

**Building a Coordinated Caribbean Position for CSW65**  
**Paper Presented for Online Discussion**  
**Friday, February 12, 2021**

**1. SALUTATIONS**

Ms. Tonni Brodber, Moderator for today's proceedings; Honourable Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs; Permanent Representatives to the UN; Parliamentarians joining us for this important discussion, and, all distinguished representatives of other Gender Equality entities; and, last but not least the Caribbean agencies supporting this vital activity.

Ms. Broder, thank you for your gracious introduction; and, to all gathered it is my distinct privilege and pleasure to have an opportunity to participate in the deliberations intended to delineate a coordinated Caribbean position, in readiness for the upcoming CSW 65 meeting scheduled to be held in New York, March 15 to 26, 2021.

**2. SDG 5: TARGETS 2 & 5**

I have been asked to address the theme of the CSW 65 meeting: *Women's full & effective participation in public life and the elimination of violence against women (EVAW) for achieving gender equality (GE) and women's empowerment.*<sup>1</sup> You will recognize that this title encapsulates the 5<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> targets of the 5<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), intended to *achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.*

It is a little concerning that we have been pursuing this goal for some four or more decades. Over a single decade, 1985-1995, some eight United Nations (UN) international conferences were held which focused on women's human rights, social issues and sustainable development. At these conferences a number of actions were identified to promote, *inter alia*, greater gender equality and gender equity with explicit reference to three of the targets of SDG5, namely:

- The **economic empowerment** of women through equal access to the labour market and non-traditional occupations and elimination of gender disparities in income and discriminatory practices by employers;
- Ensuring **equitable representation of women at all levels of the political process and public life**; and,
- **Eliminating violence against women** and ensuring their right to reproductive and sexual health.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women. CSW65 (2021). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw65-2021>

<sup>2</sup> Bailey, B. 2004. The Search for Gender Equity and Empowerment of Caribbean Women: The Role of Education. In: (eds.) Tang-Nain, G. & Bailey, B. *Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Reality or Illusion*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers.

In spite of the fact that most Caribbean governments endorsed actions identified in relation to these issues and have ratified instruments, such as the, *1979 Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*<sup>3</sup> and the *1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*<sup>4</sup>, a gap between ratification and implementation persists, and, Caribbean women, and women globally, continue to be disadvantaged in regard to many of these rights.

In the Report to the Secretary General, prepared for the CSW 65 meeting, it is acknowledged that although...

*...some progress has been made in women's representation at different levels, mainly through legislated gender quotas, and, the impact of women's participation in decision-making and civil society, are acknowledged in the report, systemic challenges, especially the increasing levels of violence perpetrated against women in public life and certain enduring harmful norms, require urgent attention as well as, specific challenges encountered by marginalized women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.* (Summary)<sup>5</sup>

Of note is the fact that over the decades, many of the conferences which addressed the concerns reflected in these two SDG targets, pointed to the **centrality of education as the vehicle for achieving gender equality and equity and as the means to women's empowerment** and their fuller participation in the development process (Bailey, 2004). From as far back as the *1985 Third World Conference on Women*, convened under the theme 'Equality, Development and Peace' education was promoted as the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women and as the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfill their role as full members of society. In *The Forward Looking Strategies*, coming out of that conference, Governments were therefore urged to institute and adopt measures to increase equal access to scientific, technical and vocational education and to create appropriate incentives to ensure that women had an equal opportunity to acquire education at all levels.<sup>6</sup> This notion was also

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<sup>3</sup> *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. Adopted and opened for signature ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979, entry into force 3 September 1981, in accordance with Article 27(1).

<https://www.ohchr.org/documents/professionalinterest/cedaw.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*. Proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/eliminationvaw.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Economic and Social Council. CSW 65<sup>th</sup> Session, 15-26, March 2021. *Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*. Report of the Secretary General. December 2020. E/CN.6/2021/3.

<https://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2021/3>

<sup>6</sup> *The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women as adopted by the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace*. New York, United Nations Department of Public Information. 1993. p.41, #163, 164.

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/otherconferences/Nairobi/Nairobi%20Full%20Optimized.pdf>

endorsed at the *1990 World Conference on Education for All*<sup>7</sup>, the *1995 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women*,<sup>8</sup> Beijing, China. The importance of education for women’s empowerment was also endorsed in the *1997 CARICOM Post-Beijing PoA to the Year 2000*.<sup>9</sup>

## 1. ROLE OF EDUCATION IN WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

If in fact, education as posited from as far back as 1985 would be the magic wand for addressing women’s subordinate position in home and society, I want to briefly test this hypothesis by juxtaposing female participation at the secondary and tertiary levels of education, across the Caribbean, with their positioning in relation to the two SDG targets which are the focus of this paper.

*Figure 1: Secondary level Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios for 11 Caribbean Countries*

GER SECONDARY			NER SECONDARY		
Reference Area	MALE	FEMALE	Reference Area	MALE	FEMALE
Antigua and Barbuda	101.80	102.84	Antigua and Barbuda	78.16	81.34
Bahamas	90.23	95.08	Bahamas	79.74	85.69
Barbados	107.88	110.68	Barbados	86.14	91.56
Belize	78.05	81.71	Belize	67.33	71.33
Dominica	93.50	100.12	Dominica	76.47	81.53
Grenada	<b>101.18</b>	100.51	Grenada	81.25	83.51
Guyana	<b>89.69</b>	88.98	Guyana	82.33	82.63
Jamaica	66.27	71.53	Jamaica	64.05	69.80
Saint Kitts and Nevis	90.31	92.75	Saint Kitts and Nevis	81.21	84.70
Saint Lucia	<b>86.71</b>	86.20	Saint Lucia	80.16	81.16
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	106.16	103.18	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	83.89	86.52

Source: UNdata 2010-2015

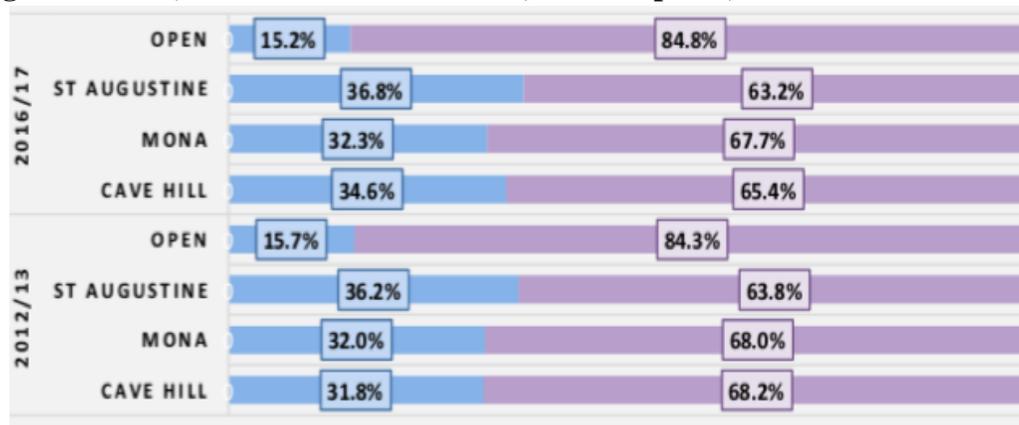
Gross Enrolment Ratios reference enrolment at the level regardless of age. The figures indicate that only in two instances, Grenada and St. Lucia, were more boys enrolled than girls. On the other hand, Net Enrolment Ratios (NER) reference enrolment to the particular age cohort in the population and, therefore, provides a more accurate assessment of male/female enrolment. In this instance enrolment favoured girls in all eleven countries (See Figure 1)

<sup>7</sup> *World Declaration on Education for All. Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*. Jomtien, Thailand. March 1990. [https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/UNESCO\\_World\\_Declaration\\_For\\_All\\_1990\\_En.pdf](https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/UNESCO_World_Declaration_For_All_1990_En.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing China, Sept. 1995. *Platform for Action and The Beijing Declaration*. Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing, China 4-15 September 1995. United Nations. Department of Public Information. New York. 1996. #B 69. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> CARICOM Secretariat, 1997, *Gender Equality Social Justice and Development: The CARICOM Post-Beijing Regional Plan of Action to the Year 2000*.

**Figure 2: UWI; Male/Female Enrolment, All Campuses, 2012/13 and 2016/17**



Data for the Caribbean indicate that beyond the secondary level, participation at the tertiary level drops off significantly compared with the secondary level. Data for enrolment at the University of the West Indies which serves the region, is a case in point. Data for the four campuses show the dramatic gap in male/female enrolment across all the campuses, except for the newest in Antigua and Barbuda, which had not yet been established at the time of reviewing these figures. The gender gap was most marked in the case of the Open Campus with a male/female gap of 15.7% to 84.8% in 2012/2013 and 15.2 to 84.8% in 2016/2017 (See Figure 2). Several factors can account for this, particularly the flexibility for accommodating participation in higher education with the primary role of women in unpaid care work in the family as well as paid employment.

These data clearly indicate that Caribbean women have made significant gains in seizing opportunities for gaining qualifications at all levels of education, particularly beyond the secondary level. The question, therefore, is: has Caribbean women's success in education translated into improved access to public service and decision-making in the public arena and contributed to their empowerment and the elimination of VAW in the region?

## **2. SDG 5.5: PUBLIC SERVICE & DECISION MAKING**

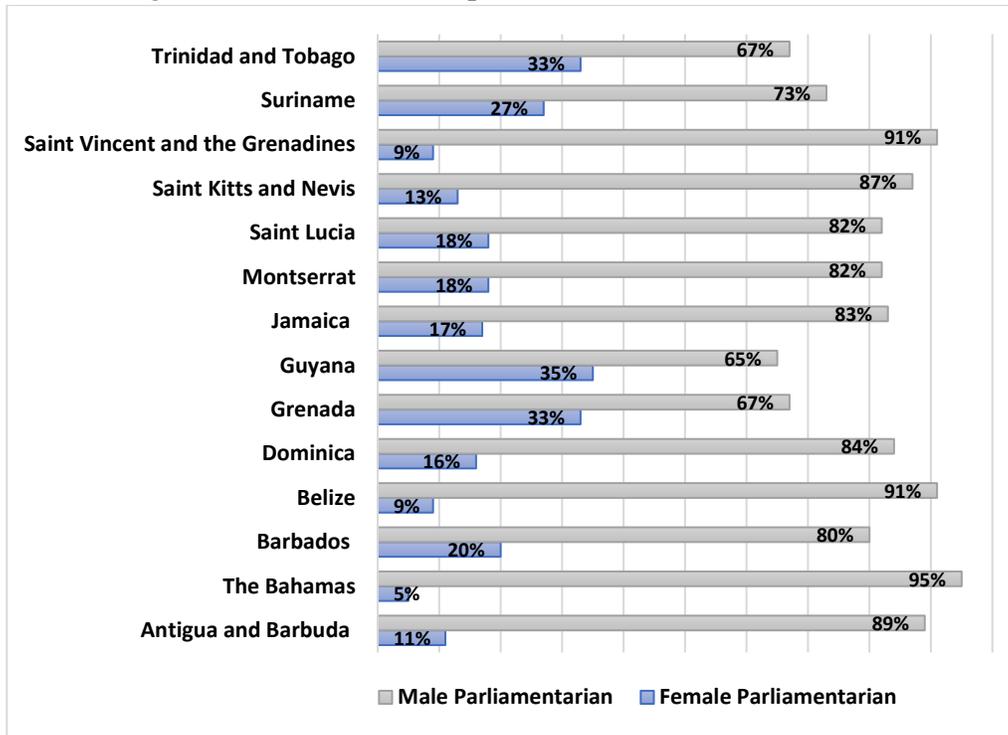
Dimensions related to the right to participate on equal terms with men in *shaping and implementing decisions and policies* affect women, their families, communities, and societies, at the local, national and international levels, include:

- The right to participate on equal terms with men in *shaping and implementing decisions and policies* affecting themselves, their families, communities, and societies, at the local, national and international levels.
- The right to *equal access to public service*.
- The right to *equal access to education and information*.
- The right to freedom of expression and opinion.

- The right to equality between men and women and to *full and equal partnership in the family and society*.<sup>10</sup>

Based on data reviewed it is clear that, at the national level, women are woefully under-represented in shaping and implementing decisions and policies that decision-making positions and policies that affect themselves, their families, communities and societies at the local, national and international levels. Data presented in the following graphs are instructive.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 3: Male/Female Representation as Parliamentarians**

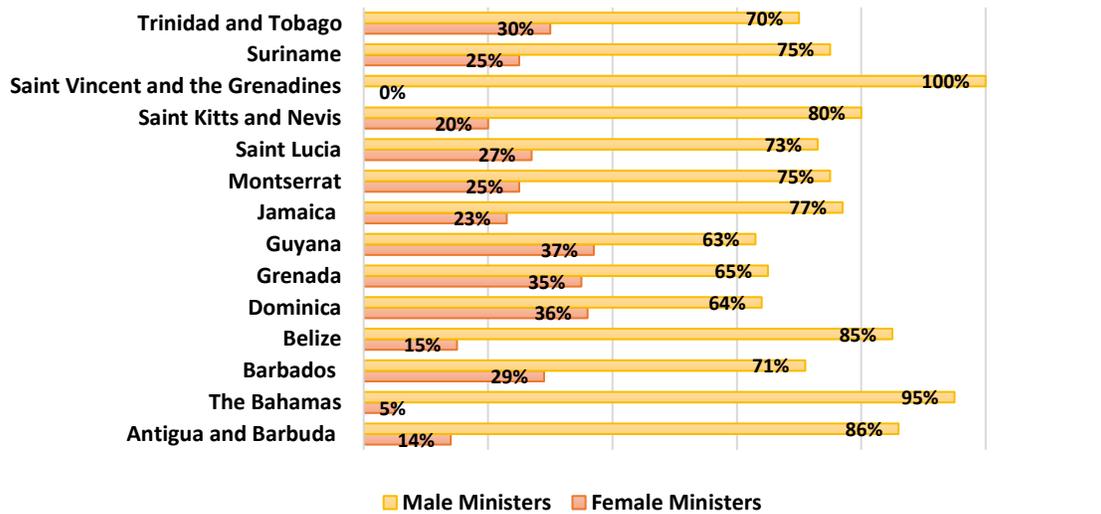


Data in Figure 3 indicate that, in every country, significantly more males than females were elected to serve as Parliamentarians, ranging from a low of 5% and 9% females in the Bahamas and St. Vincent and the Grenadines respectively to a high of 33% and 35% in Grenada and Guyana, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> *Women, Human Rights and Decision-Making: The People’s Movement for Human Rights.* [file:///Users/barbarabailey/Documents/CARICOM%20CSW%2065%20CAEICOM%20UN%20Meeting%20Feb%2012%202021/decision%20making%20in%20public%20life/PDHRE\\_%20Women%20in%20Power%20and%20Decision-Making.htm](file:///Users/barbarabailey/Documents/CARICOM%20CSW%2065%20CAEICOM%20UN%20Meeting%20Feb%2012%202021/decision%20making%20in%20public%20life/PDHRE_%20Women%20in%20Power%20and%20Decision-Making.htm)

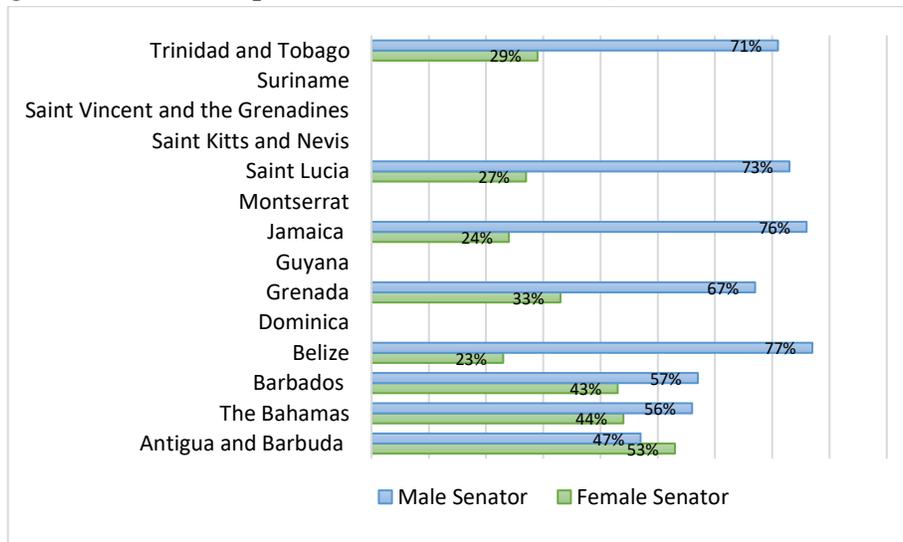
<sup>11</sup> *Women in Political Leadership in the Caribbean.* Sustainable Development Goals and UN Women, November 2018. <https://parlAmericas.org/uploads/documents/WomensPoliticalLeadershipUNWomen.pdf>

**Figure 4: Cabinet: Ministerial Appointments in Fourteen CARICOM Countries**



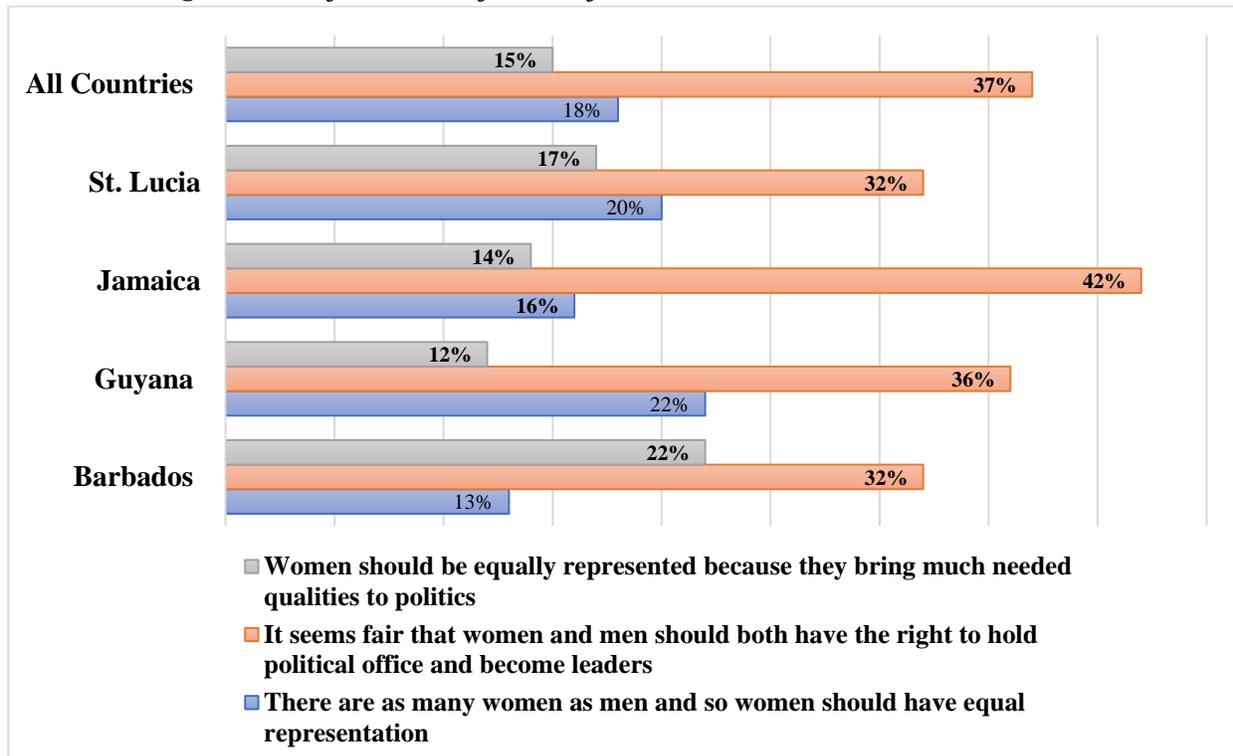
In the case of appointments to the Cabinet as portfolio Ministers (See Figure 4), the highest representation of women was just about one third in Grenada (35%), Guyana (37%) and Dominica (36%). At the time that these data were collected, the lowest representation was in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (0%), the Bahamas (5%) and Belize (15%).

**Figure 5: Female Representation in the Cabinet, 14 Caribbean Countries**



In the case of female representation as Senators, there were no data for eight of the fourteen countries - Suriname, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, Guyana and Dominica all of which have a unicameral legislature. In the remaining eight countries, with bicameral legislatures, only in one instance, Antigua and Barbuda was there higher female (53%) than male (47%) representation in the Senate (See Figure 5).

**Figure 6: Preferred Justification for Women’s Involvement in Politics<sup>12</sup>**



In spite of these views, several challenges deter women’s equal participation in the political process, including:

- Institutional barriers - No legislation and quotas to ensure/encourage women’s participation, selection processes etc.;
- The culture of politics which is often violent and hostile to women;
- Women’s involvement in unpaid care work in home and community contributing to women’s lack of economic empowerment;
- Combining work with activities such as campaigning which is also linked to lack of economic empowerment.

Target 5 of SDG 5, however, is not only addresses full participation of women in decision-making in the public life, but also the effectiveness of their participation. Effectiveness, however, can only be assessed where there is monitoring and evaluation of projects, programmes and plans across all sectors of the public service. In the absence of any consolidated data, in this regard, I canvassed the opinion of a Jamaican public servant who had worked as Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister over three administrations. In her opinion, the following could be examples of indicators of effectiveness:

<sup>12</sup> *Women in Political Leadership in the Caribbean. Op.cit.*

- the range of gender-sensitive policies relevant to significant concerns emanating from public sector entities which took into account variations in the targeted population, that is, the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination;
- the extent to which policies are not only implemented but also lead to the promulgation of statutes that provide protection for vulnerable groups;
- increased representation of women on public sector boards; and,
- evidence of a transformative agenda to include programmes that meet the needs of the most disadvantaged groups served by public sector entities.

### **3. SDG 5.2: ELIMINATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

The second target of SDG5 is concerned with the elimination of gender-based violence. Sources point to the fact that the crime and violence is a serious social issue in the majority of Caribbean states with significant consequences for citizen security and for the human and economic development and individual well-being. In all cases, women are a particular target of such violence, driven as it is by socio-cultural gender norms that reinforce unequal relations of power between the sexes resulting in male dominance and control over women in both public and private spaces.

While acknowledging that violence against women seems to be endemic in Caribbean countries as in most countries around the world, a 2007 UNODC Report, however, points out that:

*Police statistics offer only a very imperfect picture of violence against women, since the majority of these incidents are not reported to police. To get a more precise idea of prevalence rates, one must use victimization surveys that focus on violence against women. (#1.28, p.12)<sup>13</sup>*

The Report further suggests that, in the absence of such surveys that use a common methodology across the Caribbean, we are left with isolated, country-specific data on prevalence rates. In spite of the fact that three such surveys have been conducted in the Caribbean, I found that, as laid out the data were not comparative. I was, therefore, unable to identify any dataset that could provide a comprehensive picture of the prevalence of GBV across the Caribbean.

However, we know that globally, women of all ages, of all social strata and of all ethnicities are subjected to a wide range of violent and abusive behaviours, including physical, sexual and emotional violence at the hands of current or former intimate male partners as well in non-intimate situations sometimes involving total strangers, involving the illegitimate exercise of coercion, force, control or exploitation particularly in relation to sexual violence.

Caribbean women experience all forms of gender-based violence, but, sexual violence is extremely prevalent affecting females at all stages of life. Sexual violence is defined as:

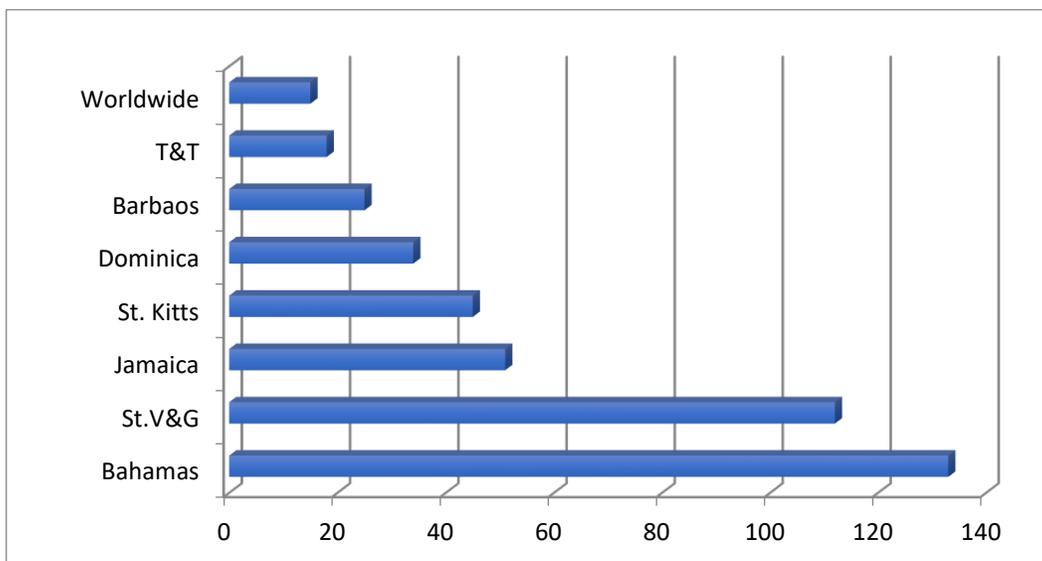
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<sup>13</sup> *Crime, Violence and Development: Trends Costs and Policy Options*. Joint Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Latin America and Caribbean Region of the World Bank. March 2007  
[https://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Cr\\_and\\_Vio\\_Car\\_E.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Cr_and_Vio_Car_E.pdf)

*...any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work. Coercion can cover a whole spectrum of degrees of force. Apart from physical force, it may involve psychological intimidation, blackmail or other threats. (p.149)<sup>14</sup>*

Rape in both the public and private domains is the most prevalent form of sexual violence in the Caribbean region that affects women throughout the entire life cycle also impacting elderly women. The same 2007 UNDOC Report provides trends for rape rates per 100 000 of the female population extracted from crime survey trends (CST). These data indicate that, three of the top ten recorded rape rates in the world, occurred in the Caribbean, including the top rated: the Bahamas. Further, the seven Caribbean countries for which comparable data were available experienced a higher rate of rape than the (unweighted) average of 102 countries responding to the Crime Survey Trends which stood at 15 rapes per 100,000 (See Figure 1).

**Figure 7: Reported Incidents of Rape per 100 000**



Source: Crime Trends Surveys – United Nations (various years) p.12

At the far end of the spectrum of all the forms of violence that a woman can experience, in both the private and public domains, however, is **femicide** defined by the Committee of Experts of OAS Belem do Para Convention as:

*....the violent death of women based on gender, whether it is committed within the family, a domestic partnership or any other interpersonal relationship; in the*

<sup>14</sup> *World Report on Violence and Health*. 2002. Eds. Etienne G. Krug, Linda L Dahlberg, James A. Mercy, Anthony B. Zwi & Raphael Lozano. WHO, Geneva.

[http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/42495/9241545615\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=5C37BCB9BBE3B8B2251225658AD592AA?sequence=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/42495/9241545615_eng.pdf;jsessionid=5C37BCB9BBE3B8B2251225658AD592AA?sequence=1)

*community by any person; or, when perpetrated or tolerated by the state or its agents by action or omission. (#2, p.6)*<sup>15</sup>

Some OAS member states, typify or consider such murders as ‘an aggravating factor in cases of homicide of women’.<sup>16</sup>

The term ‘**femicide**’ is not yet in common usage in the Caribbean nor is it incorporated into the legislative framework intended to protect women from this form of gender-based violence. Anecdotal evidence from the print media, however, points to the fact that in Caribbean countries, murders of women are frequently associated with physical violence in intimate, domestic relationships as well as incidents of rape in public spaces, particularly in non-intimate relationships which, therefore, clearly locate these incidents as femicides. In spite of the fact that, information from various sources that report on the prevalence of gender-based violence in Caribbean countries, confirm that deaths of women result from such incidents, in the absence of specific legislation they are accounted for as homicides with often no distinction of the sex of the victim.

Although the Caribbean has lagged behind in terms of enacting legislation on Femicides, model legislation has been developed by the OAS MESECVI body that monitors the Belem do Para Convention. Given that there is clear evidence that the murder of many women in the Caribbean would qualify as femicides, CARICOM member states should be encouraged to consider debate and, ultimately, enactment of this legislation given its comprehensive nature. Each country would, however, would need to carefully review the provisions to ensure congruence with existing complementary legislation.

A review of existing legislation on gender-based violence against women in CARICOM member states indicates that, through the ratification of international and regional human rights instruments and reform of existing national legislation as well as enactment of new laws, the Caribbean has made significant progress towards *de jure* equality. This, however, has not translated into *de facto* equality for women and protection of their right for a life free of violence, largely due to low State compliance with obligations under international and regional commitments and inadequate resources for enforcement of national legislation

In addition to improving compliance under these instruments I would contend that, if VAW in this Region is to be curtailed, and, ultimately eliminated, patriarchal culture and patriarchal structures and systems, need to be explicitly tackled in a more direct manner than now is the case. This is further elaborated in the recently adopted CEDAW General Recommendation 35 which states that Gender-Based Violence against Women (GBVAW) is:

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<sup>15</sup> *Committee of Experts’ Declaration on Femicide* (document MESECVI/CEVI/DEC. 1/08). OAS. August 15, 2008. <http://www.oas.org/en/mese cvi/docs/DeclaracionFemicidio-EN.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Gender Equality Observatory of Latin America and Caribbean. <https://oig.cepal.org/en/autonomies/physical-autonomy>

*.....rooted in gender-related factors such as the ideology of men's entitlement and privilege over women, social norms regarding masculinity, the need to assert male control and power, to enforce gender roles or to prevent, discourage or punish what is considered to be unacceptable female behavior. (#19)<sup>17</sup>*

These social and cultural patterns of conduct reflected in this quotation are nurtured by the patriarchal system, and, are therefore, hallmarks of patriarchy, marked as it is by: hegemonic masculinities, misogynist attitudes, unequal relations of power between men and women, gender-based discrimination and women's subordination - all of which are core drivers of VAW.

#### **4. MOVE UPSTREAM: DISMANTLE INTRACTABLE PATRIARCHAL CULTURE AND SYSTEMS**

The fact of the matter is, that in spite of Caribbean women being more highly educated and, therefore, represent the better source of human capital, they continue to lack equal access to both material (goods and services, life sustaining requisites) and to non-material resources (formal power and authority, informal power, influence, prestige, privilege) compared with their male counterparts. This This having been said, the questions that arise are: a) How is a patriarchal culture reproduced? b) What are the entry points for disrupting and transforming patriarchal culture and patriarchal structures and systems that constrain women's full and effective participation in public life and undergird VAW?

Three major systems and their associated processes buttress and sustain patriarchy. These are: a) patterns of schooling that reproduce the social order, and, particularly the gender order; b) the positioning of females in the formal labour market of CARICOM member states; and, c) the universal structure of economies that privilege males and subordinate women in paid work.

Schooling replicates the gender order through the sex-segregation of the school's curriculum and the sorting of females and males into different disciplines based on entrenched gender norms and related structural barriers. Females are less likely to pursue the hard sciences, engineering, information technology, manufacturing, construction and agriculture and predominate in subject areas that are of lower status and lead to lower paying occupational areas of employment.<sup>18</sup> This sifting and sorting of students reproduce, reinforce and maintain sex-based discrimination in schools and reproduce patriarchal power systems and structures beyond school. The net outcome

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<sup>17</sup> Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women. *General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No.19* July, 2017. CEDAW/C/GC/35. [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1\\_Global/CEDAW\\_C\\_GC\\_35\\_8267\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_35_8267_E.pdf)

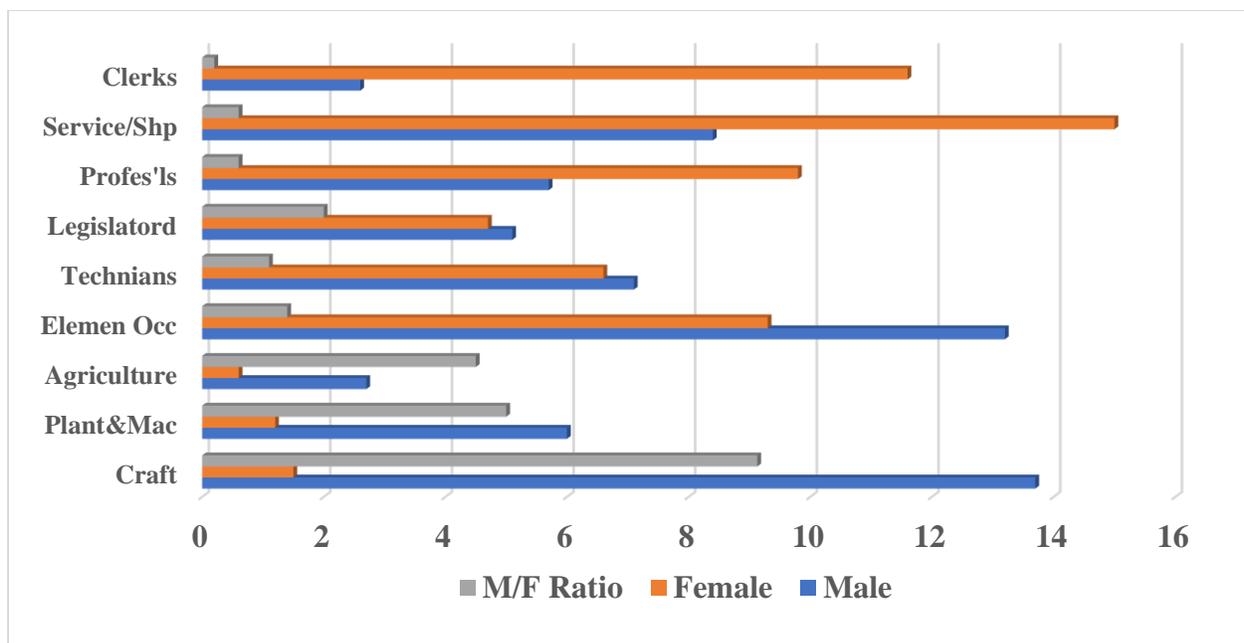
<sup>18</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Global Education Digest 2009. Comparing Education Statistics across the World*. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/2009/GED.2009.EN.pdf>

is the reproduction of the male/domination female/subordination hierarchy, and, the reproductive-productive, private/public dichotomies.<sup>19</sup>

Schools, however, are not only an instrument of the State for reproducing the gender order but are also violent spaces; and, the extent to which schooling is a major contributor to the construction of hegemonic masculinities and submissive femininities, and a site where a culture of violence is reproduced, is often underestimated.<sup>20</sup>

Another major driver of VAW is the **subordination of women in paid work**, which is also directly linked to ways in which schooling reproduces the social order. The lack of economic independence that the majority of women face and their positioning in the lowest paying sectors of the economy, are strongly influenced by women's participation in the educational process both in terms of ideological and structural determinants.

**Figure 8: Sex-Segregation of Caribbean Labour Markets: Barbados - M/F Employment by Sector 2012**



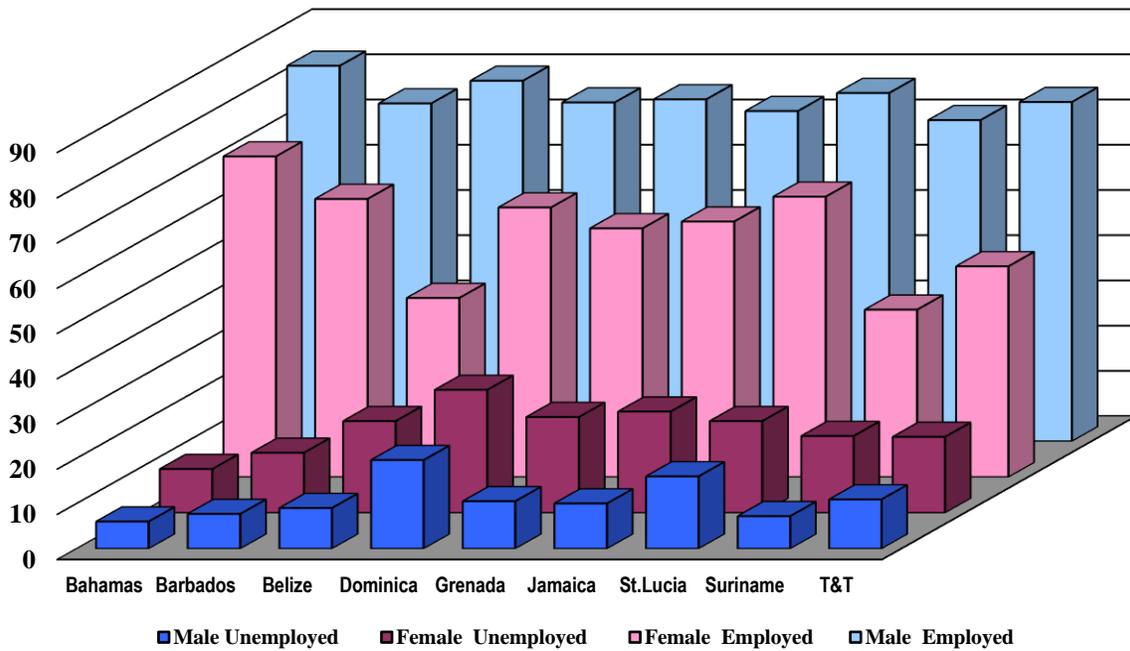
In many societies, in spite of women, as a group, representing the more highly qualified source of human capital, they continue to be clustered in the low paying and under-valued sectors of the economy including as clerks and service workers in shops and although also over-represented in the professional category this includes teachers and nurses which are highly feminized and do

<sup>19</sup> Bailey, B. 2017. *Dialogue on General Prevention and Special Prevention of Violence against Women for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Multilateral Round*. Unpublished paper presented at 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of States parties to the Belem do Para. November, 2017. Mimeograph.

<sup>20</sup> Bailey, Barbara. 2014. op.cit. p.4.

not attract the same remuneration as male professional categories such as, for example, financial institutions. Males, on the other hand, are more highly represented as technicians, legislators and crafts where often there is greater opportunity for self-employment as business operators (See Figure 8). Females also tend to be clustered in the unprotected informal sector exposed to uncertain income streams. Added to their positioning in the capital market, compared with men, generally, women experience lower levels of employment and higher levels of unemployment, (See Figure 9).

*Figure 9: Employment and Unemployment Rates by Country and Sex*



The net outcome of these patterns of women’s participation in paid work is the gender wage gap which universally favours males. Of note, is the fact that the only level of education at which the mean annual earnings of females was higher than that of males was where they indicated that they had ‘no formal education’. In every other instance from ‘pre-primary’ through to ‘special education’ and ‘other’ the mean annual income was higher for males than for females (See Figure 10). Simply put, this is indicative of the fact that formal certification does not carry the same social currency for females and as it does for males.

**Figure 10: Mean Yearly Earnings of Employed Males/Females by Highest level of Education, Jamaica<sup>21</sup>**

Highest level of Education	Mean Yearly Earnings (\$)	
	MALE	FEMALE
None	\$107,583.80	<b>\$133,181.90</b>
Pre-Primary	\$2,037,021.10	\$133,971.20
Primary	\$184,211.00	\$152,845.80
Secondary	\$254,860.90	\$212,629.60
University	\$1,181,826.00	\$876,580.20
Other Tertiary	\$579,656.90	\$423,464.30
Special School	\$340,001.90	\$229,583.30
Other	\$263,445.20	\$254,219.70

The patterns of education, employment and women’s participation in decision-making in public life are not chance occurrences but are undergirded by **gender ideologies** that normalize expected sex-linked, differentiated behaviours, educational choices, occupations and roles in public life for women and men; but; beyond that these expectations are **reinforced by societal structures and systems** grounded in multiple axes of discrimination resulting in persistent inequalities based on, *inter alia*, socio-economic status, location, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and identity etc.

The resilience of these systemic gendered patterns of schooling which translates into gendered positioning in the labour market as well as the resulting gender wage gap in favour of males, are premised on the **male breadwinner** ideology. The dominant position of males in waged work and income generation is based on this entrenched ideology, perpetuated by the structure of economies that privilege males with lower levels of certification over females with higher certification for certain jobs and positions. Further, even where both sexes have equal levels of education, males are also secure higher levels of remuneration. The result is the universal phenomenon of the horizontal and vertical sex-segregation of labour markets.

The concept of the male breadwinner is also pivotal to the construction of a hegemonic masculinity and to male heterosexual identity; both of which are associated with the levels of

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<sup>21</sup> Ricketts, Heather. 2007. *Gender Discrimination and Wage Determinants in the Jamaica Labour Market*. PhD. Thesis. University of the West Indies.

violence that women and girls experience in both the private and public spheres based on their lack of economic empowerment and, therefore their dependence on male partners for the economic survival of the family. In both instances, women are silenced by their lack of economic independence. What cannot be ignored, however, is that rather than disrupting the patriarchal social order, both education and the economy continue to serve traditional interest and motive which combine to maintain the *status quo* and ensure that the gains of men are not significantly disrupted.

## 5. APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING IDEOLOGICAL vis-à-vis STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY

Gender inequalities, therefore, are based on both ideological and structural factors. In order to fully understand the phenomena considered in this paper, as well as, identify workable ways of resolving intractable problems of women's participation in public life as well as the elimination of violence against women, we need to draw on two complementary approaches for interrogating these problems. The focus on the **ideological dimension** of these inequalities mainly locates the problem on gender socialization processes in the home, school and religious arenas. Under this paradigm, the main focus is and, on the use a socio-cultural, univariate framework which basically compares males with females to reveal sex-based differences and, therefore, on measures that need to be instituted in these spheres to **modify the ideologies that undergird the inequalities** that women face in the arenas previously discussed.

On the other hand, to fully understand **structural inequality** and the impact of intersecting axes of inequality on observed outcomes, a more comprehensive, multivariate **political-economy framework** is absolutely essential. This paradigm locates the problem in the broader socio-economic-political arena, and, therefore, to pinpoint differences based not only on sex/gender sex but also its intersection with a number of factors, that represent interlocking axes of inequality. These include socio-economic-status, location, age, race/ethnicity, level of education, sexual orientation etc. The outcomes of this approach provide far more comprehensive information that can inform interventions aimed at, not only, disrupting systemic, patriarchal economic and political structures, systems and policies that privilege males beyond school, in spite of their lower levels of educational attainment, but also, to target the specific needs of specific groups of women whose lived reality is influenced by a number of intersecting factors.

## 6. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY

### Educational Arena

- a) Modify practices and policies and in educational institutions that create normalized ideologies and structural barriers which prevent females from having free choice in terms of subject areas and career choice;

- b) Institute clear legislative and policy measures to ensure that when females pursue male dominated disciplines and activities in educational institutions, they are protected from sexual harassment and abuse;
- c) Comprehensively treat all cases of violence against girls/women in educational institutions from reporting through to prosecution and reparation, as necessary;

### **Employment**

- a) Disrupt the male breadwinner ideology by enacting and enforcing legislation that guarantees that women receive equal pay as men for work of equal value;
- b) Ensure that job recruitment policies and practices are based on merit and not on patronage, thereby guaranteeing that women's certification carries the same value as that of men's;
- c) Develop policies and enact legislation for eliminating practices that lock women in low status, low-paying occupational categories in formal and informal economies thereby disrupting entrenched labour market segregation by adopting/implementing obligations under ILO agreements;
- d) Enact legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace;
- e) Value and take into account women's contribution to GDP by valuing their contribution to national development through the care economy.

### **Women in Decision-Making**

- a) Improve women's access to decision-making positions in public entities and political parties by establishing quotas and addressing the aspects of political culture which act as deterrents to women's participation.

### **Violence against Women.**

- a) In regards to violence against women, translate de jure equality into de facto equality by holding perpetrators accountable through enforcement of existing legislation;
- f) Enact OAS MESCEVI Model legislation on Femicide across CARICOM member states;
- g) Enact OAS MESCEVI model legislation on Political Violence.

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