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**GENDER EQUALITY, POVERTY AND ACHIEVEMENT
OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)
IN THE CARIBBEAN SUBREGION**

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ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	Antenatal Clinic
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
ARV	Antiretroviral
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CFNI	Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute
COHSOD	Council for Human and Social Development
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FHH	Female-headed Households
GSLC	Guyana Survey of Living Conditions
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPCs	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IADG	Internationally Agreed Development Goals
MFB	Minimum Cost Daily Food Basket
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
GDI	Gender-Related Development Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GNP	Gross National Product
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
TT\$	Trinidad and Tobago Dollars
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women

GENDER EQUALITY, POVERTY AND ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) IN THE CARIBBEAN SUBREGION

Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are fundamentally a set of eight global goals for the achievement of basic economic and social rights for all, with time-bound targets to be achieved by the year 2015. In adopting the Millennium Declaration in 2000, the member States of the United Nations pledged to “spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.”¹ The focus of this report is on the progress made by Caribbean countries towards the achievement of Goal 1: the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; and Goal 3: the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and identifies linkages between the two goals.

While there is only one goal focusing on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, gender is included in two other goals, namely Goal 5 on maternal mortality and Goal 6 on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS). However, it has been widely acknowledged that the MDGs are gender deficient and that gender concerns need to be incorporated within all eight goals in order for their achievement to be successful. In essence, gender equality cannot be confined to one goal, since gender equality underscores and provides the *modus operandi* for accelerating the achievement of each goal.

It had been recognized that in order to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to ensure sustainable human development, the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in all respects is necessary. Unfortunately, the progress towards the achievement of gender equality has been painfully slow in almost all regions including the Caribbean subregion, and in some cases, such as women’s participation in parliament, there has been some marked regression as witnessed in the 2008 general elections in Belize, where no woman was elected to serve in parliament.

The 2008 United Nations MDG report acknowledges that limited progress has been made in empowering women and that gender inequality remained pervasive, extending beyond Goal 3. Governments were called upon to make renewed effort to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment, since the target date of 2005 had already passed.

There are many challenges facing Caribbean governments in achieving the MDG goals, particularly the achievement of gender equality. The majority of countries are lagging behind in terms of women playing an equal role in decision-making at all levels and also in terms of education, where despite women’s greater enrolment, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels, this is not translated into the empowerment expected. Further, many Caribbean women find themselves in low paying jobs and are still found in large numbers in the informal sector of the economy.

This paper reviews progress on the basis of the most recent data available from official reports and statistics with respect to monitoring implementation of the MDGs and focuses specific attention on progress linked to poverty reduction and gender equality. One of the challenges in preparing this report is the lack of reporting by the majority of Caribbean governments who have not prepared MDG country progress reports. The analysis in this paper will focus primarily on the countries that have prepared national reports, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica and Suriname as well as regional reports such as those prepared for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

¹ Secretary General of the United Nations in the Foreword to the 2008 Millennium Development Goals Report.

I. GENDER AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In 2000 the landmark Millennium Declaration and Development Goals (MDGs), was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly by all 189 United Nations member States. The Declaration is a global blueprint for action and has created a political momentum which holds great potential not only for improving the rights and empowerment of women, but more fundamentally for achieving gender equality. The targets and indicators represent concrete benchmarks to measure progress on the eight development goals.

The MDGs commit States to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways of combating poverty, hunger, disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. The acknowledgement that the achievement of women's rights and equality is central to the attainment of social and economic development is a significant accomplishment.

The MDGs are derived from the Millennium Declaration which has galvanized international efforts to strengthen cooperation to meet the needs of the world's poorest nations. The Goals are underpinned by a comprehensive framework for development emanating from agreements reached at the world summits held by the United Nations in the 1990s. They provide the blueprint for action to be taken nationally, regionally and globally to build consensus in such crucial areas as peace, security and disarmament, human rights, democracy and good governance.²

The eight MDGs – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint for tackling critical issues facing developing countries – poverty, hunger, inadequate education, gender inequality, child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation.

A full list of the MDG Goals, target and indicators can be found at the Annex, however, a shortened version of the goals and targets are presented below as follows:

**TABLE 1
THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND TARGETS**

Millennium Development Goals
Goals and Targets
<p>Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty Target 1 Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day Target 2 Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.</p>
<p>Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education Target 3 Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</p>
<p>Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women Target 4 Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p>
<p>Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality Target 5 Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</p>
<p>Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health Target 6 Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio</p>

² Jose Luis Machinea, former Executive Secretary, ECLAC in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases**Target 7** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS**Target 8** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability**Target 9** Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources**Target 10** Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation**Target 11.** Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development**Target 12** Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, nondiscriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction? both nationally and internationally)**Target 13** Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (includes tariff- and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries? exports, enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries [HIPC] and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction)**Target 14** Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.**Target 15** Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term**Target 16** In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth**Target 17** In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries**Target 18** In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies

A. Gender and the MDGs

Gender inequality remains a major obstacle to meeting the MDG targets in most developing countries. It will be impossible to achieve the goals without closing the prevailing gaps between women and men in terms of capacities, access to resources and opportunities, and vulnerability to violence and conflict.

The promotion of gender equality is understood as providing an enabling environment to ensure that women have the same social and economic opportunities as men. In the 1995 Human Development Report, two dimensions of gender equality were measured for the first time. These were the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). The GDI measures the opportunities provided to facilitate women's capabilities through access to education and health by assessing a range of indices such as life expectancy, literacy, school enrolment and income, while the GEM measures opportunities relative to women's economic and political participation.

It is within the context of the GDI and GEM that the MDG targets and indicators were developed for measuring progress. In the Caribbean subregion, there have been noticeable improvements towards the achievement of gender equality particularly in the areas of educational attainment, employment and health care, nonetheless, entrenched gender inequalities persist. During the past three decades legislative changes coupled with policy changes have resulted in a marked improvement in the situation and status of women. While the concerns of women are more visible, many challenges remain which hamper the full attainment of gender equity and equality. These are as follows:

Poverty: Women continue to be the main victims of economic and social disadvantage, expressed in the higher numbers of women living in poverty;

- Education:** In spite of educational achievements in favour of Caribbean women at secondary and tertiary level, this has not translated into the expected social and economic benefits for women;
- Politics:** Women continue to be underrepresented in the political process, and at all levels of decision-making, although there have been some moderate changes;
- Employment:** Women are segregated in the labour market in low paying jobs, particularly in the services sector in the Caribbean and are found in larger numbers than men in the informal sector of the economy, where they continue to be denied access to the benefits of social security and other social protection;
- Unpaid work:** Women continue to have greater responsibility for the care of family members and household tasks and therefore face greater constraints than men in terms of the amount of time and effort they can put into paid employment and productive work;
- Supportive Environment:** All Caribbean States have established national machineries for the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality, but they all remain under-resourced in financial and human resources. As a result, these institutions are very weak and largely ineffective; and
- Monitoring:** The lack of gender sensitive indicators, necessary for the timely monitoring and measurement of the progress in achieving the MDGs is a major challenge facing the Caribbean subregion. Despite repeated calls and commitments to collect and examine data on women's and men's unwaged work as a contribution to the domestic economy, this is still to be realized in the Caribbean subregion.

The inclusion of goals and targets in the MDGs aimed at improving the status of women must be understood within the framework of recognition at the global level that the attainment of women's rights and gender equality are fundamental to the achievement of economic and social development priorities. The MDGs provide opportunities for advancing gender-equality policy and programme initiatives in that an international enabling environment is provided to hold governments, international institutions and donor agencies accountable for gender responsive results.

What is important about the MDGs framework is that for every Goal, there is direction on gender equality that exists in the core human rights treaties. Engendering the MDGs therefore requires that ongoing connections are made between the Goals and other global agreements, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Vienna Declaration, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The majority of States are already under formal, legal obligations to realize gender equality, particularly those States that have ratified CEDAW. In this respect, CARICOM is the first region where every country has ratified the CEDAW Convention.

In keeping with their commitments to the implementation of these agreements, and in recognition of the relevance of gender to national development, CARICOM governments have all established national machineries for the advancement of women and gender equality, however, despite the espoused commitments there are still many areas of inequalities that remain problematic. The promotion of gender equality continues to be relegated to a lower level of national priority (UN, 2000b, 10) as demonstrated in the low level of resources, both financial and human, allocated to national machineries, for the advancement of the status of women and promotion of gender equality.

Problems such as the lack of resources and lack of accountability for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming mandate to ensure equity in public sector delivery at national level are obstacles to achieving Goal 3. This has emerged in many progress reports on efforts to implement these agreements. For example, the five-year review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform, held in June 2000, showed that the path to progress was one where, on the one hand, there was significant improvement in the social and economic status of women yet, on the other hand, new and emerging issues, and the lack of gender responsive policies were hampering women's progress.

As the Secretary-General's report 2005, states: 'an improved understanding of gender equality does not necessarily automatically translate into gender equality in practice'. Despite progress, the persistence of traditional and stereotypical gender roles, often reinforced by legal and/or institutional structures, impedes women's empowerment. Although positive actions have been taken in almost every country, the Secretary-General's report concludes that 'more work needs to be done, at every level, to create the enabling environment envisioned in the Platform for Action, in which women's rights are recognized as an indispensable part of human rights and women'.

The inclusion of a goal on gender equality is the result of decades of advocacy, research and coalition-building at the international level concerning actions to be taken under the global agenda for achieving gender equality and women's human rights. This goal demonstrates that the global community has accepted the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment to the development paradigm. At the centre of Goal 3 is acknowledgement that gender equality and the empowerment of women is achievable with the necessary political will and leadership.

B. Localizing the MDGs

Review in the Caribbean region articulate the fact that the MDG targets and indicators are unsuitable as universal minimum standards, and recommendations calling for the development of Caribbean specific targets and indicators to reflect the needs of the region have been proposed. CARICOM governments have acknowledged that the MDG targets and indicators in themselves are very limiting and do not represent a realistic and/or complete development plan for the region. For example, the President of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)³ suggested that some of the goals embodied in the MDGs may in their current form be inappropriate for the region. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)⁴ has also identified the limited scope of the MDGs to address problems of inequity, especially from a Caribbean gender perspective".

The common consensus in the Caribbean confirms the weakness of the gender equality goal in respect of the focus on reproductive health and on domestic violence which continue to be inherent features of Caribbean culture, serving to dis-empower women regardless of their social or economic position in society. In this context, Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment has been found to be limiting with its one target and four indicators: namely the target 'to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015'; and the indicators used to measure progress towards the goal which are: the ratio of boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; the ratio of literate women to men in the 15-24 age group; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

The strategic importance of the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment to the achievement of the MDGs, was endorsed at the April 2005 Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD). However, the meeting also highlighted the inadequacy of the targets

³ Dr. Compton Bourne in his opening address at the Regional Workshop on the MDGs, "Creating a Sustainable Framework for the Monitoring of the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the Caribbean". November, 2005 - Barbados.

⁴ Meeting on 'Developing an Agenda to Address Equity Gaps in the Caribbean SIDS', 2005 - Trinidad and Tobago.

and indicators associated with capturing the goal of women's empowerment, and recommended the identification and development of Caribbean specific indicators, particularly in relation to Goals 3 and 5, which focus on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment and reducing maternal mortality.

A number of initiatives have been adopted in the Caribbean region with the goal of integrating the MDGs into national development plans and poverty reduction strategies, but progress has been painfully slow. Progress in the development of Caribbean specific targets and indicators includes collaboration between the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the CARICOM Secretariat in the establishment of a Task force on Gender and the Poverty, emanating from the twelfth meeting of the CARICOM COHSOD in April 2005⁵ and which endorsed the view *that the MDGs should be seen as an integrated framework for development and not as a set of individual goals*. That meeting also recommended the review of the indicators with respect to their relevance for the subregion, specifically as they relate to Goal 3, and recommended the inclusion of an indicator on gender-based violence. The COHSOD also recommended that data collection systems be strengthened as a matter of priority, including those for the registration of vital statistics such as births and deaths, and called for attention to be given to the training and retention of human resources in this area.

Other initiatives include the work of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) with its member States to localize the MDGs which has been undertaken with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In addition, the CDB has collaborated with a number of agencies and the CARICOM Secretariat in the drafting of Caribbean specific targets and indicators for the region.⁶ A technical working group on the Caribbean specific MDGs was also established to review the proposed indicators for the measurement of the Caribbean specific goals and targets developed out of these initiatives. The working group presented their report to the seventeenth Meeting of COHSOD in November 2008, outlining revisions to the indicators proposed by the CDB/UNDP and UNIFEM/CARICOM processes.

Among the new indicators and targets are gender specific targets relating to MDG Goal 1 – the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, which locates the household as a unit of analysis, by focusing on the *proportion of households living below the poverty line by sex of head of household; the proportion of employed living in households with a household per capita income which is below the poverty line by sex of head of household; and the proportion of households with access to electricity by sex of head of household*⁷.

The rationale for the inclusion of these CARICOM specific indicators is to focus more attention on the complex dynamics which take place within Caribbean households, given the nexus between poverty and gender. These additional indicators allow for more analysis on the use of financial and other resources at the individual and household level, since these are factors which determine the levels of poverty within a given household and will assist in providing an explanation of why some households headed by single females are more prone to poverty as opposed to other households also headed by single females, but who live above the poverty line.

With respect to MDG Goal 3, pertaining to education attainment as an avenue to propel the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the recommended indicators for the Caribbean focus on subject choices of male and female students to include the proportion of students who take mathematics and at least one science subject in examinations.

⁵ This meeting of COHSOD had as its theme – Gender and Development.

⁶ Lynette Joseph-Brown. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Borrowing Member Countries: The Role of the Special Development Fund and the Caribbean Development Bank. (Proposed Caribbean Specific MDG Targets and Indicators). 2005. CDB.

⁷ A full listing of the new targets and indicators can be found at the Annex.

With respect to employment and earnings, there is an existing indicator to measure the average earnings of men and women across industrial groupings, which will allow for the better measurement of women's share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector.

Indicators relative to the participation of women in national parliaments, provide for the measurement of women's participation in local government and also in decision-making outside of parliament.

A new target with respect to gender-based violence was added as recommended by the twelfth COHSOD, with six new indicators. The target is to reduce, by 2015, all forms of gender-based violence, and the indicators seek to measure the incidence of reported physical abuse by sex of the abused and selected major crimes by age and sex of the arrested offender and victim; the age and sex of persons experiencing physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner; the percentage of sexual assault cases completed in the court process in the previous 12 months; and the average time it takes to process a sexual assault case through the courts.

C. Poverty in the Caribbean

Poverty is defined in terms of deficiency, namely the access to income or financial resources and in relation to capabilities, that is, the capacity to be and to do a variety of things. Given the complex and multidimensional nature of poverty, distinctions are made with respect to relative and absolute poverty. For example, absolute poverty is manifested when people do not have access to the necessary resources to support a minimum of good physical health, often expressed in terms of nutritional levels, to enable them to lead full and productive lives.

Another absolute measure of poverty often referred to as the indigence line, seeks to establish a level below which a household will not have the ability to maintain a healthy existence. The indigence line established the minimum food requirements necessary for existence and measures the monetary value of the minimum food and non-food items required by a household to fulfil its basic needs. In the Caribbean this indigence line is based on estimates of food requirements calculated for adults by the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI).

A further method of defining poverty relates to *basic needs* necessary for the attainment of a satisfactory quality of life. This approach, introduces a further set of requirements relating to social services like health care, access to education, communications and protection of the law. Poverty therefore relates not only to the absence of food, but also to access to goods and services deemed necessary for adequate functioning in society. Poverty rates (Table 2) are quite high in some of the Caribbean countries, with Suriname, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic reporting poverty rates of 76.5%, 75% and 44.9%, respectively, with the majority of the "poor" being also classified as extremely poor.

TABLE 2
INDICATORS OF POVERTY IN THE CARIBBEAN

Countries	Population 2004 (000s)	Year of Poverty and Inequality Estimates	Poverty Rate % of Population	Indigence Rate % of Population	Poverty Gap (% of Poverty Line)
Anguilla	12	2002	21	2	6.9
Antigua & Barbuda	73	2006	18.4		
Bahamas	317	2001	9.3		
Barbados	271	1997	13.9	1	2.3
Belize	261	2002	33.5	10.8	11.1
British Virgin Islands	21	2002	22	1	4.1
Cuba	11338	1999	20		4.3
Dominica	79	2002	39	15	10.2
Dominican Republic	8819	2002	44.9	20.3	20.5
Grenada	80	1999	32.1	12.9	15.3
Guyana	767	1999	35	20.7	16.2
Haiti	8988	2001	75	56	
Jamaica	2676	2005	12.7		
Saint Lucia	150	2006	28.8	7.1	8.6
St. Kitts		2000	30.5		
Nevis		2000	32		
St. Vincent & Grenadines	121	1996	37.5	25.7	12.6
Suriname	439	1993	76.5	63.1	
Trinidad and Tobago	1307	2005	16.7	11.2	7.3

Source: ECLAC: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective
CDB: Economic growth, poverty and income inequality (2008)

Notwithstanding the fact that several countries in the Caribbean subregion have shown marked improvements in their living conditions ranking very highly in the Human Development Index (HDI)⁸, significant pockets of poverty still prevail in a number of countries, notably, Guyana, Haiti, Suriname and Jamaica. Countries with poverty rates ranging between 25% and 70% are Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, while those with rates of 20% to 29% are Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands. (Bourne, 2005).

The incidence of poverty in the Caribbean subregion can be assessed from surveys of living conditions⁹ conducted in a number of countries during the period 1995 to 2002, and a series of Country Poverty Assessments, undertaken by the CDB during the period 2005-2007. However, analysis of this data indicates the use of disparate methods and sources of collection, which limit use of the data and preclude comparison among countries. There are nonetheless some characteristic features of poverty in the Caribbean subregion, revealing considerable variation and unevenness among the countries. For example, poverty is more prevalent in rural than in urban areas, with the exception of Barbados, where, urban poverty is more highly visible (UNDP, 2004).

In several instances in the Caribbean poverty is driven by external economic shocks related to disadvantageous trade policies. For example, the removal of trade preferences for bananas, which has resulted in adverse economic shocks for banana exporting countries in the subregion, but more particularly for Dominica, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where employment and

⁸ The HDI combines country level data on income, life expectancy and educational attainment. These are seen as a “measure of empowerment” and the foundation that would enable people to gain access to other opportunities.

⁹ Surveys of Living Conditions measure income or monetary poverty, as well as non-income poverty.

incomes plummeted in the latter half of the 1990s. This trend was reported by communities in Saint Lucia¹⁰ which attributed their poverty to the decline in the banana industry and the resulting unemployment.

A trait to be borne in mind is the enormous heterogeneity of poverty levels across the countries of the subregion, as well as the sharp differences among their levels of per capita income (ECLAC, 2005). This is more commonly referred to as relative poverty, where poverty levels vary between societies and within societies. For example, on the basis of their per capita income levels, Caribbean countries for the most part would be rated as middle income countries, therefore the international poverty line classification of US\$1.00 a day is deemed of little relevance as a measure of absolute poverty, because the cut-off point is too low (Bourne, 2005). Furthermore data on the percentage of the population living below the poverty line of US\$1 is not readily available in the Caribbean. Application of this measure produces rates of extreme poverty of less than 3% in Guyana and Jamaica, which clearly do not tally with these countries' level of economic and social development.

D. Poverty and Gender

Women play a pivotal role in the elimination of hunger and malnutrition and the eradication of poverty. Therefore a key element in any strategy to eliminate malnutrition and reach women and children is to target the poor for policy interventions. In the process of enhancing social and economic development, a poverty-oriented policy is a gender-oriented policy. (Johnson 1998, ACC/SCN).

Female poverty in the Caribbean region remains disguised and this has an adverse effect on their ability to care for their children. One of the priority areas for the region, coming out of the Fourth World Conference on Women, continues to be the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women (CARICOM, 2000).

Studies on gender and poverty have identified the relationship between women as heads of households and poverty outcomes, citing the fact that female-headed households (FHH) are more likely to be poorer than male-headed households. This is critical for the Caribbean, where the data show that there are large numbers of female-headed households. Although data from standard household surveys are, for the most part, inadequate for examining gender differences in poverty, novel approaches have been developed that show various ways in which existing data can be used to document disparities in poverty between women and men.

One of the dominant theses used to explain the interactions between gender inequality and poverty is the *feminization of poverty*, which seeks to provide an understanding of the differences between male and female poverty. The primary determinant of poverty in this context is the prevalence of female-headed households which, when compared to other households, are more likely to be poorer. Evidence from a number of country poverty assessments in the Caribbean has found that cases of chronic and/or long-term poverty was strongly associated with single parent female-headed households but suggests that in many instances the cycle of poverty was more likely to be found in multi-generational households, in which poverty had been repeated over a number of generations.

Among the other factors associated with the *feminization of poverty* in the Caribbean were early childbearing amongst females, low levels of education, unemployment and low wages associated with lack of marketable skills. These factors contributed to the perpetuation of poverty and growth in the number of households headed by single females. However, the female-headed household and poverty

¹⁰ Trade adjustment and Poverty in Saint Lucia 2005/06. Volume IV: The Participatory Assessment (Voices of the Poor). Final Report, June 2007. Kairi Consultants.

nexus has been challenged with many pointing to the fact that the existence of female-headed households may not provide adequate explanations for female poverty.

The dynamic process of gender relations within households has been identified as another method for assessing gender related poverty, but it is a rather complex process requiring ongoing research and availability of data from time use surveys. This is critical in understanding the relationship between gender and poverty because poverty indicators used in the Caribbean do not make distinctions between the gender inequalities that exist within a household. In fact, most indicators are based on the assumption that the household is a single unit, sharing equal resources, within the household and between household members.

Research indicates that social and economic inequalities between the sexes and different age groups exist within the household which tend to fuel gendered poverty, for example, females generally tend to have more responsibility for household chores, in what has been recently coined the “care economy”. Kabeer (2003) states that women’s reproductive work (care for child and elderly) is a tax on their labour that they have to pay before undertaking income generating or expenditure saving activities.

Analysis of poverty as a gendered experience, however, facilitates the inclusion of all poor households, regardless of headship. Analysis of the gendered impact of poverty provides understanding of the differences not only between women and men, but also explains how women from different social and economic circumstances experience poverty based on differences in care work responsibilities and burdens.

Kabeer argues that while a disproportionate number of female-headed households are indeed poor, the accepted conceptual framework of gender and poverty is seriously flawed, and outlines the need to understand the complex processes leading to female headship, particularly in the Caribbean. She cites the example of Jamaica where despite the prevalence of female headship, the corresponding level of poverty in these households was not evident. In fact, the evidence suggests that the presence of a male in the household may result in making it poorer. Similarly, an earlier study (IFAD, 2000), found that the poverty levels exhibited in FHHs in Grenada were only slightly higher than poverty experienced in male-headed households.

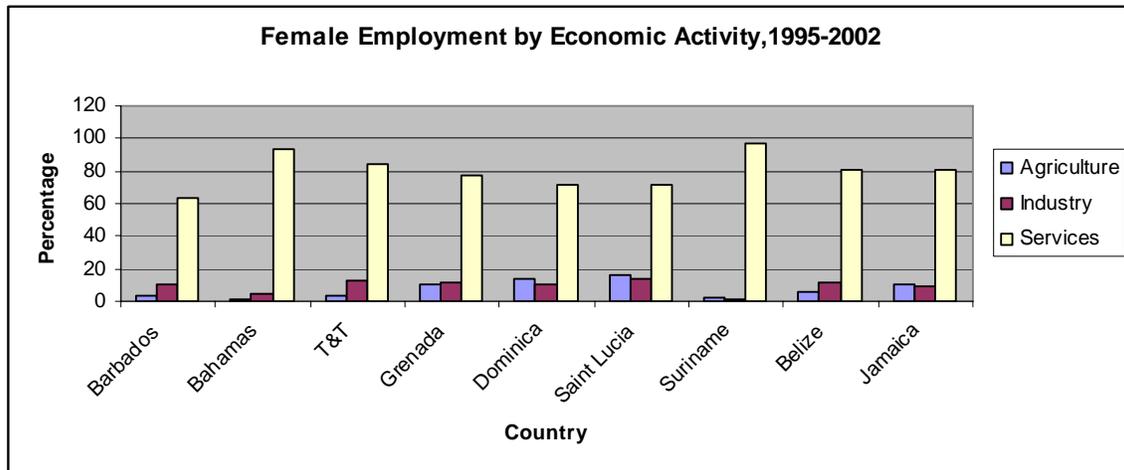
TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN AND MEN HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS
BY MARITAL STATUS, 1990/1991

Country	Sex of Head	Marital Status			
		Never Married	Married	Previously Married/ Separated	Not Stated
Barbados	Women	53	15	28	3
	Men	32	55	10	3
Belize	Women	48	23	29	0
	Men	32	63	5	0
St Vincent & Grenadines	Women	68	14	18	<1
	Men	49	45	6	<1
Trinidad & Tobago	Women	36	22	41	1
	Men	22	70	7	1

Source: Women and Men in the Caribbean Community: Facts and Figures, 1980-2001, CARICOM Secretariat, Georgetown, Guyana, 2003.

Female poverty in the region is also attributed to inequality, especially in the work place, and is linked to the type of job and nature of employment that women are able to secure. Employed women are more likely to be found in the lowest quintile in terms of wages and salaries and they have higher rates of unemployment. While there has been commendable advancement in females' access to all levels of education, there has been no corresponding real gain in the pay differential between the sexes- in fact, *progress has stalled or even reversed in employment-related indicators* (CARICOM, 2003).

FIGURE 1
FEMALE EMPLOYMENT BY ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, 1995-2002



Source: Human Development Report 2005

Another common assumption is the association between female poverty and the level of female unemployment. Unemployment rates among women in the Caribbean are higher than among economically active men in the majority of the islands¹¹ (ECLAC, 2005) and this has its obvious implications on poverty among women. However, unemployment rates do not sufficiently capture the extent of female poverty in the region. Andaiye (2003), argues that female poverty can exist even when the woman is in full time (low paying) employment. Consequently, a comparison between women's and men's earnings rather than economic participation will be more useful as an indicator of female poverty in the region. For instance, women in Barbados earn as little as 61% of the income that their male counterparts; and in Trinidad and Tobago the earnings of women are even less. Within the context of the MDGs, it is important that serious attention is paid to the gendered nature of poverty and the concomitant effects, which should be viewed as cross cutting issues, not only in relation to goals one and three but across all eight goals.

¹¹ Anguilla, Bahamas, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Netherlands Antilles, Belize, Saint Lucia, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica and Dominica).

II. ASSESSMENT OF MDG REPORTING IN THE CARIBBEAN

A. Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

The eradication of poverty and hunger throughout the world is the first MDG goal. To achieve this goal, governments are expected to halve the proportion of their population whose income is less than US\$1.00 a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger between 1990 and 2015. Among the indicators to measure progress is the proportion of the population living below one dollar per day; poverty gap ratio; the shares of poorest quintile in national consumption; the prevalence of underweight children under five years of age; and the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption.

Table 4 below shows that in Antigua and Barbuda the poverty index estimated the share of the poorest quintile in national consumption as 12.0%. Available data shows that with respect to indicator 4, there is a low prevalence rate of underweight children in Antigua and Barbuda. The highest is 1.08% in 2001, the lowest 0.47% for the reporting period (MDG Status Report 2004 Antigua and Barbuda: 2).

TABLE 4
POVERTY INDEX AND UNDERWEIGHT CHILDREN - ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Goals/indicators	Unit	1990/91	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Goal 1: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger									
Share of poorest quintile in national consumption	%	12.0	...	...	...	...
Prevalence of underweight children (<5 years)	%	...	0.60	0.47	0.87	0.85	0.62	0.90	0.08

Source: Government of Antigua and Barbuda, MDG Status Report 2004.

According to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda the country is on track in achieving Goal 1 by 2015, yet missing data to assess progress remains a challenge, especially the lack of information concerning indicators 1, 2, 3 and 5 (MDG Monitor 2007). In order to address this lack of available data, the Ministry of Housing, Culture & Social Transformation is currently conducting a National Poverty Assessment/Survey of Living Conditions in cooperation with the CDB in order to assess the socio-economic situation of the population and to measure accurately progress reached in terms of achieving the MDGs, especially with regard to Goal 1. According to the ministry, the absence of such critical data has impeded proper planning, formulation of social policies and appropriate programmes and legislation to improve the lives of the population. The ongoing Survey of Living Conditions (SLCs) is expected to improve this lack of data.

The 2007 Guyana MDG report records substantial progress in the reduction of poverty at the national level between 1993 and 1999. During this period absolute poverty declined by 8%, from 43% to 35% and so did the poverty gap, which measures the depth of poverty. The poverty gap declined from 16.2% to 12.4%. These improvements in addressing poverty in Guyana were attributed to the growth in the economy which grew at an annual rate of %.

However, despite these reductions, there has not been a significant change in poverty levels amongst the rural population in Guyana, particularly in the interior. According to the Guyana Survey of Living Conditions (GSLC), a total of 68% of households in the rural interior and 30% in the rural

coastal areas were living in absolute poverty. The absolute poverty line which included expenditure for food and non-food items was established at G\$7,639 per month, the equivalent of US\$550 per year or US\$1.40 per day, whereas the more critical poverty line, below which individuals cannot afford food to survive was established at G\$5,463 per person, the equivalent of US\$364 per year or US\$1.00 a day.¹²

The Guyana economy has stagnated since 2000, suggesting that the growth-poverty relationship has worsened, however this cannot be verified because there has been no poverty survey since 2000 according to the MDG report of 2007.

Efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition in Guyana have also been yielding results. Available data shows a decline in the malnutrition rates found in children under five. According to the 2007 MDG report, “*when compared to the baseline data from 1995, Guyana has already met the target of halving the proportion suffering from hunger.*” (pp. 10). The Guyana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) for 2006 noted that 12% of children under the age of five were underweight or too thin for their age and 14% were stunted or too short for their age¹³. These differences were more marked in the interior with 21% of children being stunted when compared with 11% for children living in coastal areas.

While the nutrition of children is closely linked to poverty and decisions by mothers or other female care-givers, there is no gender analysis of this correlation, although the MDG refers to government-led initiatives to address the issue of hunger through programmes directed at the nutrition of expectant mothers and children. Among the programmes implemented to combat hunger are two school feeding programmes to improve performance in the classroom, namely a “Milk and Biscuit” programme; and a “Hot Meals” programme for the hinterland regions both of which are managed by the Ministry of Education. However the effectiveness of these programmes is limited by challenges in terms of coverage and sustainability.

Overall Guyana has made reasonable progress towards achieving the MDGs, in particular Goals 1 and 3. Still, more effort is needed in order to eliminate gender disparities and empower women in Guyana. Also, the absence of a poverty survey in recent years makes it difficult to determine the current status of poverty and hunger (especially female poverty), considering in particular the stagnation of the economy since 2000 and the effects of the 2005/2006 floods.

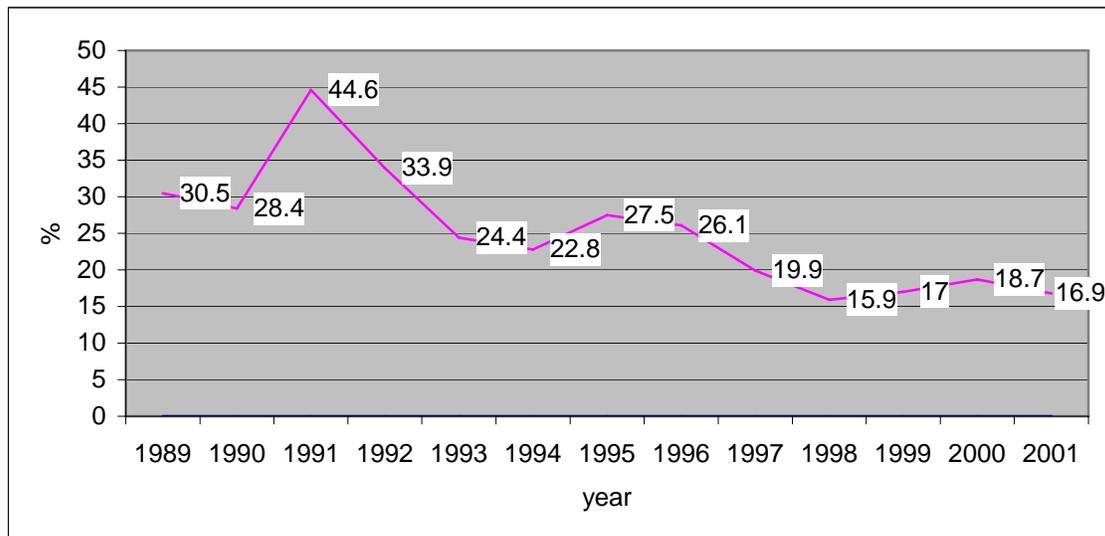
In Jamaica, progress was more noticeable in that the proportion of people living below the poverty line fell from 28.4% in 1990 to 16.9% for 2001, which was considered a success. Jamaica therefore reported that the country was on target to halve by 2015, the number of persons who live below the poverty line.

The poverty gap ratio has fallen from 7.9% in 1990 to 4.6% in 2001. The poorest quintile has steadily had 6% of national consumption; therefore it can be assumed that there is no redistributive effect among the quintiles. Malnutrition levels have also improved in the reporting period, with the best results in 1999. A slight increase can be deducted from 1999 to 2001. Overall Jamaica made good progress in reducing poverty and kept it fairly stable, achieving an improvement for almost all indicators. Yet, the malnutrition rate has increased slightly in recent years (Millennium Development Goals, Jamaica 2004).

¹² Guyana – The impact on Sustainable Livelihoods caused by the December 2005 and February 2006 Floods, pp. 17. ECLAC.

¹³ Guyana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. Summary Report 2006, pp. 5.

FIGURE 2
PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS LIVING ON AND BELOW THE POVERTY LINE
IN JAMAICA, 1989 TO 2001



Source: Government of Jamaica, Millennium Development Goals Jamaica 2004

The success recorded by Jamaica in reducing its poverty levels has been attributed to the implementation of policies and programmes such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme. This programme seeks to reduce by 50% the number of persons living below the poverty line in targeted communities and seeks to promote economic growth and social development. Programmes include the Indigent Housing Programme, the food stamp programme, the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, projects to electrify rural communities, and the introduction of primary school programmes.

The Government of Jamaica in 2000, embarked on a reform of the social safety net to increase its efficiency and effectiveness and ultimately attain the MDGs. An essential component of this reform was the merger of three existing income support benefits, the food stamp, the old age and incapacity allowance and the outdoor poor relief programme, into a single conditional cash transfer programme called the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH). The programme seeks to promote human capital development especially among children and young people as a means of breaking the poverty cycle. Preliminary evaluation indicated early successes in targeting the poorest households for benefits, and in particular increased school attendance among children in beneficiary families and a reduction in poverty levels. The programme was therefore deemed to have had a positive impact on school attendance, overall poverty had fallen from 19.1% in 2002 to 16.1% in 2004. This has contributed significantly to the country being on track to achieve Millennium Goal 1.

The Belize report points out that certain population groups are affected by poverty more than others, such as people living in rural areas, indigenous people and children.¹⁴ Yet, the report did not take the particular situation of women into account. The report did not record an improvement in the proportion of the population living in poverty between 2000 and 2003, which remained at around 33%. This means that one of three Belizians live below the poverty line. The poverty gap ratio increased from 8.7 in 2000 to 11.1 in 2003. Data for indicators 3 and 4 were not available.

¹⁴ Millennium Development Goals Report – Belize 2004, pp. 5-7.

TABLE 5
POVERTY RATIOS - BELIZE

Indicators	1990	2000*	2003**	2015
Percentage of population below national poverty line	n.a.	33.0	33.5	16.8
Poverty Gap Ratio	n.a.	8.7	11.1	5.5

*Based on household survey conducted in 1995

**Based on household survey data conducted in 2002

Source: Government of Belize, Millennium Development Goals Report – Belize 2004.

B. Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

1. Gender Equality in Education

Education has been identified not only as a tool of development but is seen as a critical foundation for its achievement and similarly for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Enormous social and economic benefits can be realized by educating girls, because educated females potentially possess greater earning capacity and have increased opportunities to become involved in public life. It is for this reason that MDG Goal 3 has as one of its targets, the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary level education by the end of 2005, and at all levels of education by 2015.

In the literature on growth, the role of human capital in fostering economic development has long been acknowledged, hence the importance attached to the achievement of tangible progress in key education indicators as one of the essential attributes of human capital and a core feature of the MDGs. Studies on economic growth and education have indicated that the failure to invest in the education of girls contributes to the lowering of the Gross National Product (GNP)¹⁵, which measures the total dollar value of all goods and services produced for consumption in each country during a particular time period.

Throughout the Caribbean, the ratio for secondary education is more in favour of females, where more girls than boys are enrolled. This phenomenon is a general trend that can be detected in most Caribbean countries (UNDP 2004b, pp. 27). This development has implications for public policy especially when analysis of progress in this is cross referenced to indicator 11, the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, and 12, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament. The available data shows that despite women's higher education, men still dominate positions of power and decision-making.

A gender analysis of available data on educational attainment suggests the need for more indicators in measuring the gender disparities in education. This is premised on a number of factors including the correlation between the head of household and their highest level of educational attainment, as well as the employment status of the mother,¹⁶ (who may also be the head of household), and the implications for student performance. It has been found that children from households with working mothers were more likely to not only perform better educationally, but were also more likely to continue their education beyond the secondary level. This was attributed to the availability of greater financial resources which could be invested in their children's education and also the ability to assist their children with making educational choices because of their own educational attainment.

¹⁵ MDG Task Force on Gender Equality: taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women. 2005. UN Millennium Project, pp. 47.

¹⁶ Sudhanshu Handa. World Development Vol. 22 #10, pp. 1539.

While parity in enrolment at the primary level has not been reached, the available data shows slight increments. In Antigua and Barbuda data for the period 1990 to 2001 indicates that the primary enrolment ratio remained at less than 1% in the reporting period with 0.97 in 1990 and in 2001 with only 0.87 (Table 6), while in Belize the ratio of girls to boys in primary education recorded a slight increase from 93.5 in 1990 to 95.9 in 2003.

At the tertiary level, the ratio even doubled in favour of female students. The report indicates that it is unlikely that Antigua and Barbuda would reach gender parity by 2005, which has been the case at the time of writing this paper in 2008. In contrast, the Guyana report indicates, that the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary and tertiary education was close to equal, nonetheless, there was also indications of a slight decline in female representation from 1996 to 2003. This has the possibility of impacting on indicator 10, the ratio of literate women to men, but there is no data available to verify this.

TABLE 6
GENDER EQUALITY INDICATORS – ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Goals/Indicators	Unit	1990/91	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empowerment									
Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education									
--Primary	%	0.97	0.88	0.91	0.92	0.88	0.92	0.92	0.87
--secondary		1.01	...	1.22	1.36	1.28	1.31	1.31	1.14
--Tertiary		2.02	1.86	1.50
Ratio of literate females to males of 15-24 year olds	%	1.21	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Women in wage employment – non-agricultural sector	%	47.7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	%	2.8	11.1	11.1	11.1	11.1	11.1	8.3	11.1

Source: Government of Antigua and Barbuda, MDG Status Report 2004.

Available data for indicator 10 shows a literacy rate amongst 15-24 years old in Antigua and Barbuda of 1.21 for 1990. The lack of data does not allow for the measurement of progress or development during the period 1991 to 2001. According to the report, due to the high attendance of girls to boys in the secondary and tertiary levels of education, it can be assumed that the ratio of literate females to males would follow this pattern.

TABLE 7
GENDER EQUALITY INDICATORS - BELIZE

Indicators	1990	2000	2003	2015
Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	93.5	94.3	95.9	100
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education	112.0	108.6	108.7	100
Ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education	n.a.	133.3*	159.5	100
Ratio of literate women to men 15 – 24 year olds	99.0	100**	100.7	100
Share of women in wage employment in non-agriculture sector	37.0***	38.1	39.2	n.a.
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	5.4	6.8	7.0***	n.a.

Source: Government of Belize, Millennium Development Goals Report – Belize 2004.

The ratio of girls to boys in primary education has increased slightly in Belize from 93.5 in 1990 to 95.9 in 2003. Parity has not been reached yet. The ratio for secondary education is slightly in favour for girls, in tertiary level the ratio even reaches 1.59. This phenomenon is a general trend that can be detected in most of the Caribbean countries (UNDP 2004b, pp. 27). This development is interesting in conjunction with indicators 11 and 12 where, despite women's higher education, men still dominate positions of power.

Available data for Guyana indicates that government has achieved some measure of success in increasing enrollment rates at primary and secondary levels and in reducing illiteracy rates. Table 8 indicates that although the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education is close to equal, there has been a slight decline in female ratios for secondary and tertiary level education during the period 1996 to 2003 suggesting a decline in the number of females participating in higher education.

TABLE 8
GENDER EQUALITY INDICATORS - GUYANA

MDG Indicators	Baseline	Latest Available
Target 4: eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015		
9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary (P), secondary (s) and tertiary (T) education	P.0.96 (1996) S.1.06 (1996) T.1.22 (1996)	0.96 (2003) 1.02 (2003) 1.03 (2003)
10. Ratio of literate females to males of 15-24 year olds	n/a	n/a
11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector	38% (1992)	35% (2002)
12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	18.5% (1992)	29% (2006)

Source: Education Digest of Guyana 1995/1996; Bureau of Statistics, Census Reports (Cited in the Guyana Millennium Development Goals Report 2007; pp. 15).

The data in Table 9 reveals a gender disparity in the secondary and tertiary levels with advantage for the girls. This follows a general pattern in the subregion. With reforms that encourage male academic achievements, Jamaica proposes to reduce the existing disparity (Millennium Development Goals Jamaica 2004). In terms of literacy, available data shows that females in the 15-24 year age group have a slightly higher level of literacy than males in the same age group in Jamaica.

TABLE 9
RATIO GIRLS: BOYS IN PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY LEVEL

Year	Primary Level	Secondary Level	Tertiary Level
1990	0.99	1.07	Na
1991	N/a	N/a	Na
1992	0.95	1.05	Na
1993	0.96	1.08	Na
1994	0.96	1.04	Na
1995	0.97	1.07	Na
1996	0.96	1.09	1.75
1997	0.96	1.06	1.92
1998	0.97	1.03	1.91
1999	0.97	1.03	2.07
2000	0.96	1.03	2.06
2001	0.96	1.03	1.99

Source: Government of Jamaica, Millennium Development Goals Jamaica 2004

2. Share of Women in Wage Employment in the Non-Agricultural Sector

The persistent inequalities in the situation of women and the differences between women and men in employment together with the discrimination faced by women have been identified as obstacles to the achievement of gender equality and to decent work for all.¹⁷ Caribbean women have higher participation rates in the economy than women in some regions, such as Latin America and North America, however this greater share of women's wage employment in the non-agricultural sector has not improved their status in the labour market, which remains significantly inferior to that of men. Women in the Caribbean are found predominantly in the services sector with the exception of Belize and Dominica where they are still found in the agricultural sector.

The employment status of women has been linked to poverty because of the persistent low earnings accorded to women. Available data shows that women earn less than men and unless the earnings of women are improved we will continue to witness the poverty exhibited in poor households throughout the Caribbean will continue. *“Women’s work, both paid and unpaid, is critical to the survival and security of poor households and important route by which households escape poverty. Paid work is critical to women’s empowerment. Yet, a range of gender inequalities pervade labour markets around the world and must be addressed if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met”*.¹⁸

The Caribbean MDG reports unfortunately reflect the global situation where for the most part women's share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector has been declining due to a number of factors, including economic recession. In many instances this has resulted in an increased burden for women's work in the care economy because of a reduction in social spending for social services, such as health and social security.

Table 10 below shows significant gender differences in the economically active population in the Caribbean.¹⁹ As the data show, women are represented in large numbers in the economically inactive population, while men dominate the economically active population. This supports the view that women's and men's participation in the labour force is different. Women still have to reconcile family responsibilities and market work and they are employed in different jobs and occupations than men, often with lower wages. Women also spend more time on unpaid work than men, as the figures for the economically inactive population demonstrates.

¹⁷ Organization of American States. Gender Equality for Decent Work. 2007, pp. 4.

¹⁸ UN Task Force on Gender Equality. Millennium Report 2005, pp. 88.

¹⁹ The economically active population refers to all persons of either sex above a specified age, who supply their labour for the production of economic goods and services.

TABLE 10
PERCENTAGE COMPOSITION OF THE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION
15 YEARS AND OVER: 2001-2005 IN THE CARIBBEAN

Country	Year	Total Population 15++			Economically Active Population			Economically Inactive Population		
		Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Antigua and Barbuda	2001	54	46	100	50	50	100	66	34	100
Bahamas	2001	52	48	100	49	51	100	63	37	100
	2002	52	48	100	49	51	100	62	38	100
	2004	52	48	100	49	51	100	63	37	100
Barbados	2001	53	47	100	48	52	100	63	37	100
	2002	53	47	100	48	52	100	62	38	100
Belize	2001	51	49	100	34	66	100	74	26	100
	2002	51	49	100	33	67	100	75	25	100
Dominica	2001	50	50	100	39	61	100	65	35	100
Grenada	2001	50	50	100	41	59	100	53	35	100
Guyana	2002	50	50	100	31	69	100	76	24	100
Jamaica	2001	51	49	100	44	56	100	63	37	100
	2002	51	49	100	45	55	100	62	38	100
	2005	51	49	100	44	56	100	63	37	100
Montserrat	2001	43	57	100	45	55	100	28	72	100
St Kitts & Nevis	2001	46	54	100	46	54	100	43	57	100
Saint Lucia	2001	43	57	100	44	56	100	37	63	100
	2002	47	53	100	45	55	100	55	45	100
	2004	46	54	100	44	56	100	55	45	100
St. Vincent and The Grenadines	2001	37	63	100	38	62	100	33	67	100
Suriname	2004	37	62	100	35	65	100	53	47	100
Trinidad and Tobago	2001	38	62	100	37	63	100	51	49	100
	2002	39	61	100	37	63	100	55	45	100
	2005	41	59	100	40	60	100	58	42	100
Associate Members										
Anguilla	2001	47	53	100	47	53	100	49	51	100
Turks and Caicos Islands	2001	44	56	100	43	57	100	51	49	100

Source: Adapted from Table 4.3 in Women and Men in the Caribbean Community: Facts and Figures, 1998-2005 CARICOM Community Secretariat, Statistics Sub-programme, May 2008. pp. 15-17

For example, the 2007 Guyana MDG report shows a decline in the number of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, although it did indicate that there is now a stronger presence of women in key political positions.

On the other hand, census data for 2002 shows a small increase in the number of economically active women, however 66% of working age women were classified as “not engaged in any type of economic activity” in comparison to 22% of working aged males. In fact males accounted for only 49.7% of working age population with a meager 5% performing home duties compared to more than 50% of females who were recorded as performing home duties/unpaid work. Clearly the higher educational attainment of females has not yet translated into the equal opportunity in the economic sector for women. Further, it is not possible to provide an accurate assessment because of the varying sources of data and the time span. This speaks to the lack of timely and good data at country level to undertake the necessary assessment of social progress.

The 2007 report indicates that there is a large and growing number of women engaged in “unwaged” home based work - an economic contribution that is often not captured in surveys. In Guyana women were recorded as being engaged in the home-based economic ventures such as hairdressing, poultry production, catering, cottage industries and dress making, which are significant financial and in-kind contributions to the household income. In addition, the critical role played by remittances in contributing to the resources of the household, particularly for women, was also identified.

Unfortunately this economic contribution by women is not always captured in surveys and belies the need for the implementation of national time use surveys to capture the time engaged in these activities and the contribution to the GNP. GNP estimates are based on growths and declines of economic activity based on the labour and production output within a country. Unpaid work related to the reproductive or domestic sphere is not included in the GNP and prevents many women from becoming economically autonomous, thus reinforcing female poverty (United Nations 2006).

In Antigua and Barbuda, women comprise 47.7% of persons employed in the non-agricultural sector according to the 1991 census of employed persons by industry and sector. It is necessary to obtain more recent data on this aspect, as this is an important indicator to monitor, in terms of assessing the links between equality in education and its translation into the equal participation of women in the economic sector, and the extent of access women have to paid jobs in areas of expanding employment (UNDP 2004b, p 30).

Belize reported a marginal increase in the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector from 37% in 1990 to 39.2% in 2003. The high level of female participation in the labour force in Jamaica is reflected in the reporting, standing at 55% in 2002. However unemployment rates have been twice that of males, e.g. 20.7% in 2002. Except for 1999 and 2001 about one third of employed women work in the non-agricultural sector.

What is evident is that women’s caring responsibility within the household continues to significantly impact on their participation rate in the economy resulting in many women engaging in home-based activities or in part-time work, or work in the informal sector, which offer no security but enables them to combine their two major responsibilities that of reproductive and productive work. Attention needs to be placed on women’s share of reproductive and caring work performed in the household. According to UNIFEM poverty can limit the ability of women to generate income, to build capacity in terms of literacy and marketable skills.

More fundamentally, there is need for more family friendly work policies. These issues also need to be placed firmly on the agenda of trade unions and employers associations in the Caribbean as one strategic avenue for bringing about the change that has been advocated for during the past four decades.

In addition to information contained in the progress reports, a review of the most recent GDI ranking for the Caribbean, from the Human Development Report²⁰, shows that quite a number of countries have been slipping in their rankings from positions held a decade ago. For example, countries in the high development ranking, such as Barbados which stood at 16 in 1998 is now 30, the Bahamas has slipped from 21 to 48, and Trinidad and Tobago from 38 to 56. Countries ranked as medium human development States, such as Suriname has slipped from 63 to 78 and Jamaica from 65 to 90. The only two countries that moved up in their rankings were Guyana from 95 to 88 and Belize from 72 to 52.

²⁰ Human Development Report 2007/2008. Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World, UNDP, pp. 326-329

3. Proportion of Seats held by women in National Parliaments

Gender disparities continue to persist in formal decision-making structures in the Caribbean, however the ability of governments to achieve their human development goals is dependent upon good governance, another priority of the MDGs, in achieving gender equality. Gender parity in political participation in the Caribbean remains an outstanding target to be attained at all levels including the political process, the public and the private sectors. In the English-speaking Caribbean, the average participation of women in Parliament averages 13.5%, varying from 7 to 25%. There are no quota laws and the electoral systems vary from proportional representation and single member districts with a first-past-the-post system.

In this context, the position of women in leadership has been viewed by some as the missed MDG. Winnie Byanyima in 2007 stated that the third MDG, on gender equality and women's empowerment, was set to be achieved by 2005, unlike the other MDGs which are set to be achieved by 2015, but it was not and therefore is considered a missed goal. According to Byanyima "the participation of women in decision-making roles in the public and private sectors is a human right, and will lead to more equitable development outcomes."²¹

Improvements in the participation of women in politics and gender parity in decision-making processes are partly related to the ability of national machineries to convert the commitments into action plans and ensure that these action plans find their way into the programmatic work-plans of these institutions. While this is one strategy for bridging the gap between planning and implementation, it is not the only mechanism for achieving the goals, and gives rise to the question of accountability. As long as no one institution is held directly accountable for the achievement of results in fulfilling these commitments, the achievement of set goals would remain sporadic, ad hoc and uncertain. National machineries may therefore wish to review and strengthen the situation of accountability within their procedures as a means of propelling the process forward²².

While constitutional provisions that remove barriers and support women's political participation must assist in setting the stage for increasing this participation, it is worthwhile to observe that most Caribbean countries have no provisions that specifically deal with the political participation of women. Of the nine countries responding to the ECLAC survey²³, only three reported related provisions in their constitutions and even these were not quite specific to women. These were Cayman Islands, Belize and Suriname.

Within the last three years, there were no fewer than 16 general elections in the subregion, namely in the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the non-independent territories of Montserrat, the Cayman Islands, Anguilla, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the British Virgin Islands resulting in mixed results for women.

²¹ Women and Leadership: The Missed Millennium Goal. October 2007, pp. 2.

²¹ Karen Bart-Alexander, Women's Political Participation and Gender Parity in Decision-Making at all levels in the Caribbean, pp. 12.

²² Survey undertaken by ECLAC in preparation for the Tenth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito, Ecuador in August 2007.

TABLE 11
STATISTICAL DATA ON WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS IN THE CARIBBEAN

Country	Elections	Seats	Women	% Women
Antigua & Barbuda	2004	19	2*	10.5
Bahamas	2007	41	5	12.2
Barbados	2003	30	4	13.3
	2008	30	3	10.0
Belize	2003	30	2	6.7
	2008	32	0	0.0
Dominica	2005	31	6	19.4
Grenada	2003	15	4	26.7
	2008	15	2	13.3
Guyana	2006	69	20	29.0
Jamaica	2007	60	8	13.3
St. Kitts & Nevis	2004	15	1	6.7
Saint Lucia	2006	18	2	11.1
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	2005	22	4	18.4
Suriname	2005	51	13	25.5
Trinidad and Tobago	2007	41	11	26.8
Associate States				
Anguilla	2005	11	0	0.0
British Virgin Islands	2007			
Cayman Islands	2005	18	3	16.6
Montserrat	2006	12	2	16.6
Turks and Caicos Islands	2007	21	3	14.3

* One woman was appointed by Government.

Source: IPU – Women in National Parliaments 2008 <http://www.ipu.org>

Recent data as shown in table 11 above indicate that countries such as Trinidad and Tobago have made remarkable increases in the number of women in Parliament. For example, in the November 2007 elections, out of the over 130 candidates contesting the general election some 33 were women. At the close of elections a total of 30 men and 11 women were elected. Nine of these women represented the successful People's National Movement (PNM) and two represented the Opposition United National Congress (UNC). As of 2007, women hold one-sixth of the seats in the House of Representatives, one fifth of the seats in the Senate and 10 Cabinet positions. The Deputy Speaker of the house is also a female. Of the 10 Ministerial positions held by women, three are in areas considered very powerful and influential, namely, Attorney General, Minister of Finance and Minister of Foreign Affairs. As a result of these increases, Trinidad and Tobago now occupies the highest position in the subregion in respect of the global gender gap.²⁴

There is a noticeable difference between women's participation in Parliament in the Lower House and in the Upper House in 2006. In every instance where the data appeared, it showed a much higher presence of women in the Upper House or Senate where they are nominated than in the Lower House where they are elected. The greatest differences showed up in Saint Lucia, Bahamas and Guyana with 31%, 23% and 19% disparities, respectively. The lowest disparities showed up in Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda and Grenada with 8%, 7% and 4%, respectively.

Guyana has recorded a significant rise in representation of women in the parliament from 12 (18.5%) in 2000 to 20 (31%) after the 2001 election. While the number of seats remained at 20

²⁴ The Global Gender Gap Report, 2008. World Economic Forum, Geneva Switzerland, pp. 19.

following the 2006 election, there was a slight decline in the percentage to 29%. Guyana now has five female ministers in comparison to two during the period 1997-2001. The position of Chancellor, the highest ranking in the Judiciary was held by a female from 2001 – 2005 and the present deputy speaker of the house is also female. Guyana was also the first Caribbean country to elect a female President (1998 – 1999).

Although some progress is reflected in education and political sectors, gender issues are only minimally integrated into policy-making in Guyana. Negative stereotyping and cultural practices still impede women's progress towards attaining leadership positions. More also needs to be done to enable women to increase their earning capacity.²⁵ In 2003, the government introduced several measures to mainstream gender in a range of areas and according to the MDG monitor, Guyana is on track in achieving Goal 3 in 2015 (MDG Monitor 2007).

At the time the Antigua and Barbuda report was prepared, as the report correctly states, no woman was elected to serve in the Lower House of Parliament. The percentage of women holding seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate remained steady for the reporting period (11.1%), with an exception in 2000 of 8.3%. This percentage comprised the total number (36) of members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. It indicates the low participation of women in political activity and decision-making positions in Antigua and Barbuda. The report highlighted the fact that efforts were being made to include women in more lucrative and leadership roles within the public sector, so that they could contribute to nation-building.

In 2004 Antigua and Barbuda historically elected its first woman to political office and she was given the Ministerial portfolio for Labour, Public Administration and Empowerment. This lone female Minister is a "graduate" of the training initiative to support the participation of women in politics, through the provision of training and capacity-building of potential female candidates offered by a number of non-governmental organizations, such as the Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women and the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPCD), which have also produced a women's campaign workbook, which provides "guidelines for winning in politics".²⁶ This female politician has been making strides during her first four years in office. In 2006, she was elected President of the Organization of American States/ Inter-American Commission on Women (OAS/CIM).

The Belize report shows only marginal increases in the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament during the reporting period. As in other Caribbean countries, it is obvious that men still dominate key positions of power and decision-making positions. This situation was compounded in the 2008 elections where a total of 36 men, but no women were elected to office which is a considerable reversal of the gains achieved in previous years. The government has taken steps to redress this gender imbalance by appointing women to serve in the Senate.

According to the Jamaica country report, female representation in Parliament has increased by 50% between 1990 and 2001 (Table 12). In March 2006, Portia Simpson-Miller was appointed Jamaica's seventh Prime Minister. She is the first woman in the country's history to hold the position of Prime Minister of Jamaica, however she lost this position in September 2007 when her party, the People's National Party (PNP), lost the elections. Mrs. Simpson-Miller has retained leadership of the Party, and is the second woman in Jamaica to head a political party.

²⁵ Guyana – Millennium Development Goals 2007, pp. 38

²⁶ Engendering Local Government. 2003. Women's Campaign Workbook.

TABLE 12
WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT IN JAMAICA – SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

	Senators		House of Representative		Total Females
	Total	Female	Total	Females	
1989 - April 1993	21	4	60	4	8
April 1993-December 1997	21	7	60	4	11
January 1998 to Present	21	5	60	7	12

Source: Government of Jamaica, Millennium Development Goals Jamaica 2004

Overall, it can be asserted that progress towards meeting this goal is lagging. There are still deep-rooted cultural traditions which have to be addressed relative to gender roles and resulting disadvantages for women. Further challenges lie in the strengthening of capacity in gender analysis in policy and planning (Millennium Development Goals, Jamaica 2004, pp. 27).

Jamaica has been actively pursuing an increase in women's participation in political and public life through its national machinery which includes the Bureau of Women's Affairs, the Jamaica Women's Political Caucus and other agencies. They have utilized legislation supporting non-discrimination and have ensured that women are both allowed to vote in all elections and eligible to participate as candidates as well as to hold public office and be advocates in non-governmental organizations concerned with the public and political life of the country."

Given Jamaica's headstart in attaining citizenship for women and their instantaneous election to political office in 1944, their progress towards attaining the 30% quota is remarkably slow. The expected transformation with the ascension of the Honourable Portia Simpson-Miller to the position of Prime Minister in 2006 did not materialize in the expected improvement for women in politics. In fact her elevation was very short-lived as she lost the government in the 2007 general elections. For the time-being, the ministerial positions are still dominated by the men.

On the other hand, the Suriname MDG Baseline Report 2005, acknowledges that women in executive positions are underrepresented, but nonetheless records a positive trend where women undertaking higher education were opting for non-traditional subjects, which, according to the report, would in future "have consequences for the choice of profession amongst women." (pp. 20) At the Parliamentary level, there were some marginal improvements with the number of women in the National Assembly moving from five in 1985-1987 to 10 in 2000-2005. The first female speaker of the Parliament was elected in 1996.

Generally the Caribbean subregion has taken steps to support women in overcoming a number of the obstacles that limit the participation of women in politics, nonetheless a number of challenges remain. Some of the strategies adopted at the global level to strengthen women's political participation include making appropriate revisions to the electoral system used, the application of affirmative action mechanisms such as quotas, improving voter education for women, and training political candidates.

The quota system, also referred to as gender quotas, is an operational mechanism designed to fast track the participation of women in politics at the decision-making level. It is a strategy for ensuring that women are brought into the forefront of political and public life and assisting in removing the barriers which continue to hinder their selection for political positions. In countries where quota systems have been implemented, the strategy has been credited as one of the most effective affirmative actions to increase women's political participation.

Since the GEM is used to measure the level of women's empowerment a review of the most recent GEM ranking for the Caribbean, in the 2007/2008 Human Development Report²⁷, shows that, like the GDI rankings, quite a number of countries have been slipping in their rankings from very favourable rankings a decade ago. Barbados slipped from 19 to 30, the Bahamas from 15 to 20, and Trinidad and Tobago from 17 to 22. Belize stood at 62 in 2008 and Saint Lucia at 66.

²⁷ Human Development Report 2007/2008. Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World, UNDP, pp. 330-333.

III. NATIONAL GENDER POLICIES

National gender policies are being given an increasingly important role in the quest for gender parity in politics and decision-making processes in the Caribbean as they seek to establish national positions that arise from international agreements. They serve as a guide for the development of policies across sectors and projects and programmes based on gender equity.

The gender policies which have been developed by the Governments of Dominica, Belize, the Cayman Islands and Trinidad and Tobago identify critical areas for attention and assign responsibilities for implementation. They are being developed through a process of consultation with the national community. Governments, however, as in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, are exercising discretionary vetoes over its gender policy.

A. Gender and MDG Reporting

A gender review of national MDG progress reports indicate that gender issues are not analyzed across the eight goals, other than Goal 3, leading to a false perception that Caribbean countries are on track for the achievement of this goal by the target date. For example, the 2007 Guyana MDG report, while citing localized indicators under Goal 1, makes no mention of gender as a contributing factor to the ongoing poverty at the national and household levels.

The Guyana report indicates that the achievement of the MDGs is rooted in its poverty reduction strategy, which was responsible for accelerating the country's development during the 10-year period 1997 to 2007. This was attributed to increased public expenditure in key social sector areas such as health, education, housing, water and sanitation.²⁸ While mention is made of the significantly improved access to social services by the Guyanese population, there is no gender assessment of beneficiaries of these services and no sex disaggregated data.

An important indicator of the capacity of the household to provide the necessary foundation to enhance the educational performance of children is the level of educational attainment of the head of household as well as the employment status of the mother. Again the household emerges as a key factor in determining the educational outcomes of students in that household and hence the need for the inclusion of a gender analysis across all the MDG goals.

Gender issues are only minimally reflected in policy-making and gender mainstreaming requires continuous monitoring and advocacy (Guyana – Millennium Development Goals 2007). With regard to the government's indication that a lot of women still perform unpaid work, the government realized that these contributions are not reflected in national surveys. As this is the case for most countries, this realization should encourage Guyana's government to make efforts to measure and include unremunerated contributions by women in their economic statistics, as recommended by the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, Nairobi 1985 (United Nations 2006).

Analysis of the Antigua and Barbuda 2004 progress report was very revealing in terms of gender. The lack of data, especially sex-disaggregated data, was identified as a problem however the report indicated excellent achievements for a number of goals, for example, it reported that the goal of improving maternal health had already been achieved. What stands out in this report is progress with respect to Goal 6, on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases, where the focus of progress is entirely on women in the age group 15 – 49. There is no data on males at all which gives a distorted assessment of prevalence and actions to combat the disease.

²⁸ Guyana MDG Report 2007, pp. 7

There is really no attempt to provide an analysis of the information, however, in relation to the status of the women impacted by the disease the report states that of the “33 women diagnosed between 1985–2002, 94% fell within the childbearing age which is also the productive labour force”. (pp. 6) It also highlights the impact of the disease on children and points to a new trend in poverty in Antigua and Barbuda, namely that of “children-headed households,” headed by children orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS. These are trends that need to be benchmarked for targeted policy interventions by Caribbean States.

Another concern requiring policy intervention relates to information regarding the percentage of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. It is important that this information be assessed, as unpaid family work is more likely to be performed by women who work in the agricultural sector, while paid employment is more prevalent in industries and services (UNDP 2004b, pp. 30). In relation to the aspect of poverty, equal access to paid jobs for women would help to bring about a major reduction in poverty levels (United Nations 2006, pp. 7). Yet, no data, or insufficient data, regarding these interrelated aspects is available for Antigua and Barbuda to monitor progress, a fact highlighted in the introduction to the reports which states that “*data gaps in some critical areas affected the statistical tracking capacities for any trend analysis*”. (pp. 1)

Gender in the Jamaica report is highlighted under Goal 1 in relation to the prevalence of underweight children (under -five years of age), where improvements were recorded in malnutrition rates during the period 1992-2001. According to the report, data measuring standard indicators such as weight for age, height for age and weight for height revealed no statistically significant difference for region, gender or consumption quintile. Nonetheless in terms of challenges, the report recognized that 66% of FHH were in poverty.

As expected reporting for Goals 2 and 3 provides a gender analysis of data. Among the challenges identified for Goal 3 was the inability to bring about changes in gender roles and behavioural modification at the household and community levels because of deep-rooted cultural traditions. Barriteau 2003, refers to this inability to modify gender-related behaviour as the entrenched “ideological relations of gender”, defined as the ways in which masculinity and femininity are constructed and accepted within cultures.

The Jamaica report also highlighted the fact that strengthening capacity for gender analysis in policy and planning, in both the public and private sector, was difficult to accomplish, however there was no attempt to provide an assessment of the national supportive environment to make this possible and the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of the national women’s machinery to enable it to more effectively undertake its mandate.

In relation to the gender disparities in education which currently are in favour of girls in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean, the Jamaica report calls for programmes aimed at the retention of males in the education system at the upper secondary and tertiary levels, and to improve the attendance and performance of males.

Progress on maternal health Goal 5 was reported as being very marginal and this was linked to factors such as poor dietary practices and lack of pre-natal care during the first trimester of pregnancy as determinants of poor maternal outcomes. Interestingly, there was no attempt in the report to link poor dietary practices and lack of pre-natal care to the poverty of pregnant women. It is important to apply a gender analysis of these situations because if a gender lens were applied, more than likely information would be unearthed to show that these women live in circumstances where they are unable to meet their basic needs for health care and food. Poor dietary practices are factors linked not only to poverty, but also to educational attainment and access to material resources. Maternal health is a gender equity issue, requiring strategic and targeted interventions in order to reduce the incidence of maternal morbidity and mortality in the Caribbean.

A gender analysis of the progress in Jamaica with respect to Goal 7, ensuring environmental sustainability, also shows a lack of gendered insight regarding the important role that women play in managing the environment especially in relation to water management. Indicators recorded incremental gains in the percentage of persons with access to piped water. However these gains were largely confined to the urban areas as opposed to the rural areas where less than 50% of households were reported as having access to piped water. This finding seems consistent with progress recorded under Goal 1, where poverty was found to be located primarily in the rural areas. Clearly, it is plausible to assume a direct link between gender and poverty, and the lack of access to piped water in rural areas, since it is also the poorest households that are headed by women.

IV. CHALLENGES IN MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MDGS

There is concern that despite the limitations of the targets, the region is in danger of missing most of the targets because of the binding timeframes of the MDGs. For example, many countries are facing setbacks beyond their control and face challenges in other areas, such as necessary financial and other administrative resources to ensure that the targets are met.

Among the persistent challenges facing the region is access to quality statistical data to assist in monitoring and evaluation of progress with achievement of the MDGs and other internationally agreed development Goals (IADGs). The persistent weakness of data systems and lack of application of monitoring and evaluation tools continue to be major challenges for the Caribbean.

Almost all progress reports reviewed highlighted the collection and processing of data by relevant national institutions as a major challenge. This reflects the generally very weak statistical capacity in the Caribbean, particularly with respect to social and gender statistics. The lack of sex disaggregated data compounds this challenge but is being addressed by agencies of the United Nations system, including ECLAC; the CARICOM Secretariat; the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the CDB to build the necessary human resource capacity for the collection and analysis of data.

ECLAC, with financial support from UNIFEM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), implemented a gender indicators project in order to provide governments, researchers and other stakeholders interested in the situation of women and men, access to sex disaggregated information. Some 63 indicators were selected for the construction of a database, but it is affected by the availability of data, and the dearth of comparable data sources in the Caribbean. To date, it has completed two phases of this project and is now implementing a household survey project, to assist in the provision of reliable and timely data.

In addition, the CARICOM Secretariat has also implemented programmes for strengthening capacity in the collection and compilation of social, gender and environment statistics and indicators to assist Caribbean governments and other institutions with timely and readily available sex disaggregated data for measuring progress towards the achievement of the MDGs. These include the formation of national level Social Indicators and the MDG groups (SIMDG) in the Caribbean. The Secretariat has as one of its objectives the improvement of the quality and consistency of data collection and compilation at the national level of statistics on women and men in the Caribbean. It also attempts to harmonize data to facilitate the comparability of data across countries.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The above analysis of MDG progress in the Caribbean with respect to poverty and links to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment provide a brief situational profile of the ongoing challenges, not only in addressing the issue of poverty, but the stubbornness that remains in applying a gender perspective across the development agenda. While there has been some assertion in the reports of having achieved some of the MDG targets and indicators especially in relation to Goal 3, the information in the progress reports provide different insights.

There is need to ensure that there are more linkages between MDG progress reports and the human development reports which provide analysis not only of human development indices, but country level assessment of gender-related development indices. Analysis of the most recent GDI and GEM data suggests that countries in the Caribbean subregion are regressing rather than advancing in these two areas. This however requires a more thorough assessment to be undertaken to identify the reasons for the apparent regression.

What is clear is that the mandate to view gender equality and the empowerment of women as a cross-cutting issue across the eight MDGs is still to be applied, since gender issues are limited to a few specific targets and indicators and the linkage across the goals – the dots are not being connected. For example, there is a direct link to women's lack of access to power and decision-making and the invisibility of their contribution to the economy through the unpaid domestic work they perform on a daily basis in the home and community.

As far back as 1999, the Human Development Report addressed the issue of care and the global economy, linking the care economy to the invisible heart, and the often neglected care and caring labour necessary for the economic development of societies. *“The task of providing for dependants, for children, the sick, the elderly, exhausted from the demands of daily life. Human development is nourished not only by expanding incomes, schooling, health, empowerment and a clean environment, but also care. And the essence of care is in the human bonds that it creates and supplies. Care, sometimes referred to as social reproduction, is also essential for economic sustainability.”*

Notwithstanding the recognition of these constraints to women's full participation in the economy, unpaid work stills needs to be recognized in the Caribbean subregion, especially for understanding the contribution of women to national economy and for assuring women better living conditions. The only Caribbean country to recognize women's unwaged work is the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in 1996.

In the political arena Caribbean women remain grossly underrepresented at most levels of government in nearly every country. This has implications for the optimal functioning of democracy and impacts the ability of government to plan and implement effective policies and practices that equally serve the needs of women and men and, arguably, limits the development potential of societies. The Millennium Development Goals (2000) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) identified the critical need for women to gain greater parity in political representation and decision-making power, yet despite international commitment to attaining these goals, progress has been halting at best.

Despite the fact that gender inequalities remain a persistent feature of governance and democracy in the Caribbean, political parties are resistant to the implementation of quota laws. The selection of female candidates to participate in politics therefore remains an issue to be addressed, since women are underrepresented in all areas of political life yet in many countries they represent over 50% of the population eligible to vote.

The underlying objective of the quota system is to ensure that women do not remain tokens in political life, yet many political parties have adopted the attitude that to implement the quota system would be “tokenism” and would obscure the fundamental principle of individual choice. However there is much that could be gained from using the quota system, for example, it could be used a temporary measure not only to increase the critical mass of women in politics but also to assist in removing the barriers for women’s entry into politics.

The small size of Caribbean countries coupled with the lack of access to financial resources are among some of the major determining factors in the decision of women to participate in political life and the electoral process. Financing, in particular, negatively affects the participation of women in recruitment and nominations as well as the electoral campaign itself. There is also a direct link with women’s work in the private sphere and their participation in politics as women are confronted with the difficulty of covering indirect costs such as family obligations that are inherent in conducting a long campaign and maintaining political support.

That many Caribbean States have attained parity in the ratio of boys to girls’ enrolment in primary schools is not cause for celebration, since Caribbean governments have over the past four decades invested a significant proportion of their national social budgets on education and health. Many countries also have enacted legislation making it compulsory for all children to be enrolled in primary education, with many having a mandatory school leaving age of 16. Available data shows that females/girls have a much higher rate of participation and completion than do boys at all levels of education from primary through to tertiary.

In the Caribbean subregion many governments have therefore acknowledged that they have met the 2005 primary and secondary school parity target, however, the available evidence shows that attainment of parity in school enrolment is not sufficient to ensure the full participation of women in the political and economic lives of their countries. Women’s higher educational attainment has not translated into the expected empowerment for women or increased gender equality. “This begs the question of the extent to which women’s education develops capabilities which give them a competitive advantage beyond school and equip them with the competencies required to take advantage of employment opportunities and participate as full citizens in their various contexts”²⁹ (pp. 31). This situation is clearly one of the most glaring examples of the inadequacy of the targets and indicators for Goal 3.

The paradox is that while females have been outperforming males in education, this higher rate of completion and performance belies entrenched cultural and ideological obstacles to equality which continue to confront women in the Caribbean. The high rates of literacy and education achieved by Caribbean women has not translated into greater access to employment, decision-making positions in the public domain or political office.³⁰ The region remains plagued by social problems such as persistent poverty, unabated violence against women and children, the rapid spread of HIV-AIDS particularly among young women, and a lack of safe and affordable reproductive health services, including safe access to services for the termination of pregnancy.

It is clear that much more policy, financial and programmatic inputs are needed to improve the situation of women. There is need for full reproductive health rights and access to services, the guarantee of equal property rights and access to employment, affirmative action to increase political representation, and an end to violence against women and girls. To realize the MDGs, Caribbean governments and their partners must seriously and systematically ‘engender’ efforts to achieve all of the goals.

²⁹ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Report on the Achievement of the MDGs in the Caribbean Community, pp. 31

³⁰ Peggy Antrobus. Caribbean Regional MDG Conference. 2003, Barbados

The uneven MDG progress in the Caribbean can be attributed to a complex set of conditions that lie at the heart of women's inequality. The structures that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination pervade economic, social, political, cultural, legal, and civic institutions, norms, and practices around the world. The know-how and investments required to eliminate them are rarely committed, especially in poor countries. The political will required to achieve gender equality is variable, or altogether lacking. (Noeleen Heyzer – UNIFEM)

In order to bring about the required transformation, political commitment at the highest international and national levels is integral to the implementation of policies to effect meaningful changes in the allocation of resources, which would result in visible changes in the distribution of power, opportunity and social change necessary for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. There is, therefore, need for greater commitment towards mainstreaming gender in the development of national policies and actions in the achievement of the MDGs.

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Annex

Millennium Development Goals, Targets and Indicators

The Millennium Development Goals were developed out of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted by all 189 UN Member States in September 2000. Many of the goals and targets were set to be achieved by the year 2015 on the basis of the global situation during the 1990s. During the decade of the 1990s, a number of global conferences took place which defined the main objectives of the global development agenda. The baseline for the assessment of progress is therefore 1990 for most of the MDG targets.

The internationally agreed framework of 8 goals and 18 targets was complemented by 48 technical indicators to measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. These indicators have since been adopted by a consensus of experts from the United Nations, IMF, OECD and the World Bank.

Millennium Development Goals	
Goals and Targets	Indicators for Monitoring Progress
Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty	
Target 1 Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day	1. Proportion of population below \$1 per day (PPP values) 2. Poverty gap ratio [incidence x depth of poverty] 3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption
Target 2 Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.	4. Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age 5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption
Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education	
Target 3 Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education 7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 8. Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds
Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women	
Target 4 Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015	9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 10. Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old 11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament
Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality	
Target 5 Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate	13. Under-five mortality rate 14. Infant mortality rate 15. Proportion of 1 year-old children immunized against measles
Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health	
Target 6 Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	16. Maternal mortality ratio 17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases	
Target 7 Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	18. HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-24 years 19. Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate 19a. Condom use at last high-risk sex 19b. Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS 19c. Contraceptive prevalence rate 20. Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years
Target 8 Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	21. Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria 22. Proportion of population in malaria-risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures 23. Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis 24. Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under DOTS (internationally recommended TB control strategy)

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability	
Target 9 Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources	<p>25. Proportion of land area covered by forest</p> <p>26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area</p> <p>27. Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per \$1 GDP (PPP)</p> <p>28. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita and consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs (ODP tons)</p> <p>29. Proportion of population using solid fuels</p>
Target 10 Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	<p>30. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural</p> <p>31. Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural</p>
Target 11. Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure
Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development	
<p>Target 12 Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, nondiscriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction? both nationally and internationally)</p> <p>Target 13 Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (includes tariff- and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries? exports, enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries [HIPCs] and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction)</p> <p>Target 14 Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and 22nd General Assembly provisions)</p> <p>Target 15 Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term</p>	<p>Official development assistance (ODA)</p> <p>33. Net ODA, total and to LDCs, as percentage of OECD/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors' gross national income</p> <p>34. Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)</p> <p>35. Proportion of bilateral ODA of OECD/DAC donors that is untied</p> <p>36. ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their GNIs</p> <p>37. ODA received in small island developing States as proportion of their GNIs</p> <p>Market access</p> <p>38. Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and from LDCs, admitted free of duty</p> <p>39. Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries</p> <p>40. Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as percentage of their GDP</p> <p>41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity</p> <p>Debt sustainability</p> <p>42. Total number of countries that have reached their Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)</p> <p>43. Debt relief committed under HIPC initiative</p> <p>44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services</p>
Target 16 In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth	45. Unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 years, each sex and total
Target 17 In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries	46. Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis
Target 18 In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies	<p>47. Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population</p> <p>48. Personal computers in use per 100 population and Internet users per 100 population</p>