

## **Child and Gender Responsive Budgeting: Opening Remarks**

**David Popo –OECS Commission**

**Ladies and Gentlemen!**

**On behalf of the Director General of the OECS Commission, I extend greetings to all the participants attending this training workshop. The Commission is delighted to partner with the UNICEF, UNWOMEN, and the government of Antigua and Barbuda, in convening this very important regional capacity building training workshop in Child and Gender Responsive Budgeting.**

**The theme for the workshop: *Rights, Equity, and Integrated Social Protection* is indeed critical toward the development agenda for the region. It speaks to the significant work that have been done by the University of the West Indies and other regional tertiary educational institutions, in attempting to provide granular analyses of the intersection between Class, Gender, and Poverty. Ultimately, we all can agree that the outputs from this training workshop will contribute toward the reduction of poverty, especially child poverty, and that of the most vulnerable men and women in our OECS economic and social space.**

**In examining the demographic composition of the region, we all recognize that the groupings of children and women constitute a broad heterogeneous one.**

**Children comprise:**

- **Orphans**
- **Disabled**
- **Juveniles before the court system**
- **Thousands without incomplete secondary education and inadequate early childhood foundation**
- **Poor urban and rural children**
- **Children from both single mothers and fathers**
- **Child workers to support family incomes**

**The above demographics brings to the front, the need for revisiting how we as public sector professionals and practitioners, think-out and influence the social policy formulation and implementation processes. To begin with, we must discontinue the practice of working in silos. We need to get away from the notion of having the so called “super” Ministries-normally alluded to the Finance ministries. This has led to the devaluing of the voices and inputs of you and I who operate within the social sector and, our ability to negotiate in a very**

compelling way with our policy makers and colleagues within the entire public sector.

We know that every budgetary cycle, we often hear of the crisis of the thousands of youth who cannot find jobs after secondary and tertiary schooling. Indeed, the education system has failed our children, and poor vulnerable households.

The OECS Commission in partnering with UN WOMEN and UNICEF, is delighted and hope that this workshop is not another talk shop but one which will have significant impact on the lives of children-the future as we say for the sustainable development of the region. We are happy that there will be a manual developed thereafter to pilot the *Child and Gender Responsive Budgeting* process and uptake in the OECS member states.

Let me end by thanking our development partners: UNICEF and UNWOMEN in providing the required technical and financial resources for the implementation of the workshop. The Cooperation Agreement with UNICEF will help us realize the broad objectives of the OECS Revised Treaty of Basseterre which seeks to improve the overall quality of life of the citizens of the OECS region.