REPORT OF SAINT LUCIA
Implementation of the Gender Agenda in Saint Lucia

Introduction:
Saint Lucia is a member of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and has a population of approximately 164,000 (2014). The country has a system of parliamentary democracy, a female Head of State since 1997, and an economy dependent mainly on revenue from tourism, services, direct foreign investment and agricultural production. Saint Lucia is vulnerable to a number of external shocks such as unpredictable tourism arrivals and natural disasters. Added to that, the existing high public debt and debt servicing obligations make it difficult for the country to effectively respond to social development programmes. The Division of Gender Relations is mandated to facilitate an environment to address gender imbalances through policies, programmes and other initiatives promoting equity and social justice. Its programme strategies include:

- Developing and implementing programmes to increase capacity and awareness on gender issues
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive national response to gender-based violence
- Promoting the use of gender statistics/data to inform programmes and project development
- Supporting other agencies’/institutions’ programmes that address gender discrimination and inequity.

The Division is presently planning for the implementation of a Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) supported project “Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Saint Lucia's National Sustainable Development Plan.” The aim of the project is to enhance the capacity of the Government of Saint Lucia to systematically address gender equality priorities in its planning and programming processes. The project is specifically aimed at building the capacity of the relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to incorporate a substantive gender dimension in the country’s National Strategic Development Plan, strategic vision and medium-term development plans. The project will include direct technical assistance (TA), as well as specific training design and delivery, which will catalyse the establishment of concrete medium-term gender equality goals, and guide the allocation of appropriate resources accordingly. It will also provide an entry point to implement some of the recommendations of the Country Gender Assessment (CGA). The CGA conducted which was conducted by the Caribbean Development Bank made recommendations concerning strategic entry points and mechanisms to promote, support and integrate gender mainstreaming initiatives in Saint Lucia, it also discussed the existing capacity and resource gaps the country faces to fully integrate gender equality concerns in its institutions, programmes, sectors and budgets.
Some key issues/challenges for gender equality and women’s rights, and some examples of public policies aimed at realising a breakthrough in Saint Lucia are highlighted as the following:

**Violence Against Women:**
Over the years significant gains have been recorded in the achievement of gender equity. However, gender-based violence including violence against women and children continues to be a major challenge to the full attainment of gender equality. National efforts to mitigate against such violence include the passage of legislation such as, the Domestic Violence Summary Proceedings Act (1994), the revision of the Criminal Code and the implementation of the Labour Code: Equality of Treatment in Employment in 2006. The social support for victims and survivors included the establishment of the Family Court in 1997 and the Women’s Support Centre in 2002 and the augmentation of services provided by other State agencies, such as the establish of the Vulnerable Persons Unit in the Royal Saint Lucia Police Force with specific responsibility for investigating sexual offences and child sexual abuse cases. A number of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations, including among others the St. Lucia Crisis Centre, PROSAF and Raise Your Voice Saint Lucia also joined in providing support.

Gender-based violence has continued unabated despite these and many other efforts made over the past decades to address the issue. There continues to be growing concern about the high incidence of reported cases of violence against women and children in Saint Lucia. Of particular concern is the alarming number of reported cases of rape of females of various ages in communities around the country.

The National Dialogue on Violence Against Women and Children was organized to bring national focus on this problem, to highlight the response of State Agencies and Civil Society Organizations, to identify existing gaps and explore appropriate strategies to address these gaps. **The National Dialogue comprised a series of four (4) live in studio audience television programmes focusing on the following:**

1. Overview of the problem
2. Legislative Provisions
3. Social Support Services
4. Victim Support

Additionally several community-based and faith-based organizations as well as ministerial departments host empowerment seminars, community outreaches, exhibitions, displays and marches against violence. Such initiatives are supported by the Division of Gender Relations and the staff of the Women’s Support Centre through presentations and awareness training on gender-based violence. Special effort was made to include Trafficking in Persons awareness in these presentations. They also provide counselling services through one-to-one counselling, make referrals, and provide educational literature at their booth during such activities. Some of the training activities include outreach programmes within communities island wide, health centres, schools, churches, radio programmes and upon requests by other organizations. The Centre also provides training to police recruits to inform them of the Protocol which guides the referral of clients to the Women’s Support Centre as a component of their training curriculum. Additionally all police stations were provided with a copy of the Protocol during an intensive island wide training programme. The Centre also has a 24 hour toll free hotline for
victims or potential victims. Recent efforts have been made to make this hotline more easily accessible to the public using either of the two main telecommunications service providers. Officers attached to the Vulnerable Persons Unit in the Royal St. Lucia Police Force underwent training held locally and regionally in the following areas.

1. **Training in Sexual Offense Investigation.** Some areas covered include:
   - Victim focused interviewing techniques
   - Collection and Compilation of evidence
2. **Juvenile Justice Reform** though a project which is currently being implemented in Saint Lucia.
3. **Mediation Training.**
4. **Domestic Violence Awareness Courses,** which includes a Train-the-Trainer to increase capacity within the police force.

However the capacity for these police officers to respond adequately is not sustained because although many officers have benefitted from the training several of them have been re-assigned to other departments within the police force.

**Economic Empowerment:**
The multiple roles, including the disproportionate responsibility for caregiving, often assumed early in life has contributed to limited access to various opportunities for women to pursue education and skills training and participation in the job market. The rate of unemployment amongst women is slightly higher than that of men with 24.7 % of women unemployed compared to 20.1 % of men.

Two thirds of micro-enterprises in St. Lucia are owned by women (67%). However, there is generally no growth or business expansion, and low competitiveness and profitability because in addition to the similarity among most of these female owned business, there is also a tendency for women not to take business associated risks. According to the Situational Analysis of Gender Issues Affecting the Services Sector in Saint Lucia (2015) the businesses supported by the Small Enterprise Development Unit, with mostly female owners are mainly in services-accommodation and food services (tourism), education and human health and social work. This is reflective of traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

The analysis also highlights, inequalities exists in access to finance such as mortgages and start-up funding for business. There is a lack of knowledge on the part of women on procedures for taxation, social security, business registration and incorporation. While many small business women tend to remain within “their safe zones”, some have limited access to finance because of traditional patterns of ownership, such as, the lack of land register and title deeds, which places them at a disadvantage in providing collateral to secure loans from traditional financial institutions. There is also the issue of poor management practices including a lack of business records and plans. Such constraints also restrict their ability to actively seek concessions, and participate in regional and international business expansion.

In light of the above, among others, a study on “Females and Entrepreneurship in Saint Lucia” was conducted in 2015. The study was intended to contribute to economic growth and development of the country through improved productivity and competitiveness within the private sector. This study also highlighted disparities in receiving financial assistance for both business start-up and conducting daily business operations. Male business owners were more than twice
as likely to receive financial assistance (28.3%) from banks to manage their daily operations when compared to their female counterparts (12.5%). Recommendations coming out of this study were presented at the individual, institutional and macro structural levels. Individual level recommendations highlighted strategies the individual entrepreneurs and businesses can adopt to reduce obstacles to business start-up and growth or expansion. Institutional level recommendations focused on systems and mechanisms that the various supporting agencies can in order to facilitate Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Saint Lucia. The macro structural level recommendations focused on broad national interventions and policies that create or facilitate an enabling business environments for SMEs. The recommendations also included interventions for more gender favourable outcomes.

Skills Training

A variety of services and training are provided at the National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) in the areas of Career Counselling, Technical Vocational Skills, Job Search Workshop and Job Attachment and Placement. Of the four hundred and fifty-two (452) trainees enrolled at the NSDC one hundred and seventy-nine (179) were enrolled under the National Apprenticeship Project (NAPP) and fifty-six (56) under NAPP in House Training and two hundred and twenty-seven (227) were enrolled in the Single Mothers In Life Enhancing Skills (SMILES). Seven hundred and thirty-four (734) graduated from the various NSDC programmes of which sixty-three percent (63%) were females and thirty-seven percent (37%) were males.

In 2013/14, the Centre for Adolescent Rehabilitation and Education (CARE) which provides technical and vocational training for adolescents of school age at five (5) Centres had an enrolment of one hundred and twenty-nine (129) students of which twenty-one percent (21%) were females.

National Enrichment and Learning Programme (NELP) offers a variety of technical/vocational, literacy and academic courses in Cake Decorating, Carpentry, Flower Arranging, Electrical Installation, Basic Literacy and Pre-CXC Mathematics at fifteen (15) different centres on the island. These programmes are not only provide women with employable skills, they also provide entry level training for entrepreneurship.

Conclusion:

Gender equality is a human rights issue which is necessary for the country’s sustainable social, economic and political development. Following the June 2016 general elections the Division of Gender Relations was reassigned to the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, thus presenting new opportunities for the necessary institutional changes and reforms to more adequately address gender inequalities in the pursuit of social justice in Saint Lucia.