



Organization of
American States



INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN

THIRTY-FIFTH ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES
November 3 to 5, 2010
Mexico D.F., Mexico

OEA/Ser.L/II.2.35
CIM/doc.29/10
23 September 2010
Original: Textual

NATIONAL REPORT: JAMAICA

(Item 2) on the agenda

**REPORT TO THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN
RE: PRINCIPAL DELEGATES TO THE CIM**

ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN

The Government of Jamaica (GOJ) through its national machinery, the Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA/Bureau) has taken several measures to implement specific policies and programmes in keeping with the Strategic Plan 2010 - 2013 as well as the Vision 2030 Jamaica: National Development Plan. These consist of policy and legislative measures, programmes, projects, research and public education activities which were documented in the **Combined Sixth & Seventh Periodic Report to the UN CEDAW Committee** which was submitted in August 2010.

Democracy

Jamaica is a democratic country with two major political parties, namely the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP). Since the last CIM Report in 2008, both major political parties continue to commit to gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Increasing Women's Participation in Public and Political Life and Governance

The GOJ has taken steps to increase the **participation of women in public and political life** at the highest levels of power and decision-making. This has been facilitated through the appointment of four (4) women at the highest level of the political and public life. In the legal profession, Jamaica witnessed the appointment of the **first female Attorney General and Minister of Justice** as well as **Chief Justice** and **Director of Public Prosecutions**. In 2009, Jamaica's **first female Chief of State Protocol** was appointed in the **Office of the Prime Minister**, with special oversight responsibility for all matters relating to protocol. Most women in positions of power and decision-making are represented at specific levels in top and middle management positions. As is the situation across the Caribbean region, females are still for the most part, largely absent from Boards and Commissions and still very few are represented in Parliament and Cabinet, the highest decision-making bodies of the land.

The GOJ will continue to provide support to women in order to increase their level of participation in public and political life at the highest levels of decision-making. With regards the **Parliamentary Resolution on the establishment of quotas**, there has been no significant shift since the last reporting period. The BWA will continue to monitor the progress and will provide an update where necessary. Collaboration between the **Jamaica Women's Political Caucus (JWPC)** and the BWA continues, in order to support their work as well as to encourage more women to aspire for leadership and increased participation in politics.

The BWA has conducted two small studies to ascertain barriers to women's participation in Guild of Undergraduates and other leadership positions at the UWI. The main findings were consistent with the gender stereotypes concerning women's low participation in leadership, politics and decision-making. Despite several efforts to increase the participation of women and girls in these areas, the influence of the socio-cultural factors continue to hinder students' participation rates in leadership at the level of the Guild of Undergraduates and other leadership positions in that institution. Follow-up studies will be conducted with students in other tertiary level institutions to discover their perceptions concerning the barriers to participation in leadership and decision-making.

A recent study conducted in 2008 on **women's participation on Boards and Commissions** indicated that only 16 per cent of places on boards of publicly listed companies in the sample were occupied by women. In terms of membership, women occupied only 14 per cent. There are however, a higher percentage of men (64.1), than women (42.3) who reported serving on multiple boards.¹ The BWA is addressing this by targeting female students at the secondary level through public education, sensitization and training, in order to stimulate their interest in power and decision-making towards their participation in these areas.

A research paper entitled, **The Assessment of Women's Political Participation & Gender Parity in Decision-Making Processes in Jamaica** revealed that although women's participation in decision-making at the public level has increased considerably over the last decade, women continue to be under-represented at the highest levels of governance. The BWA partnered with a few women's NGOs Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC) as well as Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) to provide training to several women towards increased participation in political and public life.

Gender Violence

Jamaica is committed to ensuring the implementation and effective enforcement of existing laws, and the priority passage and implementation of pending laws towards eliminating gender violence. This includes the promotion of gender-sensitive policies to combat prevailing gender-based stereotypes including violence against women. Jamaica is also committed to the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism so as to regularly assess the impact and effectiveness of law enforcement and programmes aimed at preventing and providing redress to victims of violence.

The **Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women – (Belem do Para)** was acceded to in 2005. This underscores Jamaica's commitment to address violence against women which causes death or physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls, in public or private spaces.

Jamaica is committed to promoting respect for human rights, as demonstrated by its democratic principles. As a result, on February 15, 2010, the Bureau met with Mr. Manfred Nowark, **UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**. It was noted that a number of treaties and conventions were signed as well as local policies and legislation put in place to address pertinent issues. The Bureau indicated that violence against women was one of its critical areas of concern and that there were some pieces of legislation that were reviewed in order to enact new pieces of legislation or amend existing legislation in order to eliminate discrimination against women. Issues discussed included what happened when women are taken into custody, domestic violence, marital rape and trafficking in persons. Legislation include the Sexual Offences Bill, the Domestic Violence Act, Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression, and Punishment) Act as well as human rights conventions such as CEDAW and the Belem do Para.

The Bureau also indicated that there were several strategies used to address violence against women. These include public education, collaboration with other women's groups, and observance of special days including the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. The print and electronic media were also used to address the issue. The number of cases of domestic violence, and the number of females involved in crime were also discussed as well as the female detention facilities. The

0 1 Watson Williams, Carol (2008) - Gender and Governance: Implications for the participation of Women on Boards and Commissions in Jamaica (The study was commissioned by a local NGO - **Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC)**)

establishment of the Male Desk was seen as a welcome addition to address violence against women. After the meeting, and at the request of Mr. Manfred, the Bureau also provided statistics on violence against women to him in order for him to complete his analysis.

The Bureau of Women's Affairs implemented a violence-reduction project entitled **Reducing Gender-Based Violence in Jamaica: Increasing Awareness, Enhancing Access to Protection, Strengthening Responses 2008 – 2009 (Sexual Harassment Project)** through funding by the United Nations Trust Fund to end Violence against Women (UNTF). Technical support was provided by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The project involved combating entrenched perceptions and behavioural patterns as well as changing attitudes to gender-based violence. Large-scale awareness-raising, workplace sensitization and training took place in all government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) as well as selected private sector companies. To date, approximately 1, 320 persons have been trained in 43 workshops to identify sexual harassment and to address the issue.

Since 2009, technical assistance has been provided by UNIFEM under the **Project: Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action for Ending Gender-based Violence in the Caribbean (2008-2010)** to carry out research on violence against women (VAW) and to identify the gaps where they exist. Through funding support from UNIFEM, the BWA was involved in reducing gender-based violence through strengthened and responsive state and civil society actions. The project is primarily grounded in the need to build political will to address the significant gaps in policy frameworks for sexual and gender-based violence, particularly in the justice and security sectors.

The project addresses the need for multi-sectoral strategies as a lever for ending impunity, and calls for men to be engaged as partners in advocacy on ending sexual and gender-based violence. The main approach to the implementation of this project involves continuous consultation and collaboration with relevant stakeholders and partners. In keeping with the GOJ's commitment towards eliminating gender violence, a draft **National Plan of Action on VAW/Gender-based Violence (GBV)** has been developed and outlines a comprehensive strategy to address the issue.

Awareness-raising sessions have been conducted by the Bureau and other partners as a part of the public education campaign to include training and sensitization of several stakeholders, in particular, the judiciary, law enforcement officers and prosecutors, as well as teachers, health-care & social workers and the media. The BWA continues to provide **extensive public education, training and sensitization** of a wide cross-section of persons through workshops as well as print and electronic media in partnership with UN agencies, particularly the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

In keeping with the anti-trafficking thrust and provisions under the Trafficking in Persons Act 2007, the Bureau of Women's Affairs and the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons (NATFATIP) have conducted a number of public education sessions across several parishes. In addition, the BWA is engaged in public education and training activities geared towards elimination human trafficking through funding assistance from the USAID in partnership with the People's Action for Community Transformation (PACT).

The BWA also utilizes the **commemoration of special days for women**, such as **International Women's Day (IWD)** on March 8 and **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW)** on November 25 annually to specially recognize women's contribution and the advancement of human rights and the **promotion of gender equality**. In addition, the GOJ remains committed to combating gender-based violence in particular as well as all other forms of violence.

In terms of legal reform towards the elimination of gender-based violence, recommendations from the Bureau of Women's Affairs include the **training in gender-sensitivity among justice system personnel** as well as the **development of protocols for the treatment of victims and vulnerable witnesses including women and children**.

Justice and Human Rights

Jamaica continues to hold discussions on the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, in order to eliminate discrimination against women. In recognition of the failure of Section 24 (3) of the Constitution to stipulate that laws which discriminate on the basis of sex are prohibited, the Charter seeks explicitly to prohibit gender discrimination. This will allow women to access equal opportunities on a basis of equality with men. The Charter prohibits all laws which are discriminatory in nature.

Through the process of the legislative reform and advocacy, the Bureau of Women's Affairs continues to promote women's rights and protection under the law. The Bureau has made recommendations for several pieces of legislation to be placed on the legislative agenda for amendment. This includes the merging of the sections which deal with sexual offences in *'The Offences Against the Person (Amendment) Act'* as well as sections of *the Incest (Punishment) (Amendment) Act'* to create the **Sexual Offences Bill**.

The **Sexual Offences Bill** which covers all forms of sex crimes was passed by the Senate in July 2009.

The **Sexual Offences Bill** provides for, among other things; a statutory definition of rape, the abolition of the common law presumption that a boy under 14 years old is incapable of committing rape, protecting the anonymity of the complainant, and for the offence of rape to be gender-neutral, meaning it can be committed by either male or female and against both male and female. It also sets out the circumstances under which a spouse who has sexual intercourse with the other spouse without the spouse's consent will commit the offence of rape.

In keeping with the global trend, the Government of Jamaica has adopted a **Child Pornography (Prevention) Bill** to criminalize the production, importation, exportation and distribution of child pornography as well as the use of children in such activities. The Act ensures protection for girls who are the primary victims of child pornography. The Bureau of Women's Affairs provided comments and endorsed the Child Pornography Bill which was passed in Parliament in September 2009. A **Cyber Crimes Bill** has been passed to complement the existing legislation on child pornography and will also protect women and girls from cyber crimes.

Other social intervention programmes such as the Citizen's Security and Justice Programme (CSJP), Community Security Initiative (CSI), Jamaica Violence Prevention, Peace and Sustainable Development programme (JVPPSD) among other initiatives continue to contribute to crime and violence reduction in urban centres and rural communities through strategic interventions which address individual, family and community risk factors.