in 1991.

10. Institutional Strengthening

On December 3rd, 1993 the Government of Trinidad and Tobago signed a non-reimbursable Technical Cooperation Agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank for provision of consulting services, equipment and training for the Women’s Affairs Division. The IDB provided a non-reimbursable grant of US$ 400,000, while the Government of Trinidad and Tobago provided a contribution of not less than equivalent to US$ 75,000. The Women’s Affairs Division was the coordinating agency for the project.

The specific objectives of the Programme were

1. To strengthen the institutional capacity of the Women’s Affairs Division to promote and assist in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender sensitive policies, programmes, projects and activities pertaining to gender in the Ministry and in other government agencies.
2. To improve coordination, collaboration and communication among Non-Governmental organizations (NGO’s), private sector organizations, unions, cooperatives, community groups, mass media and women’s networks and the Women’s Affairs Division, in order to enhance women’s participation in policy and development programmes.

The Programme had 5 main components

1. Improvement in programme planning, coordination and management including monitoring and evaluation.
2. Establishment of a Women in Development Information management System
3. Strengthening of outreach and coordination with NGOs, public and private sectors, mass media and community groups.
4. Training and sensitization in Gender and Development
5. Provision of technological equipment
10.1 Staffing the Division

A pre-condition for the disbursement of funds from the Inter-American Development Bank was that local technical staff be hired for the Division. As such on June 23, by Cabinet Minute 1598 of 1994 the following positions were created for the Division and staff hired on a contract basis.

- One Director
- One Deputy Director
- Four Project Execution Officers
- One Project Execution Assistant.

Mrs. Denise Noel DeBique was hired as Director, however only 5 of the other positions were filled prior to November, 1995. Contracts were renewed as required.

The programme was initially expected to be completed within two years from the date of the agreement, however, the programme didn’t commence till July 25th 1994. Later, an extension of the period of the contract was granted and the final disbursement was made on September 30th 1999.

Some of the outputs/ products from the programme included:

1. Provision of consultants;
   - Planning and Management Consultant, Nancy Laatunen,
   - Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant, Hayden Toney
   - Publications Consultant, Peter Andrews.
   - Monitoring and Evaluation Consultants, Pannel Kerr Forster International
   - Training and Sensitization in Gender and Development Consultant, Edusystems International
2. Computers and office equipment
3. Gender training videos and materials
4. Gender training workshops and manual
5. Rental of premises for women’s fairs
6. Publications design

11 International/ Regional Conferences

11.1 The Women’s Affairs Division assisted in preparations for the Sixth Meeting of CARICOM Ministers for the Integration of Women in Development held in Trinidad and Tobago in May 1993.

11.2 Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China. 1995

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, significantly advanced the global agenda for women’s human rights and gender equality. The
theme “Action for Equality, Development and Peace” reflected the Conference’s agenda to catalyze global action for the protection of the human rights of women and girls and to set forth international standards for achieving gender equity through the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

The Beijing Conference was preceded by a preparatory process that was highly participatory and inclusive. Preparatory activities, including five regional meetings and a series of seminars and workshops, brought together government representatives to develop regional priorities, strategies and plans of actions and to explore in-depth, issues that would be before the Conference. NGO consultations were held in every region as well. (Women Go Global)

The Women’s Affairs Division also engaged in an extensive participatory process preceding the Beijing Conference. There were several seminars and fairs open to the public where people could discuss the issues that they wanted to see addressed at the Beijing Conference. The Milles Fleur Building was converted into “Beijing House” and several displays and brochures were provided on the forthcoming World Conference on Women. Additionally, there were a number of national and regional consultations with various agencies including CARICOM and the OAS/CIM to determine what issues and priorities should be brought to Beijing.

The Division also contracted a consultant, Jo St. Cyr to lead in the completion of Trinidad and Tobago’s National Report on the Status of Women 1995. Karen Bart-Alexander of the Women’s Research and Resource Institute was also involved in the early stages of data collection for the National Report.

A delegation of 17 persons (6-public service, 11-NGOs and academia) and led by the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, Joan Yuille-Williams, represented Trinidad and Tobago at the Beijing Conference. In a statement made by the Minister she noted that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had identified four priority areas for action to remove the remaining obstacles to the advancement of women. They were:-

(a) alleviating poverty among women;
(b) valuing the unwaged work of women;
(c) providing affordable health care, and
(d) eliminating violence against women.

The Minister also went on to report that on June 25th, 1995, a Bill for Counting Unremunerated Work was passed in the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago and was designed to recognize the unremunerated work of both women and men. She added:

“This event represented the successful culmination of two decades of consultation and collaboration among a wide cross-section of individuals, NGOs and public and private sector agencies. My country recognizes that evaluating unremunerated work in the home
and community is a strategy for equity as well as for increasing the self-worth and self-esteem of a large section of the society.” (Statement by Senator the Honourable Joan Yuille-Williams)
12. International Women’s Agenda focuses on Gender and Development, Violence Against Women

12.1 Emergence of Gender and Development approach

In the years immediately preceding the Fourth World Conference on Women, there was a global paradigm shift from the WID and WAD approach to Gender and Development (GaD). The Gender and Development approach looks at the position of women from a structural perspective, recognizing that much of the discrimination women face is based has been institutionalized based on societal social norms and values pertaining to men and women. It recognizes that women, through their reproductive roles, including childrearing and unwaged work in the home, are already integrated into the development process and that these roles should be accounted for in national budgets. Most importantly it recognizes that development policies and practices impact on men and women in different ways so that gender mainstreaming plays a critical role in improving development outcomes for women.

This change to Gender and Development was also reflected in many of the international Conventions and Plans of Action. Additionally, Violence Against Women was also placed on the international agenda, with calls for National Machineries for Women Affairs to implement programmatic and legislative initiatives to combat violence against women.

12.2 The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 December 1993. Of special note, the Declaration called on states

“To promote research, collect data and compile statistics, especially concerning domestic violence, relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and encourage research on the causes, nature, seriousness and consequences of violence against women and on the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress violence against women;”

12.3 Belem Do Para 1994

The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication Violence against Women, otherwise termed the Convention of Belem Do Para, came into effect on 9 June, 1994. This Convention was introduced in an attempt to eradicate all forms of gender violence directed towards women including sexual harassment in the workplace and called on state parties to condemn all forms of violence against women and agree to pursue policies to prevent, punish and eradicate such violence. Trinidad and Tobago signed the convention on 3rd November, 1995 and ratified on 8th May, 1996.
12.4 The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted by 189 countries built on political agreements reached at the three previous global conferences on women, establishing twelve priority areas for action. It called for the removing all the obstacles to women’s active participation in all spheres of public and private life and recognized violence against women as cultural pattern, urging countries to adopt programmes and implement legislation to end violence against women. The BPfA also recognized social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development.

The Beijing Platform for Action also states that governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of their respective effects on women and men.

12.5 Fifth Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meetings (WAMM5) 1996

The 1995 Plan of Action on Gender and Development, which formed part of the Commonwealth’s contribution to the Beijing Conference and Platform for Action (BPfA), made the paradigm shift from a focus on women to a gender mainstreaming approach. Building on this approach, at the Fifth Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meetings held in Trinidad and Tobago in 1996, the Commonwealth introduced its initiative on gender-responsive budgets as a strategy for advancing gender equality and eradicating poverty through the national budgetary process. Ministers also set a target of no less than 30% of women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors by 2005 and called for increased legislative and procedural provisions to combat domestic and other forms of gender-based violence. (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005)

12.6 The CARICOM/UNECLAC/UNIFEM Post-Beijing Encounter 1997

The Caribbean Sub-regional Ministerial Conference in Georgetown, Guyana, 6-8 August 1997 was convened to review governments' progress in the region after the Sixth regional Conference and the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. At this meeting countries were informed that the WID approach addressed women's needs in isolation from other issues and that the gender and development approach provided a more holistic picture between men and women. The Secretariat highlighted the fact that while women still remained the target group that the differential impact was to be assessed.

12.5 The CARICOM Post-Beijing Regional Plan of Action to the Year 2000 also called for gender mainstreaming into the culture and organisation of institutions, including their policy-making and planning, and in public debate. (Caribbean Community Secretariat, 2003)

13.1 Structure and Strategy

By 1996, the government administration had changed once again and Minister Daphne Phillip of the United National Congress (UNC) assumed responsibility for the Women’s Affairs Division. The Ministry in which the Division was located would undergo three portfolio changes during the UNC’s administration: from Community Development, Culture and Women’s Affairs in 1995 to Culture and Gender Affairs by May 1998 and finally, Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs in February 2001.

This was an exceptional period of growth for the Division with the outputs of the Institutional Strengthening exercise beginning to yield increased capacity with the provision of training manuals and videos, planning and management consultancies and the addition of technical staff.

With this improved position, and the new mandates set by the Beijing Platform for Action and the ratification of CEDAW, the Division embarked on a number of pilot projects to address the obstacles to women’s advancement. Many of these pilot projects evolved into national programmes and were targeted to single mothers and unskilled women who were either unemployed or under-employed and from the lower economic strata of society. The Division also initiated several projects aimed at combating the rise in cases of domestic violence in the country.

The Division piloted a Construction Skills Programme for women and later signed a Technical Agreement with the Inter-American Bank to establish a Non-Traditional Skills Training Programme for Women. The Division also received funding from agencies such as the Canadian International Development Fund (CIDA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to pilot such projects as the establishment of Drop-in Counselling Centres and the hiring of a Consultant to complete the CEDAW Report.

The Division also focused on building women’s leadership skills, establishing a Women’s Leadership and Enhancement Institute and supporting the Caribbean Association of Women Entrepreneurs in launching their first annual exhibition and conference “Mega Market 1998”, aimed at expanding and developing new markets for women-owned and operated businesses in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Division also attempted to revive the Inter-Ministerial Committee and created a National Council of Women, made up of representatives of from women’s NGOs and CBOs. A Male Advisory Committee was also formed and these three entities would serve in an advisory capacity to the Division.
In 1997, the name of the Division was changed to the **Gender Affairs Division** and its focus was expanded to also include programs for males. By 2001 its key policy areas and objectives as outlined in the Government’s Medium Term Policy Framework had expanded to include:

- Formulation of a National Gender Policy
- Promoting gender mainstreaming in all policies, programmes and projects
- Targeting issues related to women’s human rights and wider gender issues
- Development of a gender based information system
- Contributing to the socio-economic enhancement of low income women.

### 13.2 Staffing

Over the period 1996-2001 the Division augmented its staff through requests to Cabinet for approval of short-term contracts of a year or less to manage the various new projects and programmes initiated by the Division. Both technical and administrative personnel were hired to staff the Domestic Violence Unit, the Women’s Second Chances programmes, the Non Traditional Skills Programme, the Male Support Programme and the Women’s Leadership and Enhancement Institute. By 2001, over 60 persons were employed in the Division’s programmes and sub-programmes.

In October 2001, Cabinet agreed to the creation of a staff establishment for the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs with the following positions approved by the Ministry of Public Administration.

- **Gender Affairs Division**  
  One Director, Gender Affairs

- **Domestic Violence Unit**  
  One Manager, DVU
  One Coordinator, Drop in Information Centre
  One Research Assistant II

- **Special Projects Unit**  
  One Manager, Special Projects
  One Project Analyst

- **Gender Support Unit**  
  One Manager, Gender Support Unit
13.3 Budget Allocations

At the end of 1996 the budget allocation to the Women’s Affairs Division was $1,043,900. By 2001 this allocation had increased to $2.3 Million with a further increase to 4.9 million for the 2001-2002 fiscal year, reflecting the Division’s increased programming and other activities.

13.4 Key Programmes and Projects of the Division 1996-2001

13.4.1 Domestic Violence Hotline established August 1996

The Domestic Violence Hotline (800-SAVE) was established in August 1996 in response to the increasing incidence of domestic violence in the country. Lifeline, a local NGO offering Hotline services to the suicidal, was contracted to run 800-SAVE as a six week pilot project. In October 1996 the Ministry of Culture and Women’s Affairs took over administration of the Hotline. The Hotline which provided listening and referral services to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence was staffed by eight Active Listeners and a Supervisor/Counsellor. By the end of 1997, the Hotline recorded over 1700 calls.

13.4.2 Establishment of a Domestic Violence Unit 1996

With the Hotline established, there was need for a co-coordinating unit to manage the affairs of the Hotline and develop appropriate programming to educate the public about violence against women and provide support services for victims and perpetrators. As such, on September 12, 1996 Cabinet approved the establishment of a Domestic Violence Unit. A Co-ordinator, Research Officer, Project Assistant and Clerk were hired to staff the Unit.

13.4.3 Domestic Violence Task Force

A multi-disciplinary Task Force was set up in 1999 to develop a comprehensive National Policy on Domestic Violence. The Task Force which comprised persons from the Modus Operandi Police Unit; the Judiciary; The Rape Crisis Centre and other NGOs; The Central Statistical Office; and The University of the West Indies, first met on September 16, 1999 with the following objectives:

- To improve understanding of the factors influencing domestic violence
- To enhance the capacity to analyse the problem of domestic violence at the community and national levels
- To develop an improved mechanism to measure the cost effectiveness of interventions
• To develop and implement planning and management guidelines.

One of its first endeavours was to work on the development of a registry for the collection, analysis and dissemination of reliable data on domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago. This process was led by an Information Specialist/ Demographer Statistician from UWI.

13.4.4 Domestic Violence Training programmes

One hundred and two (102) police officers participated in training programmes by the DVU between 1996-1998. Training was also provided for staff of safe houses/shelters and crisis lines, volunteers, members of non-governmental agencies, staff of the Community Development Division and community leaders throughout the country.

A number of rallies were also held throughout the country to commemorate International Day Against Violence Against Women.

13.4.5 Drop in Centres

In 1998, Active Listeners at the Domestic Violence Hotline reported that callers to the Hotline had indicated that were having difficulty accessing counselling and support services in their communities. As such, the Division, through its Domestic Violence Unit, embarked upon a Pilot project to establish Drop-In Counselling and Information Centres in 22 communities with funding from international agencies and support from the Police Service. The objectives of the project were:-

1. To provide support services for victims of domestic violence including rape and incest.
2. Encourage the establishment of support groups at the community level
3. Promote an integrated approach to the protection and rehabilitation of persons vulnerable to domestic violence

The Pilot project was funded by the UN System and ran from May-October 1998 when funds had been exhausted. On May 13, 1999 Cabinet approved the permanent establishment of 22 Drop-In Centres at an annual cost of $396,000.

13.4.6 Male Support Program

In August 1996, the Ministry established a Male Support Advisory Group aimed at helping address issues regarding men and their relationships with women. In December 1996, the Women's Affairs Division launched a Male Awareness Week and the following year hosted a
two-day Workshop which focused on developing interventions to support male perpetrators of domestic violence.

The Division contracted a Male Facilitator in 1997, Christopher Greaves, and designed and implemented a Pilot Male Support Programme during the period January to December 2000. The Pilot comprised 3 sub projects –

- Gender Sensitisation Workshops for Males in First Form conducted in four Secondary Schools.
- A Male Issues Forum which addressed issues of men’s health, drug abuse and domestic violence in 15 communities
- Training of male counsellors for Drop-in Centres to help male perpetrators of domestic violence.

On July 25, 2001 The Male Support Programme was formally established via Cabinet Minute No. 987.

13.4.7 Women’s Second Chances

The Women’s Second Chances project was developed to address the problem of unemployment among women who were; single heads of households; unskilled; or otherwise vulnerable to violence because of their lack of financial independence. The national project was approved by Cabinet on September 1, 1999 and comprised the following components

i. An Agricultural project using state land under the control of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and marine resources
ii. Agricultural Projects using Grow-Box Technology
iii. Elderly Care Training
iv. Homework centres to provide support for mothers who were in the program.

13.4.8 Women’s Leadership and Enhancement Institute 2000

On May 6, 1999 Cabinet approved the establishment of the Women’s Leadership and Enhancement Institute. The Institute was created to help further the participation of women in leadership and decision. It was first piloted in North and Central Trinidad in June 1998 and February 1999 targeting 75 women. The Institute held conferences and workshops for Business Women, Educators and women leaders in the community. The Institute also held seminars/workshops dealing with personal development and accessing financial services to help graduates from the Division’s programmes to create sustainable livelihoods.
The project began running on a budget of $425,250 for the first twelve months. A Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, Special Project Clerk were hired to run the institute.

13.4.9 Non-Traditional Skills Training for Women

In the mid 1990’s, the Division had pioneered a Construction Skills Programme for Women to enable women to expand their skills base and take advantage of employment opportunities in the Construction sector. Subsequently, Trinidad and Tobago participated in an IDB assisted programme designed to provide technical and vocational education and training for low income women in non-traditional areas.

The IDB Non-traditional Training Project was implemented in four Caribbean countries: Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, Guyana and Jamaica. The Project commenced in January 2000 with the IDB contributing $248,446 and local counterparts $126,072. The John Donaldson Technical Institute was contracted as the executing agency. The project was completed in September 2002.

13.4.10 Committee on the development of a National Gender Policy 1999

While a draft National Policy Statement on Women had been developed in 1988, there was a need to develop a comprehensive national policy on gender and development to guide the work of the Division and facilitate gender mainstreaming throughout the government’s programs and policies. Through the planning and management consultancy, the Division was provided with a structure for the development of the National Gender Policy. The Technical Staff of the Division then constructed a Working Document on the National Gender Policy as a starting point for the process.

On December 15, 1999 Cabinet agreed to the appointment of a Committee to develop a National Gender Policy for Trinidad and Tobago which would “bring focus and perspective to equitable gender relations in a new era of sustainable development for the country” and to prepare a Plan of Action for Implementation of the policy (Cabinet Minute 2687).

The Committee which comprised representatives from the public and private sector as well as NGOs was given the task to review the Working Document on the Draft Gender Policy and to submit its report to the Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs within two months. After only two meetings, the Committee recognized that the time frame for delivery of the policy was grossly inadequate and that additional research and collection of gender disaggregated data was needed to better inform the development of a comprehensive policy framework.
14. International Conferences

14.1 Beijing+5

The Twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 5-9 June 2000. This Beijing+5 review process was attended by a Trinidad and Tobago delegation of twelve persons (6- public service and 6- NGOs).

Prior to the New York meeting, states were required to complete a questionnaire on their government’s implementation of the Platform for Action. A National Country Report on the Status of Women was also prepared reviewing the progress made since Beijing. The document made note of key legal instruments that were undergoing legislative reform and review to ensure the protection of women’s human rights. These included:-

- The Domestic Violence Act no.27 of 1999
- Sexual Offences Amendment Bill 1999
- The Legal Aid and Advice Amendment Act 1999
- The Maternity Protection Act no.4 of 1998
- The Cohabitation Relations Act, 1998
- The Attachment of Earnings (Maintenance) Act, 1996


Although Trinidad and Tobago had signed the CEDAW convention in 1990, they had yet to fulfil their reporting obligations. Several other Caribbean nations had also lagged in submitting their reports so in April 1999, UNIFEM assembled the Heads of Women's/ Gender Affairs Divisions in the Caribbean in St. Kitts for a three-day workshop on how to complete the reports.

The GAD, recognising the lack of capacity within the Division to complete the reports, approached the UNDP for assistance in sourcing and contracting a consultant on the Division’s behalf to lead the process. Ms. Gaitree Pargass, a Human Rights lawyer, was hired as the consultant to supervise and assist in the reporting process. The GAD then coordinated a workshop for stakeholders and held consultations with key NGOs and CBOs dealing with women’s issues.

Using the information obtained by the Gender Affairs Division, the newly established Human Rights Unit (October 1999) began to prepare the outstanding reports, in accordance with the United Nations reporting guidelines. On 21 January, 2002, a delegation of five persons led by H.E. George W. McKenzie, Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United
Nations, presented Trinidad and Tobago’s Initial, Second and Third Periodic Reports to the CEDAW Committee at its Twenty-Sixth Session.
15. Gender Affairs Division in the 21st Century

In April 2002, the People’s National Movement assumed office and Joan Yuille-Williams was once again Minister of Community Development and Gender Affairs. For a short period between November 2003 and March 2004, the Division was placed under the portfolio of the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs with Mustapha Abdul-Hamid as Minister and Diane Seukeran and Junior Minister, but soon reverted to the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs where it remains today. Following the November 2007 election, the Honourable Marlene McDonald took over as Minister.

Having successfully established a portfolio of programmes and projects in the preceding years, the GAD, under its Director - Monica Williams, now worked to standardize and expand these programmes with the general aim of eliminating gender-based inequality within the society. During this period, the Division also sought to strengthen its position as the national focal point for gender mainstreaming efforts in all spheres of public and private life. Key strategies of the Division in this period would be the development of a National Policy on Gender and Development and the strengthening of gender focal points in all Ministries so that gender analysis would become foundational to the design and administration of all strategies, policies, programmes and project.

16. The Millennium Development Goals and Vision 2020

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the international community had now fully adopted the sustainable development approach, embodying social, economic and ecological objectives. There was now a greater understanding of gender as a crosscutting issue that impacted all development outcomes - from health and HIV/AIDS to poverty eradication and environmental protection.

The Millennium Development Goals, adopted by 189 Member States at the UN Millennium Summit of 2000, aimed at slashing poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation, maternal and child deaths and other ills by 2015. The MDGs comprised 8 overarching goals each with specific targets to the year 2015. Goal number 3 - “Promote gender equity and empower women” – highlights the fact that most of the world’s poor are women and that global prosperity and peace cannot be achieved without rectifying the gender disparities in education and economic empowerment and eradicating gender violence.
The MDGs have been mainstreamed into Trinidad and Tobago’s long-term development plan, Vision 2020. The Vision 2020 document charts the country’s course to achieving developed country status by the year 2020, and explicitly identifies gender equity as essential to this goal.

“Our citizens need to value and respect gender differences and embrace the changing roles of the sexes in a post-modern society. Gender equality should be a societal norm underlying the country’s people-oriented approach to human and social development” (Vision 2020 Draft National Strategic Plan)

A Gender and Development Committee was one of 28 sub-committees which contributed strategies to the Vision 2020 document. The Committee, headed by Denise Noel De Bique - Gender Fund Coordinator with the CIDA and former Director of the GAD – identified four goals to the year 2020

- To establish mechanisms to promote gender equity in the public and private sectors.
- To sensitize the public on issues arising out of the Gender Policy.
- To produce gender disaggregated social and economic data.
- To educate NGOs and CBOs on gender issues

17. National Gender Policy

Following the earlier attempts at advancing work on the development of a National Gender Policy, efforts were renewed in 2002 with the support of the UNDP and CIDA. On September 5, 2002, Cabinet by Minute #1924 agreed to support from these two agencies for the Development of the National Gender Policy. By the terms of the agreement the UNDP contributed US$20,000 (TT$124,000), CIDA contributed US$40,000 (TT$248,000) and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago provided counterpart funding of US$25,000 (TT$154,000).

An Advisory Committee representing members from all the partnering agencies was formed. This Committee under the auspices of the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs laid the framework for the execution of the project. A proposal, terms of reference and draft implementation schedules were developed and circulated to source a Consultant for the project. The Centre for Gender and Development Studies at UWI St. Augustine was contracted as Consultant for the project and a Program Co-coordinator was also retained to manage the development of the Policy.

A participatory approach to the development of the policy was adopted whereby civil society was engaged in a consultative process to identify those issues that they felt should be addressed in the National Gender Policy. An extensive public information strategy was implemented to
create awareness and encourage participation. The project was launched in July, 2002 and a National Consultation entitled “Building Consensus: Shaping the Vision” was held in 2003 at the Trinidad Hilton. A series of seven regional consultations followed paralleled by ten interest group consultations in Trinidad. In Tobago an Island-wide consultation and six interest group consultations were held.

A presentation was made to the Permanent Secretaries of the various Ministries at one of their monthly meetings, to incorporate their critical concerns and discuss possible approaches for developing and implementing this sectoral policy. This process was augmented by the commissioning of six major sector studies and 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 comparatively assess the situation of men and women in Trinidad and Tobago.

Following the report of the Consultant, the draft document was circulated for public comment but was later withdrawn. The document was revised and shared with stakeholders for their comment and a formal presentation was made to the Cabinet and senior members of Government. Subsequently, the National Policy on Gender and Development was accepted by the Cabinet, and in 2009 was laid in the Parliament as a Green Paper for further comment.

18. GAD expands Programmes and Projects

Today the GAD has expanded its programmes to continue to meet the needs of men and women in Trinidad and Tobago. In 2007, budget allocations for the Division reached a record $13 million, reflecting increased programming at the community level including national outreach and education initiatives. Some of the Division’s older programmes, such as the Women in Harmony Programme, continue to play an important role in helping address the structural and social barriers to gender equity in the country. Newer programmes, which have matured from earlier initiatives of the Division, now serve to strengthen the Division’s position as a leader in gender mainstreaming efforts of the country and as a model for other countries in the region.

18.1 Financial and Technical Support to NGOs and CBOs

The Division continues to provide training and technical and financial assistance to NGOs and CBOs in the country. Organisations receive support to implement approved programmes and projects, to conduct training, to acquire property and participate in local, regional and international gender forums.
18.2 Gender Mainstreaming in Health institutions

In 2009 the Gender Affairs Division partnered with the PAHO/WHO to conduct Gender Mainstreaming Workshops for the Health Sector. These workshops were designed to help to ensure that the differential needs of men and women and boys and girls are routinely considered in the health sector thereby improving access, targeting and treatment. Health professionals from Ministry of Health, the Regional Health Authorities, the Ministry of Local Government, the Public Health Departments of the Regional Corporations and Non-Governmental Health Agencies participated.

18.3 Men and Women’s Health Caravan

The Division partnered with the Ministry of Health, Regional Health Authorities and Health Related NGOs to conduct the Men’s Health Caravan in fiscal 2008/2009.

Approximately 1000 men throughout the regions in Trinidad had access to lectures, and basic testing for non-communicable diseases; prostate cancer; HIV/AIDS, and access to vaccinations. Several health agencies have since continued the programme, providing exclusive male spaces where men feel more comfortable in accessing health care services.

A health caravan for women was also implemented. This intervention focussed on women’s sexual and reproductive health including female mortality and morbidity. Rural women were the main target group with community centres/complexes used as the venues for the programme.

18.4 Food Preparation, Fine Dining and Home Management for Men / Boys

In 2005, the GAD piloted a Food Preparation and Fine Dining Program for men with 35 men. The Programme was designed to promote the sharing of family responsibilities within the household. In 2006, the Division hosted “Men Can Cook Too”; a culinary competition exclusively for men and in 2008 and 2010, the Division hosted a “Men, Fun, Food and Family Day” for participants of the Programme and their families. Modules on financial planning, men’s health, and gender sensitization have been added to the Programme.

18.5 Public Sensitization and Media

The Division has consistently used electronic media to promote public education and sensitization on critical gender issues and on the programmes of the GAD. Several infomercials were prepared on issues such as domestic violence, masculinity, and other critical gender and development issues. In 2006, the Division developed the concept for a six-part television panel series entitled “Gender on Your Agenda”. The Programme featured expert panellists in the areas of Popular Culture, Masculinity and Manhood, Leadership and Decision-making, Labour and Workplace Issues, Gender and Education, and Health and Wellness. In 2008, the “Gender on Your Agenda” series presented “You’ve Got Male”, which focussed on masculinity issues.
The Gender Affairs Division also produces large volumes of literature, brochures, pamphlets, and documents which are often distributed at national and community fairs and exhibitions.

18.6 Central Registry in Domestic Violence Data

In 2008 the Division contracted the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies of the University of the West Indies to pilot the establishment of a Central Registry for data on Domestic Violence. Through this project, a standard protocol for collecting data on gender violence has been developed and a number of agencies trained to record relevant data. Once mastered, this process template can be applied in other countries in the region.

18.7 Establishment of a Research and Documentation Centre

To facilitate its gender mainstreaming mandate and the large number of requests by researchers, students, and the general public for information, the GAD has established a Documentation Centre at its offices in Port of Spain. As part of this project the Division has also established a Digital Library at its website – www.genderaffairs-tt.net – where information about the Division’s work and projects will be posted online including gender disaggregated data in sectors such as Health and Wellbeing, Education and Training, Leadership and Decision Making, Labour and Employment and Gender- Based Violence.

18.8 Partnerships

The Division continues its partnerships with various national and international agencies to facilitate various projects and initiatives.

In 2007 the GAD introduced its Distinguished Lecture Series in collaboration with the UNDP. The Series which is held at venues throughout Trinidad and Tobago, features panels of experts speaking on topics such as HIV/AIDS, Gender Violence and Masculinity in Caribbean Society. The transcripts of these Lectures have been posted on the UNDP website and are currently being reviewed for the preparation of a publication.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has supported the Division’s programmes targeting men and boys. It has conducted an evaluation of the Defining Masculine Excellence Programme and is helping develop brochures, posters and other publishing materials as part of a sexual and reproductive health campaign for men.

The Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO/WHO) is also assisting the Division in developing and conducting its Gender Mainstreaming in Health initiatives.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the GAD, collaborated with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to host the 43rd Meeting of Presiding Officers of Women in Latin American and the Caribbean in July 2009.
The GAD also collaborated with the UN Systems in the Secretary General’s campaign on ending Gender-Based Violence through a number of activities executed during International Women’s Day celebrations in 2009 and 2010.

**18.9 International Reporting Obligations**

The GAD continues to meet its reporting obligations to various International Conventions and Agreements such as CEDAW, CIM and the Beijing Platform for Action. In March, 2009 the Division submitted its Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000). The Division also submitted Trinidad and Tobago’s Country Report to the XXXIV Assembly of Delegates of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) held in Chile, November 2008. The Division has also prepared the draft of the Fourth and Fifth Periodic Reports to CEDAW and is closely collaborating with the Ministry of the Attorney General to finalize and submit to the CEDAW Committee.

**18.10 Gender and Development Training and Education for Staff**

The Division has sought to increase the capacity of its staff in the field of gender and development.

Between 2004- 2006, three members of the GAD’s staff participated in a two-week work/study program with CIDA and the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC). Staff members have also been exposed to training in Ethnographic Studies at the UWI and all staff routinely participates in weekly staff development exercises focussing on various topics related to gender and development. Additionally, other staff members are pursuing postgraduate studies in Gender and Development.

**18.11 Internships/Work-Study Exchanges**

The scope and success of the GAD’s contribution to gender empowerment in Trinidad and Tobago has led to its recognition throughout the Caribbean Region as a leader in the application of gender and development strategy and programming. As such, a number of other Gender Machineries in the region - among them Cayman Islands and St. Kitts - have come to observe and work with the GAD to learn more about how the Division implements its policy and programmes.

Students at the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, also complete 12-week Practicums (2 days per week) at the GAD as part of their post-graduate studies as do students of the undergraduate Social Work program.
19. The Way Forward – A Vision for the GAD

The GAD continues to work on strengthening its capability to implement the Vision 2020’s Gender and Development goals. As such, the Division is working to fill key permanent positions at the managerial level so that it can more effectively meet its obligations.

The finalization of the National Policy on Gender and Development and its five year action plan, will be foundational to the advancing of gender mainstreaming efforts at the national level and widen the accountability for gender and development goals within all sectors. To this end, the GAD will continue its capacity building of Gender Focal Points in all Ministries.

At the national level, the GAD is recognised as a key partner in the development of policy. Members of staff have participated on various Inter-Ministerial and International Committees dealing with issues from education reform to children’s rights. In the Declaration of the Fifth Summit of the Americas, two paragraphs were dedicated to role of gender and development.
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## List of Persons Interviewed

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aileen Clarke</td>
<td>Former Director of Gender Affairs Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allison Hughes</td>
<td>Former AOII at the Women’s Bureau</td>
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<td>Gloria Henry</td>
<td>Former Minister of Community Development, Welfare and the Status of Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hermian Smart-Findlay</td>
<td>Gender Training Specialist, Gender Affairs Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karen Bart-Alexander</td>
<td>Former Deputy Director, Women’s Affairs Division</td>
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<td>Madhuri Supersad</td>
<td>Former member of Inter-ministerial Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monica Williams</td>
<td>Director, Gender Affairs Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nirala Cumberbatch</td>
<td>Former Clerk/ Stenographer Women’s Affairs Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie Daly LL.B.</td>
<td>Former member of the National Commission on the Status of Women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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List of Appendices

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