



**STATUS OF WOMEN AND MEN REPORT: A GENDER ANALYSIS  
OF LABOUR FORCE DATA AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS IN SIX  
CARICOM MEMBER STATES**

Remarks delivered by  
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Salutations

Good morning! Welcome to the launch of UN Women's *Status of Women and Men Report: A Gender Analysis of Labour Force Data and Policy Frameworks in Six CARICOM Member States*. Often issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment are not seen as central to development priorities. When thinking of development invariably most thoughts go to the economy, more often now the environment. Just recently in a meeting we heard, well gender can't be in everything. How could it not? Are people not in everything? The ways in which we value and fully expand on the potential of the populations which we serve is critical to the success of the economy and the environment. That

is gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender Equality and women's empowerment is not something to be achieved after we achieve development, development cannot be achieved without it. The report demonstrates this tangibly.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the centrality of gender equality to development and as a prerequisite for progress across all its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Four SDGs in particular are relevant for achieving gender equality in the world of work and are outlined below.

- SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.
- SDG 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- SDG 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- SDG 10 on reducing inequality within and among countries.

While progress has been made, an analysis of available data and information confirms that women in CARICOM are not experiencing their right to decent work and their opportunity to contribute robustly to our economies to the same extent as men.

The UN Women *Status of Women and Men* Report has confirmed that, despite significant investments in education, structural barriers to gender equality and women's

empowerment persist in the labour market. The report provides a gender analysis of the labour force in six CARICOM Member States (Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago) and insight into progress made with regards to achieving gender equality in the world of work.

The report confirms the following:

- Women tend to be more highly educated than men in the Caribbean but are employed at lower rates than men.
- Occupational sex segregation is evident in all countries. Women are most strongly over-represented in the clerical category.
- The female hourly rate is less than 100% of the male rate in all countries except in Barbados (where the rates are the same) and Jamaica. Women's earnings, once disaggregated by educational level, are lower than those of men, revealing that women do not receive the same reward for education that men do.
- Women are many times more likely than men to live in households that contain no other adults but do contain at least one child under 18 – that is, there is a predominance of single-female-headed households with children.
- The gender gap in wages is narrowing, but still persists, which is disturbing given the women are more highly educated.

So why do these persistent gender gaps remain? Despite the progress made in education? What else needs to be addressed for Barbados and other countries throughout the Caribbean to

reap the benefits of a fully engaged workforce of women and men?

In spite of their overall higher levels of education at the secondary and tertiary levels, the majority of the women in the region continue to be positioned in the lowest sectors of the capital market, earn lower wages than men, suffer higher rates of unemployment, experience greater levels of poverty, are under-represented in decision-making positions at the meso and macro levels of social and political institutions and generally lack real personal autonomy.

The challenge of persistent gender gaps in spite of certification is not unique to the Caribbean. We see similar trends globally, where 41.5% of women with a university degree are outside of the labour force or unemployed, but only 17.2% of men are in this situation.

In Barbados, 38% of women are educated up to the tertiary level compared to 31% of men. But the employment rate for Barbadian women, based on 2017 data, is 55% compared to 63% for men.

Barbadian women earn on average 95.4% of what Barbadian men earn. But when controlling for education, Barbados women who are educated up to the primary level earn BDS 4\$ less than their male counterparts; those who are educated up to the secondary school level earn BDS 1.67 less; and 63 cents less than

men if they are educated up to the university level. Women comprise 49% of managers in Barbados.

These gaps are relatively narrow when compared to other countries in CARICOM and globally, but still notable given that Barbados has yet to fully benefit from the capacity and potential that Barbadian women have to offer.

***What this tells us is that Access to education alone will not address the gender inequalities in employment.***

What is required is multifaceted. This includes understanding the structural barriers to women's empowerment in order for both women and men to enjoy, *de facto*, the full range of their rights. When women remain disadvantaged, a society continues to undervalue the full potential of all its people.

Recently during a Fulfilling the Commitments Beijing+25 online course hosted by UN Women, The University of the West Indies Institute for Gender and Development Studies Nita Barrow Unit, ParlAmericas and CARICOM Professor Barbara Bailey highlighted that "Improving Caribbean women's access to education has met a practical need and satisfied a basic human right but has done little to change their subordinate position in their societies. Rather than challenging patriarchal structures and systems, schooling, not only in the Caribbean but also generally, serves to reproduce and reinforce the social order and maintain the

male/female-domination/subordination hierarchy. Women's strategic need for empowerment is therefore not addressed in any substantial way through the educational process."

What are the structural Barriers educationally??

1. Gender regime of the school - Ideological discrimination – stereotyping; structural discrimination – differentiated system and differentiated quality of offerings;
2. Address gender stereotyping of certain subject areas, especially in technical-vocational fields of study at all levels, that lead to sex-segregation of subject subscription;
3. Barriers that constrain free subject choice as in cross time-tabling of technical vocational subjects in coeducational schools and the absence of some offerings perceived to be inappropriate in single sex schools;
4. Need to institute measures to train teachers to use pedagogical strategies that encourage women's self-confidence and result in women's empowerment to take control of their lives (violence);
5. Training of teachers to increase their capacity to provide gender-responsive education;
6. Eliminate violence, particularly sexual violence and harassment of females in educational institutions – institute a zero-tolerance policy and legislation to prevent and punish;
7. Adolescent pregnancy and reentry policies for affected adolescent mothers;

8. Institute social protection measures including conditional cash transfers that target disadvantaged girls, especially in improvised communities and FHH;

Globally, several research studies have confirmed that unpaid care work was the main reason women were outside the labour force. Universal access to day care from birth to three years old is therefore vital. Barbados, with its subsidised nursery programme, has and can continue lead the way in reaching universal access to this key service.

Tackling gender stereotypes by changing mindsets and values around care, and the kind of jobs that women and men should have, requires investment in programmes and policies to shift attitudes, behaviours and practices. The Share the Care initiative by UN Women, which promoted men and women prioritising their children by giving them their time and care as well as financial support where relevant, was one such programme.

Data on the prevalence of sexual harassment in Barbados is not available. However, sexual harassment and violence do hinder women's employment prospects and their productivity while at work. Barbados is one of a handful of CARICOM countries with sexual harassment legislation. More robust enforcement of this legislation can create a more enabling environment for women in the world of work.

With regards to the gender gap in wages, a key reason for this gap, may be the undervaluing of jobs held by women. Women tend to be employed at higher rates than men in service and clerical positions.

To address these myriad challenges, a broad partnership would be required. One that involves promoting principles of gender equality within the educational system and working with communities to encourage shared responsibilities between men and women for child care and domestic work. Partnership with the private sector and among employers, is also key. UN Women encourages more Barbadian companies to adopt the Women's Empowerment Principles, Signatories to these Principles demonstrate their commitment to advancing gender equality through their recruitment, retention and promotion policies; work-life balance measures, such as parental leave; and promotion of equal pay for work of equal value.

On the cusp on 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action it is a source of pride to note that Barbados has been a leader in gender equality and women's empowerment in the region and globally, from issues related to violence against women, state subsidised childcare and sexual and reproductive health. While many gains have been made, the results from this report

demonstrate that much more work needs to be done for Barbados and countries throughout the Caribbean to be able to truly benefit for the full potential of women and men. As noted above we need to;

1. Increase women's access to paid employment in better remunerated non-traditional sectors of the economy, "equal pay for work of equal value legislation";
2. Alleviate the burden of unpaid work in the home through policies that enable women to reconcile paid and unpaid care responsibilities;
3. Improve access to quality, affordable childcare facilities;
4. Improve access to productive resources – land rights -titles, credit, housing – especially in rural areas;
5. Investigate what can be done to expand entrepreneurial opportunities – increase women's access to an equal share of financial services through schemes to support micro-enterprises and their graduation;
6. Concentration of women in the informal largely unregulated and unprotected economy; and finally we have to
7. Improve social protection measures especially for women below the poverty line including child benefits, conditional cash transfers, old- age non-contributory pensions, subsidies for education, health care and housing.

Many of these issues are already being addressed by the Government of Barbados and other governments across the Caribbean. We wish to reiterate that UN Women stands ready to support where needed.

