



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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against Women

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**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination against Women**

Replies of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the list of issues and questions in relation to its combined fifth to ninth periodic reports***

[Date received: 5 October 2022]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.
** The present document was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent
information.



Constitutional and legislative framework

Reply to paragraph 1 of the list of issues and questions

1. Under the Saint Christopher and Nevis Constitution, Chapter II (Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms), Section 15 affords protection from discrimination on grounds of race etc. Sub-section 3 specifically states:
 - In this section the expression “discriminatory” means affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by race, place of origin, birth out of wedlock, political opinions or affiliations, colour, sex or creed whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages that are not accorded to persons of another such description”.
2. Since the 5th to 9th report- the State enacted the Domestic Violence Act, Cap.12.04, which came into force on the 22 Day of November 2019.
3. In accordance with the State party’s obligations under articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and in line with target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, there are no known measures taken in this respect.

Women’s access to justice

Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues and questions

4. There are no statistical data that relates to judicial biases occurring on account of women who are victims of gender based violence, nor is there any empirical evidence to suggest that this occurs in the State, within the justice system.
5. Equality before the law is a fundamental right as provided under Chapter 11 of the Constitution.
6. Victims of domestic violence may file reports at any police station or the Special Victims Unit. All police officers are required to be properly trained in gender sensitive interviewing and evidence collection. When reports of gender based violence are made, the victims are interviewed at length and a comprehensive statement is recorded outlining what transpired. If the victim was injured in the incident a medical form is issued. Medical treatment for victims is free and accessible with the issuance of the police medical form. The victim is given the option as how the police can proceed, by taking the matter to court etc.
7. The Department of Gender Affairs (Nevis) hosted a series of interdepartmental training workshops in the first quarter of 2022 which included members of the police force on Nevis.
8. The State has recently launched a gender equality policy, thereby making the various genders aware of the respective rights; the launch of an active laws data base on line with the laws of St. Kitts-Nevis, available @ www.lawcommission.gov.kn.
9. Since the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act, 2014, there have been changes to the jurisdiction of the court regarding the treatment of domestic violence matters which are now heard before the High Court which illustrates the importance attached to them. However, whereas previously, domestic violence matters could be brought before the Magistrates Court by the Special Victims Unit (SVU) of the Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police Force, and dealt with by the Legal Aid Centre at no cost to the complainant. Applications heard before the High Court must be supported

by an affidavit, an interim draft order (ex parte order) and payment of stamp duty; the cost of which must be borne by the victim. Consequently, complainants may pay considerable sums for the documentation associated with the process. This has the potential to create a barrier to justice for individuals without the means to have their matter heard in court. In order to seek some sort of redress for complainants the Legal Aid Centre have waived their letter writing fees and will instead write a letter to the alleged perpetrator asking them to cease and desist. A meeting of relevant stakeholders was convened in June 2021 to consider the matter and it was recommended that an approach be made to the Attorney General to have domestic violence matters returned to the Magistrates Court, and to redress the perceived oversight in the drafting of the law so that matters may be dealt with at no cost, or low cost.

10. The matter has not yet been resolved, however, the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs provides support for clients unable to pay legal fees.

Increasing Awareness

11. As part of public awareness campaigns in 2020 and 2021, two painted murals were unveiled in public areas in Nevis as permanent reminders of the continued fight against gender-based violence and to encourage men and women to break the silence surrounding this taboo subject.

12. Workshops provide opportunities for women to learn about their rights, ventilate issues and discuss possible solutions. The National Gender Machinery works with its partners in the private sector and civil society to engage the public through televised panel discussions, radio programme appearances, school visits, on-the-street interviews and so forth, to increase awareness of the often hidden, but serious nature of gender-based violence.

Impact of the pandemic on women's rights and gender equality

Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues and questions

13. In St. Kitts and Nevis over 50 per cent of households are female-headed, single parent households. Statistics¹ reveal that in 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a decrease in total air and sea visitor arrivals by 73% to a total of 301,614. This level of decline represents the most significant negative impact on the tourism sector on record. Labour Department figures indicate that during the period March to December 2020, women's livelihoods in the tourism and manufacturing sectors were directly impacted at 64% and 85% respectively; the impact of which left many households without an income.

Stimulus Measures

14. The national stimulus packages aimed to protect and support the most vulnerable in society, including persons laid off due to the pandemic. The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) was scaled up to address the needs of those individuals whose household income had fallen below the monthly EC\$3,000 threshold. An additional 1,056² persons were added to the PAP since the start of the pandemic in 2020, of which, approximately 65% were women. Other social protection measures included the introduction of financial support for households with children living with disabilities; plus an additional income support programme, implemented in July 2021

¹ The COVID-19 Pandemic impact on Tourism Industry in St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Kitts and Nevis Statistics, (<https://www.stats.gov.kn/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/The-COVID-Impact-Tourism-2019-20-April.pdf>) [accessed 30.8.22].

² Government of St. Kitts and Nevis Budget Address 2022, p.2.

to bring relief to indigent and vulnerable persons. Federal government figures³ indicate that over 3,050 applications were approved for the Income Support Programme at a cost of \$8 million; and 157 families benefited from a pay-out of EC\$390,500 under the Disability Support Programme.

15. Government collaboration with the public and private sectors, and civil society facilitated the provision of support to families in the form of shopping vouchers, redeemable from participating local supermarkets. Notably, the COVID-19 Food Drive held by the St. Kitts and Nevis Chamber of Industry and Commerce resulted in the donation of food vouchers to the value of \$40,000 split between the St. Kitts and Nevis Red Cross Society, and the Ministry of Community Development, Gender Affairs and Social Services. Beneficiaries of the food drive included teen mothers and single women headed houses on St. Kitts and Nevis; over 80%⁴ of the recipients were women.

16. Parental support included Ministry of Education provision of digital devices and internet connection to eligible households to enable school children to continue their education online. During the school closure period the School Meal Programme made arrangements to permit parents to collect a school meal for their child(ren).

17. Recognising that many frontline essential workers are women, workers required to work during partial curfew periods were given priority in public and private sector establishments to purchase essential items.

18. In Nevis, the Department of Gender Affairs provided opportunities to women in the recovery efforts. These included three hundred (300) women who benefitted from skills training sessions during (March 2020–2022) to re-tool themselves and thus provide for their families; forty (40) women who participated in two business boot camps (6 week intensive training); and an Agripreneur Conference (August 2022) to equip women and girls with the knowledge to make their agricultural ventures profitable businesses. In the context of measures taken to contain the pandemic, the Covid-19 Task force was staffed by nearly 50% women and headed by a female.

Raised Public Awareness

19. The Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs partnered with the Business and Professional Women's Club, St. Kitts (BPW) as a sponsor of a 4-part mini docu-series focused on 'The Impact of COVID-19 on Women's Lives'. The BPW-produced series, offered short, and long term solutions to address pandemic-related issues; including physical health and well-being; work and home life balance; social and family support; and mental health and domestic abuse. The series was screened on national television during prime time viewing hours, and publicized on government information radio programming during the run up to the 2021 International Women's Day activities.

20. Partnership and technical support received from regional agencies facilitated the production of awareness-raising materials to educate the public about gender based violence and offer practical tips for help; including translation for the Spanish speaking community. Benefit was derived from information campaigns and training materials produced by regional agencies, such as CARICOM and OECS. The digital resources were shared with women's groups and civil society organisations.

21. Other government-led social protection measures included increased contact with vulnerable client groups to ascertain their needs, provision of care packages and

³ Government of St. Kitts and Nevis Budget Address 2022, p.3.

⁴ Data from signed receipts from Department of Gender Affairs (St. Kitts and Nevis), and Red Cross proposed listing.

meals. Capacity building training (with a focus on COVID-19) was delivered to teen mothers; whose participation was enabled through financial provision for childcare. Psychosocial support included dissemination of awareness-raising materials on health and well-being through traditional and social media channels; including training⁵ of frontline workers on psychosocial support and GBV responses in the context of COVID-19.

22. During the height of the pandemic the general public was kept abreast through daily briefings delivered through national media agencies. The National Emergency Operating Centre (NEOC) provided information and support to the general public, broadcast on national television and radio, including information on psychosocial support, child protection, social services etc. The NEOC dedicated 311 Hotline was available to provide information, in addition to summoning emergency assistance.

23. The Department of Gender Affairs continues to manage an on-call cell phone which victims of domestic violence are able to call to receive help in summoning police assistance. The department provides follow up, and referral to appropriate agencies as appropriate e.g. Special Victims Unit of the police force, counselling, and social assistance.

Economic Empowerment

24. As part of the COVID-19 response, the Federation participated in the UN Women MCO initiative to promote economic empowerment through the procurement of services for the production of cloth masks. The official handover⁶ of 500 cloth masks for vulnerable groups took place in October 2020.

25. The Women's Employment, Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion Project (WEEFIP) was launched in October 2021 to provide technical and financial support to unemployed women and female entrepreneurs in St. Kitts and Nevis in the current COVID-19 environment. Candidates benefited from course content delivered by local facilitators, in the areas of business strategy innovation, food and beverage entrepreneurship; and beauty entrepreneurship. Further information is contained at paragraph 19 (Economic Empowerment of Women).

National machinery for the advancement of women

Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues and questions

26. In November 2018 the development of the St. Kitts and Nevis National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan (GEPAP) was launched in collaboration with UNESCO. It was developed in two phases (2019 and 2021) and launched to stakeholders across the Federation in June and July 2022.

27. Consultants provided technical assistance during its development, with administrative support provided by the Department of Gender Affairs. Due to the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions the GEPAP Steering Committee did not meet physically in Phase 2, but were engaged virtually to review and provide feedback, including consultation on the final draft. Similarly, no trainings or seminars were held with stakeholders, as originally planned, but alternative forms of stakeholder engagement with the consultant were offered, including face to face and telephone interviews, virtual meetings, and targeted survey forms. A communications strategy

⁵ Free online course on Basic Psychosocial Skills: Training for COVID-19 Responders offered by the WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Development, promoted by the Mental Health Psychosocial Support Committee, and shared with networks.

⁶ <https://www.thestkitsnevisobserver.com/500-cloth-masks-produced-for-the-federations-vulnerable-groups/> [accessed 9.9.22].

raised public awareness through traditional and social media, including outreach to the Spanish speaking community.

28. The National Gender Machinery (NGM) has responsibility for spearheading and coordinating the implementation of the Action Plan of the National Gender Policy. The Action Plan contains guidance on policy strategies to standardize gender mainstreaming; including coordination of a four-component Gender Management System (GMS) comprised of the Cabinet Oversight Body, Gender Focal Points, Knowledge Management and Learning System; and Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning System. The Gender Focal Points are expected to be identified at the executive level in the government ministries, to which the policy domains refer. The Action Plan recommends that the NGM and Gender Focal Points prepare a monitoring and evaluation plan. A full review of progress in 2024 is also recommended.

29. In the first quarter of 2022, the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs entered into discussions with regional stakeholders with a view to receiving technical assistance to support national gender responsive statistical systems and frameworks in the implementation of the GEPAP.⁷

30. Funds were made available to hire additional staff in the Department of Gender Affairs (Nevis) to handle communication and policy.

National human rights institution

Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues and questions

31. At the present time, there is no formal national human rights institution. However, in 2018 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Aviation, established the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-Up (NMRF). This Mechanism is a Cabinet-approved, inter-ministerial committee created to assess and report on the Government's efforts to promote and protect human rights in the Federation. The Committee responds to recommendations from United Nations Treaty Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

Temporary special measures

Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues and questions

32. At the present time, no temporary special measures exist. However, in St. Kitts over 60% of women occupy the role of permanent secretary, which is the most senior decision making position in public life.

Discriminatory stereotypes

Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues and questions

33. The relevant ministries involved work alongside families and children in an effort to foster stronger relations, e.g. family counselling. Conversations regarding patriarchal attitudes are brought to the fore during public awareness activities, in particular those to mark global observances. The National Gender Machinery in St. Kitts and Nevis marked the occasion of International Day of the Boy Child on May 16, 2022 under the theme 'Boys Under Construction: Building Positive Attitudes in our Boys.' Activities across the Federation to recognize the challenges that boys

⁷ Caribbean Development Bank in the Regional Project Gender Responsive Statistics and Development of Gender Policy.

face included national addresses delivered by the ministers with responsibility for gender affairs in St. Kitts and Nevis, panel discussions, and government information broadcasts; in which the discriminatory nature of gendered roles and responsibilities within the home were raised and explored.

Gender-based violence against women

Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues and questions

34. However, gender or women are not specifically mentioned. A framework of legislative measures includes the introduction of, and revisions to, existing laws. Relevant legislation includes, but is not limited to the following.

35. Offences Against the Person Act, Cap.4.21 makes provision regarding offences against the person and related matters. It includes aggravated assaults on females, rape, abduction, defilement of women, attempts to procure abortion and concealing the birth of a child.

36. Trafficking in Persons (Prevention) Act, Cap.4.40 prescribes measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, with particular regard to victims who are women and children.

37. Status of Children Act, Cap.12.14 recognizes that all children are of equal status independent of whether the child is born out of wedlock. The Status of Children (Amendment) Act, 2013 further amended the Act in respect to the presumption of paternity, including the right of the mother to choose for the child to use her last name instead of the father's last name.

38. The Electronic Crimes Act, 4.41 has penalties for persons committing the offence of child pornography which include fines and imprisonment.

39. Equal Pay Act, 18.45 makes provision for the removal and prevention of discrimination based on the sex of the employee in paid employment.

40. Domestic Violence Act, Cap.12.04 provides protection for victims of domestic violence including violence against women and children and makes provision for the granting of protection orders. Under the Act domestic violence is defined as "any controlling or abusive behaviour that harms the health, safety or well-being of a person or any child" and the various forms of domestic violence are detailed. The Act came into force in November 2019.

41. No known steps taken to introduce the ex officio prosecution of offenders in domestic violence cases and to ensure their prosecution even upon withdrawal of a complaint, or in the absence of testimony, by the victim in court.

42. Gender based violence is an offence under the Offences Against the Persons Act, which will be dealt with strictly as a crime and not through mediation. Furthermore, only civil matters are settled through mediation.

43. Victims of sexual abuse are required to make a formal complaint to the Department of Gender Affairs, the Special Victims Unit of the Police Force, charges are brought by the Police and is prosecuted by the Director of Public Prosecution's Office (DPP), under these circumstances a case for discontinuation of the offence on account of bribery is untenable.

44. It is the discretion of the DPP to continue prosecuting a matter even if the complainant wishes to discontinue the matter. The DPP can still proceed if he or she is of the firm view that the case has a good prospect of securing a positive verdict, based on the evidence.

Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues and questions

45. The relocation of the Special Victims Unit of the Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police Force (RSCNPF) as an independent stand-alone unit, provides victims with a more private environment in which to report incidents. The Local Intelligence Unit of the RSCNPF generates domestic violence statistics that indicate the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. As at the time of writing, no statistical data was available on prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators of gender based violence against women.

46. The Department of Gender Affairs enjoys a close working relationship with the Special Victims Unit. Victims of gender based violence are supported through advocacy services, and inter-departmental referrals to relevant agencies, i.e. social assistance, counselling etc. The Ministry of Social Services and Gender Affairs provides financial assistance to victims of domestic violence who are unable to pay legal fees.

47. The Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints and Response Protocol was launched in November 2018. In 2019 two, one-day workshops held in St. Kitts and in Nevis were attended by 80 stakeholders. The PAHO-sponsored implementation activities educated stakeholders on their roles, responsibilities, and the procedures contained in the protocol. In addition, the workshop provided the agencies with participatory opportunities to review the various intake forms in the protocol and to network. The main lessons from the consultation highlighted the need for regular sensitization and continuous training, quality data collection, good working relationships, and clear operating procedures. To date, no formal monitoring or evaluation of the Protocol has taken place.

48. The Domestic Violence Strategic Plan is still in draft format.

Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues and questions

49. Although there is no toll-free hotline, the Department of Gender Affairs continues to operate an on-call cell phone which persons seeking assistance can call. Collaborative efforts with civil society and faith-based organizations also continue to provide support to victims of gender based violence. In 2022, the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with a privately-run shelter to provide short-term accommodation for female victims of gender based violence (including their children aged under 5 years). Victims are referred to the facility via the Ministry and provided with psychosocial and social assistance services, as necessary. Faith-based organisations continue to lend support in temporarily housing victims of domestic violence; one such unit officially opened in 2021.⁸

50. There is no government policy of housing allocation specifically for victims of violence.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues and questions**

51. There are no formal reports of women and girls being trafficked in the Federation, although there is knowledge that this may be happening.

52. St. Kitts and Nevis has ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol). The Federation has also enacted the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention) Act, Chapter 4.40,

⁸ <https://www.sknis.gov.kn/2020/02/20/department-of-gender-affairs-salutes-the-temple-for-opening-rehoboth-centre/> [accessed 9.9.22].

2008, which foresees the creation of a National Task Force to combat human trafficking.

53. As part of the technical assistance provided by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) within the framework of the ACP-EU Migration Action, an assessment was conducted in 2018, with meetings and training with diverse stakeholders in St. Kitts and Nevis in January and April of 2019. From these meetings, recommendations were provided to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the composition and function of a Task Force and Public Awareness Campaign to combat Smuggling of Migrants (SoM) and Trafficking of Human Beings (THB).

54. The recommendations outlined the basic aims, structures and functions of a National Task Force relevant to the current context or situation in St. Kitts and Nevis. There were a number of meetings by the relevant local stakeholders prior to COVID-19 to activate the task force, progress was paused following the onset of the pandemic. The Ministry of National Security was identified as the coordinating body to oversee its implementation.

55. A database was created, along with a manual to guide its usage by local Government IT experts for data collection from victims of THB and SoM as part of the technical assistance from IOM/ACP-EU. It is envisaged that the database would be expanded in the future to encompass information on investigations, prosecutions and convictions, as well as on the services and protection received by victims.

Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues and questions

56. Prostitution remains illegal in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Participation in political and public life

Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues and questions

57. In May 2022, following a Cabinet re-shuffle prior to the General Election, women represented 40% of the Cabinet of St. Christopher and Nevis. Following the General Election in August 2022, the newly appointed 8-member Cabinet comprises three women which represents 38% female political participation. There has been an overwhelming shift in attitudes towards female politicians. Seven female constituency representatives, across five political parties campaigned during the run up to the General Election. The increase in female political leadership was also the subject of a local radio programming. The weekly mini conversations with female candidates who campaigned for election was promoted in a series entitled “Running in Heels”⁹ hosted by the Junior Minister for Health and Gender Affairs, Nevis, The Hon. Hazel Brandy Williams prior to the federal General Election.

58. The Nevis Island Administration has provided a number of opportunities through workshops and conferences on, for example, Women in the Media facilitated by local media pioneers, Women in the Political Climate – Balancing Personal and Political Life; and Evaluating your Chances/Political Readiness facilitated by regional political analysts.

59. No information was available on the implementation of recommendations in the report of the Commonwealth on women and political parties in five small States of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

⁹ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJ6NUx3ALe8>) [accessed 24.6.22].

Education

Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues and questions

60. No information was available from the Ministry of Education.

Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues and questions

61. The laws of the Federation do not provide for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and as such this cannot be integrated into a curriculum. However, a robust sexual health curriculum is provided in schools.

62. The Project Viola Programme, which was established in 2002 continues to run. With the provision of financial assistance, the Department of Gender Affairs usually hosts an annual summer Capacity Building Workshop for adolescent mothers. The workshop comprises sessions on social and life skills, entrepreneurship and skills training, one component of which is sexual health and reproduction. Provision is also made for girls at risk to attend such training sessions.

Employment

Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues and questions

63. Participants or employees in the informal economy in St. Kitts and Nevis can access protections through self-employed coverage provided by the St. Christopher and Nevis Social Security Board. Where an informal worker does not have formal employment contracts with an employer, or operates unregulated (but legal) business activity, they may register as a self-employed person to access all benefits and protections offered by Social Security to employees in the formal sector, except for Employment Injury benefits. However, the Social Security system does not provide unemployment benefits at this time.

64. A female from the informal sector who registers with Social Security as a self-employed person has access to short term benefits like maternity, funeral, and sickness, as well as long term benefits like age, survivor's, and invalidity pensions among others.¹⁰ However, there are other ways for the informal worker to obtain protection as an employee. If a person requiring the service of the informal worker registers with social security as an employer, then they may make the requisite payments and reports to Social Security on their behalf. This would ensure that the informal employee can be covered for the duration of the work relationship. Some examples exist as homeowners register as employers for persons they hire as domestic workers. These employers may not be required to register with Inland Revenue as they are not conducting business that generates profit etc, or providing services that are accessible by the general public. This registration as an employer is mainly to ensure that their employee has Social Security coverage.

Information on the participation of women in the labour market is not available disaggregated by urban and rural location.

65. Within the Federation of St Christopher and Nevis, local legislation in the form of the Equal Pay Act chapter 18.45 serves as the framework by which women are ensured equal access to formal employment and to leadership positions within the private sector. At the Department of Labour, the Occupational Safety, Health, and Environment unit is tasked with conducting regular social inspections to ensure that

¹⁰ St. Christopher & Nevis Social Security Board, Things You Should Know booklet which available for download at <https://socialsecurity.kn/booklets/> or <https://socialsecurity.kn/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Things-You-Should-Know-2018.pdf> [accessed 8.9.22].

this act is enforced. In recent months the implementation of National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan has provided another avenue for the enforcing of this legislation.

66. The Objective of the Act is outlined below:

- Chapter 18.45 Equal Pay Act;
- *“An act to make provision for the removal and prevention of discrimination based on the sex of the employee in paid employment, and to provide for related or incidental matters.”*.

67. The Department of Labour has taken measures to increase social inspections into the informal economy. In addition, Labour officers are supported with continuous training and empowered with labour laws as contained with the Protection of Employment Act chapter 18.27 and the Social Security Act. These efforts are also supported by the Social Security Administration who has ensured that field officers and compliance officers are available to investigate labour concerns and non-compliance issues.

68. The National Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan launched in May 2022 is a supportive protocol to the Equal Act chapter 18.45 of 2012 aimed in supporting and mainstreaming gender concerns within Federation of St Christopher and Nevis. This document would provide additional legislative backing to ensure women have an equitable position in the workforce.

69. Despite the recommendations to give consideration in amending Equal Pay Act 2012 no action has been taken to date. The amendments once effected should clearly set out the principle of equal remuneration between men and women for work of equal value which includes equal remuneration for men and women performing similar or substantially similar work, and to further include equal remuneration for work carried out by men and women that is different in nature but of equal value. As it stands the draft Labour code has not been codified, the setback primarily due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Tripartite Committee has tabled several amendments to the Labour Code surfacing since the pandemic, it is expected that at the time of these amendments, any additional recommendations would be included.

70. The Ministry of Labor has strengthened its Public Relations unit to educate the general population through symposiums and workshops on the importance of equal pay, which is presently embedded into local laws through the Equal Pay Act chapter 18.45. The Ministry of Labor has also taken a decisive approach to integrate an online digital educational platform called National Classification Occupation System (NOCS) which provides guidelines as to how pay structures and pay scales should be adopted into the business environment according to level of education, work experience and skills attained.

71. The State enacted relevant provisions in the Public Service Act that makes sexual harassment in the workplace a punishable offence. In addition, the National Gender Equality and Action Plan provides for the foundational framework necessary in addressing all types of abuse to gender specific within the workplace.

72. In 2005 the Sexual Harassment Act was tabled before the National Tripartite Committee, which as it was modelled from the CARICOM Model Law. The Committee felt that further work was needed to tailor the legislation to our locale, and it was included in the Pegasus Draft Labour code then. The new draft Labour Code has two phases, an amalgamation of all labour laws on the books and the second stage addressing ILO Conventions and ratifications, as well as Sexual Harassment and Equal Opportunity in Employment.

73. The Department of Labour in December 2021 also submitted to the competent authority a recommendation to consider the ratification of Convention 190- Violence and Harassment 2019.

74. The subject of sexual harassment continues to be brought to the fore. Public awareness activities during the 16 Day Campaign Against Gender Based Violence in 2020 included a live-streamed debate on the CARICOM Model Bill on Sexual Harassment in the annual Mock Parliament session, led by the St. Kitts National Youth Parliament Association (SKNYPA). The St. Kitts and Nevis Defence Force is currently developing a Sexual Harassment and Inappropriate Behaviour Policy.

75. The Department of Gender Affairs (Nevis) is in the process of implementing a Women's Unemployment Registry by October 2022 in collaboration with the Department of Labour and the Chamber of Industry and Commerce to assist women in securing decent work as the economy recovers from the gasps of the pandemic. Registrants will benefit, where needed, from training to increase competency and employability. Assistance in resume writing, job application and interview preparedness will also be provided by a local NGO.

Health

Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues and questions

76. The Ministry of Health places a strong focus on key areas as delineated in the National Strategic Plan for; one such priority area is Non-Communicable Diseases. Robust activities include influencing lifestyle changes, scaling-up screening, and detecting new cases of NCDs. Epidemiological statistics indicate that over the period 2015 to 2020, the incidence of new cases of diabetes and hypertension decreased by 46.9% and 44.7% respectively. In addition, the average mortality data associated with diabetes and high blood pressure decreased from 83% to 63%.”.¹¹

77. Efforts continue to promote NCD-related initiatives which include:

- The development of the National Multi-Sectoral Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs;
- Completion of a population-based health survey (STEPS Survey) in collaboration with PAHO;
- Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) – refresher training for 6 facilitators;
- Metabolic Disease Project. Over 26 hours of workshops for nurses, doctors and social workers were conducted in 2021. The program engages a community health screening programme, to date, over 2,000 persons across the Federation have benefited from screening;
- Food Consumption project (“Improving Household Nutrition Security and Public Health”). The UWI and FAO funded project was conducted in 2021 to capture home-based dietary consumption with a view to improving local food systems;
- Health Promotion Unit Media campaign in collaboration with a local public health NGO to raise awareness of the harmful effects of sugar sweetened beverages, and the importance of drinking water;
- SKN Moves program, launched in 2019 focuses on healthy eating, increased physical activity and regular health screenings;

¹¹ <https://www.sknis.gov.kn/2020/12/17/robust-outreach-activities-to-reduce-the-incidence-and-impact-of-ncds-have-realised-significant-returns/> [accessed 25.8.22].

- Publication of SKN Manual of Food Portion Quantification in September 2021;
- Production and launch of “In Ya Kitchen Cookbook” with simple and healthy recipes designed to encourage the use of locally grown produce, and to assist in food budget management.

78. In October 2019, the Ministry of Health conducted a widespread public awareness/education programme geared toward sensitizing parents and adolescents to the Human Papilloma Vaccine (HPV). Targeted at grade six students, 90% coverage was reached in all primary schools. Children received their second and final dose in April/May of 2020. It is envisioned that a drastic decrease in the incidence of the related strain of cervical cancer will be seen in a few years, as efforts persist to mitigate against NCD's in the Federation.

79. Family Health Services are offered at seventeen (17) nursing districts in the Federation, including eleven (11) in St. Kitts and six (6) in Nevis. High-quality sexual and reproductive healthcare services for women are easily available, accessible and free of cost. Women have access to ante-natal care, post-natal care, family planning (contraceptive) clinic, pap smear clinic; and other medical/health screenings.

80. According to national guidelines, all pregnant women accessing care within the public health system are screened for HIV, Hepatitis B, Syphilis and HTLV 1 and HTLV 2 as a means of preventing Mother to Child Transmission.

81. Other health screenings are conducted to:

- Monitor the progress of the pregnancy in order to ensure good maternal health and normal foetal development;
- Identify deviation from the normal and provide early and appropriate treatment intervention to ensure that the woman reaches the end of her pregnancy physically and psychologically prepared for labour and delivery;
- During pregnancy, women are only vaccinated with the Diphtheria and Tetanus, Influenza and, most recently, the COVID-19 vaccines.

82. During pregnancy, all women are engaged in educational sessions that help to equip them with essential knowledge and skills and to identify support mechanisms to manage the post-natal period successfully.

83. Annual pap smear screening forms part of a woman's preventive health care plan. There is no doubt, that early detection of abnormal changes in the cervix will therefore lead to early intervention and prevent loss of life.

84. Further progress attained by the Ministry of Health pertaining to women's health¹² includes the development of a “Maternal, Newborn, Child & Adolescent Health Guidelines Manual” in collaboration with PAHO/WHO which will guide the direction of maternal and child health practices in the Federation; and the commissioning of a Maternity Guide Manual, consisting of antenatal, intranatal and postnatal information, including benefits of breastfeeding which will assist in achieving the ‘baby-friendly hospital’ status to promote healthier babies and individuals.

85. The Business and Professional Women's Club (BPW)¹³ has on two occasions partnered with the Ministry of Health to host wellness clinics. The sessions were held on a Saturday morning and arrangements made to open health clinics at which screenings were provided for cervical cancer, blood pressure, diabetes and eye health. Although such services are available free of charge at healthcare clinics, the wellness clinics provided access to women unable to attend clinics during the week due to

¹² Government of St. Kitts and Nevis, Estimates 2021, p.14-11 [accessed 30.8.22].

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-p-OKMVKidI> [accessed 14.9.22].

employment commitments. Over 400 persons were tested. One further example includes a footcare clinic for senior citizens.

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86. Women accessing the family planning service are provided with all necessary information to guide them toward choosing the contraceptive method that is best suited for them to delay/prevent unwanted/unplanned pregnancies.

87. School children can only access family planning services with parental consent. The emergency contraception is not available within the public health care system and does not provide services for abortion. Abortion remains illegal in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Economic empowerment of women

Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues and questions

88. The drafting of the National Social Protection Policy and Action Plan¹⁴ has been completed with the assistance of UNICEF. The vision of the policy is the attainment of Universal Social Protection and to support a high quality of life for the people of the Federation. The Government provides support for individual and families through services and programming to protect the population against chronic poverty and hunger, shocks, destitution, and social exclusion. Built on a human-rights based approach, the National Social Protection Policy includes gender responsiveness in understanding and responding to the different needs of women and men and girls and boys.

Economic Initiatives

89. In addition to the government's stimulus package and other forms of social assistance for workers directly affected; the Federation's efforts to re-tool women and diversify their skills in response to times of uncertainty included a number of economic initiatives.

90. Young men and women were identified as under-served in starting up and operating small businesses, the Ministry of Finance in the Nevis Island Administration (NIA), in 2019 officially launched an Entrepreneurship Fund¹⁵ aimed at encouraging more women and youth participation. Recognising the challenges faced in accessing loans through the usual lending mechanisms, Government and Taiwanese-assisted funds provided loans at nominal interest rates, to small businesses and start-ups owned, or operated by women and youth aged thirty-five and under.

91. In addition to the economic empowerment initiatives offered on the island of Nevis, other measures include backyard farming seminar (2020), provision of grow boxes to under-privileged families to encourage sustainable backyard farming practices; and staff assistance to women in the acquisition of loans from the Nevis Cooperative Credit Union.

92. The Small Business Development (SBDC) supports the economic empowerment of women through training, for example business plan writing, networking through trade fairs, accessing duty-free concession and training in business principles. The SBDC also partners with organisations that aim to enhance the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector.

¹⁴ Government of St. Kitts and Nevis, 2022 Estimates, Vol 2, p. 09-2.

¹⁵ <https://nia.gov.kn/entrepreneurship-fund-for-women-and-youth-launched-by-nevis-island-administration/> [accessed 14.9.22].

93. The Business and Professional Women's Club host a number of activities, one of which includes a monthly 'New to You' sale of new, and nearly new clothing, conservatively priced (under EC\$50), to assist women to purchase attire to enter into the world of work. In addition the NGO provides coaching sessions with high school girls.

Ministry of Tourism and Transport

94. The Ministry of Tourism and Transport worked closely with the COVID-19 Task Force to develop the COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols to revise industry standards and practices. 5,205 workers across the Federation were exposed to the Travel Approved Training and Certification Programme¹⁶ with all fees waived to secure maximum participation.

95. A significant percentage of micro, MSMEs are operated by women from single-parent households. The Ministry facilitated the participation of forty six (46) (primarily women) MSMEs in the sector who will benefit from the 18-month Future Tourism Business Adaptation Programme,¹⁷ jointly funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the University of the West Indies (UWI) and Frankfurt School of Finance and Management.

96. The Ministry directly employs MSMEs and hundreds of citizens and residents to provide goods and services for the St. Kitts Music Festival,¹⁸ one the longest surviving festivals attracts local, regional and international patrons.

Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship Development

97. The Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) introduced across three OECS member states (St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) the Taiwan ICDF Project Proposal for Assisting the Economic Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean Post Pandemic Era. For the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis the project was dubbed "Technical Assistance for Women's Employment, Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion in St. Kitts and Nevis. The project was launched at an Agreement Signing Ceremony on Tuesday October 11th 2021. The Agreement was signed by the Minister with responsibility for Social Development the Hon. Eugene Hamilton and Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) H.E. Michael Chau- Horng Lin.

98. The project is implemented by the Taiwanese Technical Mission with support from the key public sector implementing agencies. This includes the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs, Small Business Development Center (St. Kitts), Small Enterprise Development Unit (Nevis) and the Advanced Vocational Education and Training Center (AVEC) on St. Kitts. A project team was retained to include the positions of Project Coordinator, Communications Officer and Trainee Liaison. All three positions have been filled by competent women.

99. Technical advice is provided by a National Steering Committee which is made up of the main implementing agencies and other public and private sector establishments who play a key role in women's employment and entrepreneurial matters. See full list in the Appendix.

100. The project was designed to support the boosting of the economy after the pandemic and the maintenance of social stability through the strengthening of women's economic empowerment. The project provides financial assistance support

¹⁶ Government of St. Kitts and Nevis, 2022 Estimates, Vol 2, p. 11-2.

¹⁷ Government of St. Kitts and Nevis, 2022 Estimates, Vol 2, p. 11-2.

¹⁸ Government of St. Kitts and Nevis, 2022 Estimates, Vol 2, p. 11-4.

for micro-enterprises and women combining credit guarantee mechanism and capacity building of employment and entrepreneurship to improve financing opportunities for enterprise. The main components are institutional function enhancement, vocational skills training for women, counselling for women's entrepreneurship and development and counselling for MSME growth and development. The project targets unemployed women over the age sixteen (16) years with the interest and desire to become entrepreneurs; women entrepreneurs, women business owners who employ up to 1/3 of employees being women; and MSME's that employ up to 1/2 of employees who are women.

Vocational Skills Training:

101. Seven (7) topical areas were offered to interested unemployed women divided as four (4) topics on St. Kitts and three (3) on Nevis. The training sessions included topical areas critical to the creation of a business plan which was later pitched to a panel of judges in order to determine winners who received cash grants to commence the start or improvement of the business ideas. The summary is as follows:

St. Kitts:

<i>Training Topics</i>	<i>Total # of Applicants</i>	<i>Total # of Trainees</i>	<i>Total # of Successful Trainees</i>	<i>Total # of Recipients of Grant Funding</i>
Business Strategy and Innovation 1	206	45	30	10
Food and Beverage Entrepreneurship	47	35	31	10
Beauty Care Entrepreneurship	114	40	36	11
Business Strategy and Innovation II	56	34	28	9
GRAND TOTAL	367	154	125	40

Nevis:

102. Data from Nevis to follow.

103. The Project also included a Women's Empowerment Contest, eligible to registered non-governmental organizations with the Financial Services Commission and community-based non-profit organizations registered with government partnering agencies, intended to promote and highlight grassroots initiatives. The maximum amount of support is up to EC\$80,000 (eighty thousand Eastern Caribbean Dollars) per project idea.

Small Business Bootcamps and Expo

104. Work towards sustainability in response to the hardships posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and female entrepreneurship was further developed through small business boot camps¹⁹ held in 2020 and designed to empower men and women economically. The boot camps, held in Nevis, enhanced the business of existing entrepreneurs and equipped potential entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge to move their ventures from conceptualisation to actualisation. Training topics included marketing, customer service, financing, financial management, pricing, social security, taxation, legal structure of business, labelling and quality standards as required by the Bureau of Standards. In keeping with the theme for 'Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow', The Gender Department in Nevis hosted its first Gender Expo in March 2022 as part of its activities marking Women's Month to showcase goods and services.

¹⁹ <https://nia.gov.kn/first-business-boot-camp-completed-gender-minister-proud-of-participants/> [accessed 9.9.22].

Entrepreneurs also acquired skills from training sessions in the areas of fish trap making, plumbing, basket weaving, hat and fascinator making, sewing, and fruit and vegetable carving which have enabled them to generate income.

Rural women

Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues and questions

105. Currently, there is no official policy or programme within the Department of Agriculture that targets women or women in rural areas in St. Kitts. Notwithstanding women in agriculture and in general have equal opportunity to access farmlands, although the agriculture sector is still dominated by males. To date, farmer registration indicates that there was a significant increase in farmer registration over the past 5 years to approximately 1,599 farmers, of which 216 (14%) were females and 1,383 (86%) were males.

106. The Fahies Women Cooperative Society that was established after the closure of the sugar industry and it is still active and continued to receive the support of the Ministry of Agriculture. Over the past four years this group benefited from several agro-processing workshops geared towards expanding and enhancing their livelihood. Such training focused on processing of breadfruit chips, breadfruit flour, guava cheese and wine.

107. The Department of Agriculture continued its initiative to build resilience to a crisis such as COVID-19 through its Farmer Assistance Program to which both male and female farmers, whether from rural or urban areas, have equal access. Thus far, 203 farmers (25 females and 178 males) benefited from this programme, where they received wire, fencing poles, ground cover, seeds, fertilizer, insecticide, water storage tanks and green houses.

108. At the department of Agriculture, more women have been promoted to managerial and sub-managerial positions. Currently, the Strategic Operation Committee constitutes more than 50% females.

109. The Ministry of Agriculture continues to support the development of women farmers. In 2022, several women farmers were engaged in fruitful discussions with the purpose of implementing a range of measures to further support local women's participation in the agricultural sector. Examples of such include the relationship with a number of women within the Federation to form the St. Kitts chapter of the Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP).²⁰ Special extension and advisory services will also form part of the ministry's support to women and this support will enable women to understand the market and how it operates and it will enable them to know the needs of the market both in products, quality and volume.

110. Other projects include the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Water Energy Food (WEF) Nexus project which seeks to incorporate gender mainstreaming in its implementation. Twenty (20) farmers were selected to benefit directly from the WEF Nexus project that aims, in 2022, to install and equip the farms with solar powered drip irrigation, water harvesting and storage systems. The project stipulated that 20% of the farmers selected should be women. Of the 20 beneficiary farmers selected, 6 are women (30%). Training will comprise installation, operation, maintenance, and management of the systems that allow them to adapt to climate change challenges, with the potential to increase farm output, productivity, and household income. As part of the gender mainstreaming focus of the project, planned

²⁰ <https://www.sknis.gov.kn/2022/03/11/ministry-of-agriculture-provides-platforms-for-female-food-producers-to-succeed/> [accessed 9.9.22].

focus group sessions on gender mainstreaming in agriculture aim to bring together women farmers, women employed in technical and agricultural extension positions. The sessions provide opportunities to raise concerns, constraints, give perspective on disadvantages faced relating to access to resources, support services, shortfalls of existing their recommendations for solutions going forward.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues and questions

111. The Department of Gender Affairs (Nevis) has executed women-focused televised panel discussions under the theme: “SKN Women and a Sustainable Future,” shining a light on gender equality and its impact on disaster risk and climate change. Meetings with the Federal Ministry of Sustainable Development to partner in the implementation the project “Improving Environmental Management through Sustainable Land Management in St. Kitts and Nevis.” The Department played a vital role explaining the importance of gender mainstreaming in the project’s implementation. In a similar vein, the department has held meetings with the Federal Ministry of Sustainable Development on the execution of local and regional conferences on Women and Climate Action.

112. The St. Kitts and Nevis National Gender Equality Policy notes that the 2021 Biennial Update Report (BUR) for Saint Kitts & Nevis conducted assessments with varying publics on the current level of engagement and inclusion of gender issues and vulnerable groups in climate change planning engagement and processes. The Report also assessed ways to enhance their adaptive capacity. Among the findings of relevance to the Policy are:

- Climate change affects and impacts men and women and other vulnerable groups differently (different roles and responsibilities at the household and community levels);
- Women are more exposed and vulnerable to climate change because they are often poorer, receive less education, and are not involved in political and household decision-making processes that affect their lives;
- Shared vulnerabilities of the different groups affect their participation in productive processes and decision-making and hampered climate change awareness.

113. The Gender Policy promotes a gender-responsive approach to climate change, the environment and sustainable development, and men’s and women’s equal participation in decision-making on all aspects of the sector.

114. Despite the challenges faced, women’s active contribution in building resilient communities is well documented; mirrored by the 2022 International Women’s Day Awards Ceremony that honoured several women who had made significant contributions in the areas of science, the digital, blue and green economies; and the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Marriage and family relations

Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues and questions

115. The State has enacted the following suite of Legislation to address the issues raised in this question, they are: The Probation & Child Welfare Board Act, Cap.12.12 Child Justice Act, Cap.4.15 & Children Care and Adoption Act, Cap.12.01.

116. The Divorce Act, Cap.12.03 did not define property in the strict context of divorce proceedings, however, property is defined in the Interpretation Act, Cap. 1.02 as: “property” includes money, goods, things in action, land and every description of property, whether real or personal; also obligations, easements and every description of estate, interest and profit, present or future, vested or contingent, arising out of or incidental to property as herein defined.

117. The Divorce Act, did not make a special distinction between women with disabilities as opposed to women without disabilities, with respect to parental rights, however given the Constitutional protection afforded against non-discrimination on all grounds, a woman with a disability would not be treated less favourable on account of that disability.

Appendix

Representatives of the National Steering Committee: Technical Assistance for Women's Employment, Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion in St Kitts and Nevis

- Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs (SK) - Chair
- Small Enterprise Development Unit – Ministry of Finance – Nevis – Deputy Chair
- Taiwanese Technical Mission
- Department of Gender Affairs (St. Kitts)
- Department of Labour (St. Kitts)
- Small Business Development Center – Ministry of Industry and Commerce (St. Kitts)
- Advanced Vocational Education and Training Center (AVEC)
- Ministry of Education (St. Kitts)
- National Women's Council
- ECCB Credit Unit
