



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

Distr.: General  
5 May 2006

Original: English

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**Committee on the Elimination of  
Discrimination against Women**

Pre-session working group

Thirty-fifth session

15 May-2 June 2006

**Responses to the list of issues and questions for  
consideration of the combined initial, second, third,  
fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report**

**Saint Lucia**

**Articles 1 and 2**

1. A national reporting committee was established. It comprised representatives of the public and private sectors as well as civil society. This Committee was charged with the responsibility of providing information to be contained in the report according to their respective areas and interests. A consultant/coordinator worked in close collaboration with the Committee, gathering and verifying the data.

When the first draft of the report was completed, a national consultation was held, bringing together all social partners from a wide cross section of the public and private sectors including non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society. There were vigorous discussions and a very valuable interchange which formed the basis for revision of the draft. The revised report was then submitted to the Minister for his perusal. A cabinet memorandum was then prepared along with a summary of the report for presentation to the Cabinet of Ministers.

After discussion of the document, the Cabinet of Ministers' conclusion indicated that their report contained some inaccuracies, and that it should be referred to the office of the Attorney General. The inaccuracies were addressed and the report was resubmitted to the Cabinet for approval.

2. Ratification of a treaty incorporates such treaty into the domestic law of Saint Lucia and as such the ratified provisions would rank *pari passu* with the domestic law. In case of conflict with the two pieces of legislation, the presumption is that the latter repeals the former.

### **Article 3**

3. The national machinery for the advancement of women in Saint Lucia is referred to as the Division of Gender Relations. It is a miniscule division located at present within the Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations. The Division's current staff comprises a Director, one technical officer, a supernumerary secretary and driver (without a vehicle). The approved staff for the Division includes one other technical officer and a Research Officer, but these positions have been tokenized for the past four years, seriously hampering the effectiveness and efficiency of the Division.

The Director is positioned at grade 17 and the technical officer at grade 13. The Director has a fair amount of autonomy as far as the programming for the Division is concerned; however, the Division is not vested with any great amount of authority, as it has not been able to win the attention of the decision makers as an important player in the decision-making process. The Division is severely under-resourced, receiving a mere .06 per cent of the national budget.

4. There was widespread public discussion and debate on various aspects of the Criminal Code, although the section dealing with the termination of pregnancy (section 166) received more attention than any other. The Criminal Code of Saint Lucia No. 9 of 2004 came into effect on 1 January 2005. Some of the changes in the new Code now impacting women are the new provisions for sexual offences.

These provisions expand the category of sexual offences to ensure that it captures a wide range and the various forms of illegal sexual behaviour, and as such the Code has included new offences for unlawful sexual connection which involves any form of sexual contact and extends to sexual contact with persons who are judicially separated.

Other sexual offences include:

- sexual intercourse with a person under the age of 12
- sexual intercourse with a person between the ages of 12 to 16
- indecent assault and indecent acts.

The new Code further allows for the protection of victims of these offences, providing them with the security of hearing in camera and for non-reporting.

5. An investigation revealed that there have not been any complaints laid on prosecutions under the Act.

### **Article 4**

6. There is no evidence that affirmative action is being practised at any level in Saint Lucia.

### **Article 5**

7. In order to combat gender stereotyping some deliberate measures have been taken:

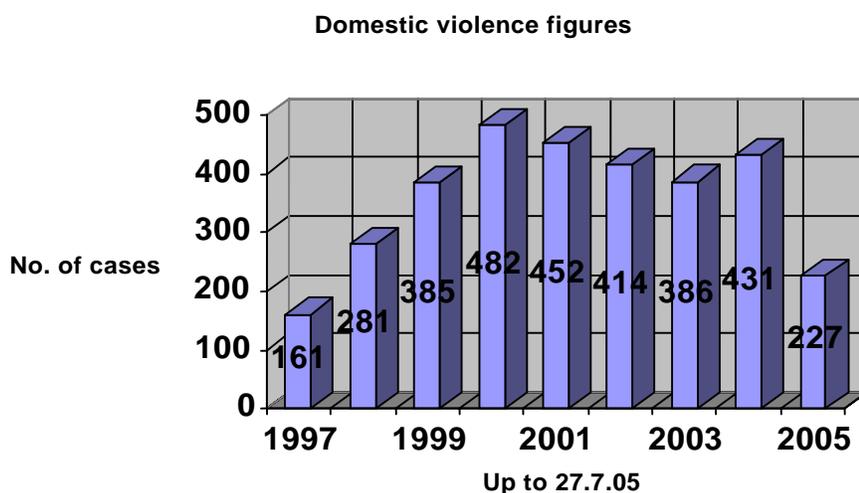
- The Curriculum and Material Development Unit of the Ministry of Education is responsible for preparing reading material for primary schools. At the Unit particular attention is paid to not reinforcing in their image the gender

stereotypes which have existed in the past; for example, a nurse will not be portrayed as a woman and a doctor as a man — the role will be interchanged.

- In certain public service announcements and advertisements in the media, deliberate efforts are made to portray male and female in non-traditional roles.

8. The Domestic Violence Act of 1994 provides protection by means of summary proceedings in cases involving domestic violence and related matters. Such persons are not prosecuted as the hearings are of a civil nature. Criminal charges are brought only when the offender contravenes the summary conviction.

The following table indicates the number of domestic violence cases which have been brought before the Family Court since its inception in 1997. Whereas it is not disaggregated by sex (the Court is working on doing this), a source from the Family Court indicated that only 10 per cent of the cases were brought by men.



Source: Family Court.

A number of measures have been put in place for the rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence:

- The Family Court provides free-of-cost counselling services. It provides protection orders, occupation orders and tenancy orders in accordance with the Domestic Violence Act of 1994. The Family Court has also introduced a batterer's programme for perpetrators of domestic violence.
- The Women's Support Centre, a programme of the Division of Gender Relations, was established in 2001 to offer safe refuge for victims of domestic violence and their children fleeing from life-threatening situations in the home.
- The Women's Support Centre offers group and individual counselling to clients and takes them through a structured programme where they understand the phenomenon of domestic violence.
- The Women's Support Centre helps its clients to develop protection plans which they will use on leaving the facility.

- The Women's Support Centre assists unemployed clients in finding jobs and also assists those who do not wish to return home to find housing at a reasonable cost.

9. Encouraged by the success of the pilot phase of the Community Response Teams programme, the Division of Gender Relations is committed to establishing such teams in other communities.

#### **Article 6**

10. The tourism sector continues to expand with the construction of a number of new hotels and extension of existing ones. Many women find employment in that sector both directly — working in the hotels — and indirectly, providing goods and services for the tourist.

There has also been the introduction of the Information and Communication Technology sector in terms of back office and call centre operations. Employment opportunities in these areas are predominantly taken up by women.

11. A comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy has not yet been developed; however, there is interest in the area of trafficking in persons. With the aid of the International Organization for Migration, a preliminary investigation was carried out to find out the extent to which human trafficking in any form was occurring in Saint Lucia. The survey did not reveal any hard evidence.

The Division of Gender Relations has established a coalition against trafficking in persons. The group has begun a programme of awareness-raising and information-sharing among front-line persons who, through their line of work or place in the communities, are likely to encounter possible victims of trafficking.

At present there is no legislation which directly addresses trafficking in persons; nevertheless, there are sections of the Criminal Code under which persons engaging in or associated with the act of trafficking can be prosecuted.

#### **Articles 7 and 8**

12. There has been no expressed intention to do so.

13. The Local Government Reform Initiative has been temporarily shelved. There is no word on when the process will be recommenced.

#### **Article 9**

14. It is the intention of the Government of Saint Lucia to review and revise the Citizen Act of Saint Lucia No. 7 of 1979 and Act No. 20 of 1964.

It is not expected that this review will be undertaken within the next year. Saint Lucia has commenced a review of the Saint Lucia Constitution of 1978. To that end, a constitutional review commission has been set up. It is not yet known whether that provision is one that will be affected by the review.

#### **Article 10**

15. Information technology which includes keyboard skills is being offered at both the all-male and the all-female secondary schools. Typing, which was offered at the all-female secondary schools, is no longer a subject on the school curriculum.

16. Apart from the two single-sex denominated schools, all other 20 secondary schools are co-educational. They offer a standard curriculum recommended by the Ministry of Education. Students are free to select without pressure from teachers and are encouraged to select the subjects in which they perform well. There is no policy of differentiation of subjects for boys and girls. Students — boys and girls — do elect to pursue non-traditional subjects. Parents, however, do have an important level of influence on students' choice of subject.

Career fairs are held annually and girls as well as their male counterparts are exposed to a range of careers in both the traditional and non-traditional areas. Entry into the non-traditional fields is not difficult once the benchmark requirements have been attained.

17. The Ministry of Education has made it clear that students of school age must be in school, and that according to the Education Act of 1999 it is illegal for a child under the age of 16 to be out of school. There is no written regulation which prohibits teen mothers from attending school. Girls who become pregnant tend to drop out of school because of shame and embarrassment.

Increasingly girls who become pregnant while attending school return to continue after the birth of their child. Some of them ask for transfers to other schools where they are not known. They are easily accommodated. Many of these girls do well if they have support with childcare and emotional support.

#### **Article 11**

18. The Equality of Opportunity and Treatment in Employment and Occupation Act of 2000 is a positive step by government in its effort to attain gender equality in the field of employment. This Act is intended to protect workers from discriminatory practices in the workplace and includes gender-related grounds for discrimination.

The new labour code soon to be enacted makes specific provision for non-discrimination and equality of opportunity in the workplace.

19. Government as an institution has not specifically made provisions to educate employees about their labour rights; however, the various workers' associations and trade unions do have programmes which inform their members of their rights.

20. There is no official policy granting paternity leave to men; however, through the Men's Resource Centre Project the Government encourages men to become better fathers and share family responsibilities with women. The Men's Resource Centre Project is a project of the Division of Gender Relations which aims to address men's issues in an effort to improve family life, among other things.

#### **Article 12**

21. The Ministry of Health through its maternal and child health clinics offers on a daily basis (except on weekends) family planning services, including contraceptive devices which are available at all health centres free of charge.

The Saint Lucia Planned Parenthood Association provides family planning services including contraceptive devices at nominal cost. This includes the morning-after pill. Young women/girls over the age of 15 do not need parental consent to use the

services under the law. Termination of pregnancy that is the result of rape or incest is allowed under the law.

22. A comprehensive health and family life education programme was developed and introduced into all schools at both the primary and secondary levels.

The Planned Parenthood Association has instituted in many secondary schools a peer counselling programme where teens are trained to reach out to their peers and discuss matters of a personal nature, including sex and reproduction.

### **Article 13**

23. St. Lucia Mortgage and Finance Company Ltd. was able to provide the data requested as follows:

From 2000 to the present, 406 persons took advantage of loan schemes from the Company: 18% — 74 were men; 46% — 187 were women; and 36% — 145 were couples.

*Source:* St. Lucia Mortgage and Finance Company Ltd.

24. The BELFUND is still active. The most recent sex-disaggregated data on loans to Saint Lucians under this fund are as follows: male 179; female 179.

### **Article 14**

25. In order to ensure that women in rural areas have effective access to maternity services, the Ministry of Health conducts clinics where high-risk patients are assessed and preparations are made for such patients to be admitted into the main hospital well in advance of their date of delivery. Low-risk patients are accommodated for delivery at the district hospitals (of which there are three).

There is a comprehensive health education programme at the antenatal clinics, where clients are taught the measures they must take in order to have a safe delivery.

Additionally, there has been a great improvement in the network of roads in the rural areas, and therefore transportation to and from the rural areas is no longer problematic.

26. There are at present 21 day-care centres run by the Ministry of Social Transformation, 20 of which are located in rural areas. The majority of day-care centres in the urban areas are privately owned.

The Government-owned day-care centres are subsidized so parents pay lower fees. These centres run, as part of their programme, parenting courses aimed at educating parents and bettering their own self-development.

The innovative Roving Caregivers Programme, which is run by the Early Childhood Department of the Ministry of Education, is an important step in improving the quality of day care in Saint Lucia. The programme aims to offer early stimulation to young children and improve parenting practices in disadvantaged communities.

The National Enrichment and Learning Programme, which caters for adult learners, also has introduced an effective parenting component to its curriculum.

**Articles 15 and 16**

27. A strong women's movement which can agitate for the implementation of the laws is desirable. It has the power to demand from the Government the establishment of those mechanisms that make the law operative.

28. Data from the Registry Department show that over the period 1982-2002 the number of persons who married before attaining the age of 18 years is as follows: 68 females; 2 males. There is not an expressed intention on the part of the Government to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years.

**General**

29. During the presentation of this report (the initial to sixth report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), the Division of Gender Relations made a request to the Cabinet of Ministers for consideration of Saint Lucia's ratification of the Optional Protocol.

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