

# Newsletter

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**CEDAW COMMITTEE**  
of Trinidad and Tobago

**MISSION** - Ensure the Convention mandates are upheld, and the recommendations highlighted in the Closing Observations are implemented in the context of Trinidad and Tobago.

**VISION** - A sensitized, knowledgeable and educated citizenry, on the convention and its mandates who will hold all stakeholders accountable for its comprehensive implementation.

Issue Editor, Dr. Hilary Bernard

## Women's Autonomy in Changing

### Economic Scenarios *Beatrice Mateyo*

Gender inequalities are an obstacle to gender equality and women's empowerment. The ever changing scenarios faced globally are proof of the urgent need to make decisive steps to ensure existing strategies to address this include gender equality and women's autonomy at their centre while also guaranteeing the rights of everyone without exception. Women's power relative to men varies across different spheres of life such as in business, leadership, technology. This affects the decisions and influence that men and women will have on things concerning finances, place of residence, children's health care and household decisions. There have been a variety of ways that have been used to analyze women's autonomy but a fundamental aspect of this autonomy is women's access to and control over resources. While there has been this recognition of women's autonomy as having many dimensions, the assumption that these dimensions correlate with one another is still prevalent. A general mistake that most prac-

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## Una Extraordinaria Experiencia... De Puerto Rico para CEDAW South to South

*Tanisha Gaspar*

Mi nombre es Tanisha Desiree Gaspar Clemente. Soy una joven estudiante, promotora de salud y organizadora comunitaria de la organización de base feminista Taller Salud en Puerto Rico. Vengo de un pueblo afrodescendiente llamado Loiza, localizado en la costa noreste del país. Un pueblo e gran riqueza cultural e histórica, pero a su vez marcado por los prejuicios sociales y situaciones violentas que a través del tiempo han afectado a toda la comunidad, pero sobre todo nos afecta a nosotras las mujeres. Por eso día tras día en nuestra organización nos encontramos luchando por erradicar estas situaciones violentas con la creación de espacios participativos en los que se fomentan la educación sexual-reproductiva y comunitaria enfocada en los derechos de las mujeres. En Taller Salud creemos en la formación y en el desarrollo de liderato de jóvenes mujeres. Por eso el verano pasado 2019,

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## Reflections

*Terry Ince*

We're celebrating our 3rd anniversary with the 3rd issue of our newsletter as we stand on the cusp of a new decade - Generation Equality. Generation Equality - UN Women's campaign of realizing women's rights for an equal future' on the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action - demand equal pay for equal work; equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work; an end to sexual harassment and violence against women and girls; health care services that respond to their needs and their equal participation in political life and in decision making in all areas of life. As we enter the 41st year since the CEDAW convention was adopted at the United Nations, it is time for the state commitments to come to full fruition. The commitments made at the Beijing conference and known as the platform for action and the substantive articles (1-17) of the CEDAW convention.

**Times Up!!**

### CORE VALUES

**C** Collaborate Credible Capable Commitment Consistent  
**E** Excellence Effective Expedient  
**D** Diversity Dependable Development  
**A** Advocacy Audacity Assurance Assertive Accountable  
**W** Wisdom Willpower

### QUICK GUIDE

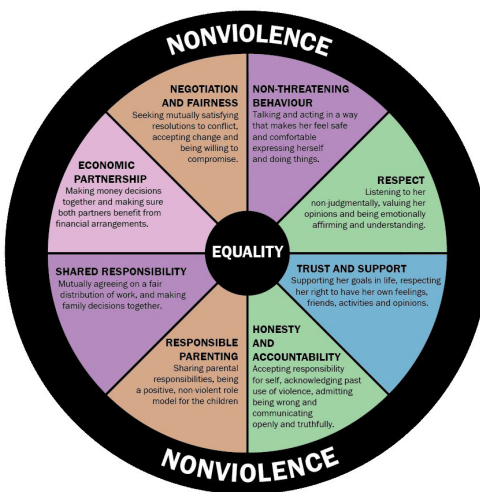
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CEDAW @40  
GENERATION  
EQUALITY



## Women's Autonomy continued

tioners make is to assume that economic empowerment only will bridge the gender equality gap. A woman's autonomy may be manifested through her control of major resources, such as having her name on a housing title, owning land, as well as through control of minor resources such as having cash on hand for herself or household expenditure or the lack of it. True autonomy for women may be realized with economic empowerment as well as the ability to make decisions regarding variety of choices. This is an important part of women's empowerment which will affect other aspects of her life such as access to health services, education etc. However, it is not enough to assume that increases in women's labour force participation or economic activities means an increase in control over money in the household. For women, earning money is not the same as controlling income because household relations of distribution are created by men and women through gendered interactions within specific cultural and economic contexts. These may match, reinforce or even reverse principles that govern money outside the household. My experience has shown that household allocative systems are influenced by gender ideologies which work to reinforce traditional gender roles which may still limit the woman's sphere of decision making despite having the financial muscle. On the other hand, women who are already disadvantaged relative to their partners in terms of market earnings may experience household allocative systems that either fail to reverse that disadvantage or, in some cases, may compound it. Although earning a wage for women might alter gender relations within the household, it is not easy to demonstrate that these changes translate into holistic autonomy for women as so many factors are needed to be put in place in order to achieve autonomy.



In conclusion, to address these structural challenges of gender inequality, there is need for holistic transformation from the individual, household level all the way to government's commitment to develop policies that can overcome them to have a positive effect on women's lives.

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**Nikita Diaz conversing with a guest during 'Collaborate for Impact' workshop.**

## Una extraordinaria experiencia continued

tuve la oportunidad de participar en el curso intensivo CEDAW South to South en Trinidad y Tobago.

Una experiencia que catalogo como extraordinaria pues ueron dos semanas de trabajo intenso, pero llenas de aprendizaje, intercambio cultural, pero sobre todo de creación de lazos con mujeres de diferentes partes del mundo. The University of the West Indies se convirtió en mi hogar y en un espacio de saberes compartidos y tradiciones. Conocí a mujeres de Surinam, Malawi, Etiopía, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Canadá, Bahamas y las anfitrionas de Trinidad y Tobago. Mujeres llenas de valor y mucho conocimiento para compartir con las demás. Participamos de orientaciones, grupos de trabajo, exposiciones y conversatorios. Aprendí aspectos significativos de mis derechos como mujer y conocí de dónde nació la inquietud de que a las mujeres se nos considerara como personas. Creamos un plan de acción que una vez llegué a Puerto Rico, lo pusimos en marcha en la organización. Hemos iniciado un proyecto de formación para

jóvenes Afrocaribeñas como líderes feministas y activistas de justicia social.

Creamos un espacio de sanación y aprendizaje colectivo usando el arte, la educación popular y el juego como destrezas para la vida y la organización social.

Hoy por hoy puedo decir que este curso me ayudó a mi formación como joven líder comunitaria y feminista. Conocer mis derechos, me hace poner en perspectiva de la realidad en la que vivimos nosotras las mujeres en todas las partes del mundo. En países que han ratificado en la convención y los que no, como mi país, Puerto Rico. De todas formas, el no haber ratificado por ser una colonia de Estados Unidos, no es un impedimento para hacerme presente en estos espacios. Cree conexiones, recibí valiosas recomendaciones para que podamos en mi país, continuar trabajando con los derechos de nosotras las mujeres. Gracias a esta extraordinaria experiencia me convertí en una orgullosa CEDAWISTA, que constantemente lucha por sus derechos y por los derechos de todas las mujeres.

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## Regionally Speaking: Women's Affairs

Terry Ince

Caribbean nations have played a leading role in all the major United Nations-organised conferences on women: In Mexico City in 1975; in Copenhagen in 1980; in Nairobi in 1985; and at the last conference - and perhaps the most significant - convened in September 1995 in China, which produced the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA): the globe's current framework for gender equality.

The 25-year anniversary of the BPfA converges with the 12th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Minister's Meeting (12WAMM), and it is therefore fitting that the Caribbean region, with the support of the Commonwealth Foundation, was represented in the first civil society roundtable to directly feed into the ministers meeting itself. I proudly represented the Caribbean as founder and convener of the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago (CCoTT), a body that reviews regional progress on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Woman (CEDAW). As a member of the Caribbean team, I solicited inputs on the four pillars identified for the roundtable: Violence Against Women; Women's Leadership; Gender and Climate Change; and Women's Economic Empowerment; and assessments from experts, advocates, partners, and other non-state actors in Trinidad and Tobago. Building on those responses and my individual research, I worked with my colleagues from the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, who represented five additional Caribbean island nations to create a picture of these issues in the Caribbean and equally, if not more importantly, what recommendations we believe our region needs going forward. A good example of the preparation we undertook for 12WAMM is a working session that engaged Caribbean experts on the recommendations made by the United Nations CEDAW committee in Geneva on violence against women. Experts met to form a regional picture of five key

factors that contribute to the problem: 1) violence committed by intimate partners and other forms of domestic violence 2) inadequate number of shelters 3) delay in adopting regulations for the Sexual Offences Act in order to introduce a sex offender registry 4) low number of arrests for breaches of protection orders and 5) law enforcement officials' treatment of domestic violence cases. Later, at the CEDAW South to South Institute, we examined violence against women through the lens of human rights with a range of regional experts, activists, and advocates. Flexibility around time slots for working groups ensured all participants were able to provide input and arrive at a consensus.

Despite everyone's best efforts to prepare for big international meetings, they carry the risk that some voices will drown out others. I am pleased to report that every representative was heard in equal measure at the civil society roundtable at 12WAMM: this was achieved in part by permitting flexibility around time slots for working groups, to ensure all participants were able to provide input and arrive at a consensus. Perspectives shared by representatives from each region of the Commonwealth highlighted what we share in common: the struggle to eradicate violence against women, achieve women's leadership and economic empowerment, address climate change, and build coherent and sustainable movements. As Small Island Developing States grappling with climate inaction, we naturally identified with Pacific Islanders and formed new alliances. But we also benefited from local experience too: I won't forget the rich experience of being welcomed at the Maasai community in Kajiado, 80 km south of Nairobi, where I saw, first-hand, the exceptional work being done by a local community organisation to address women's economic empowerment and leadership. Salaam!

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## Women's Economic Autonomy and Discriminatory Legislation

Sharifa Ammon

**Women's economic autonomy is described as women's capacity to generate income and personal financial resources, based on access to paid work under conditions of equality with men.** [ECLAC, *Report of the technical meeting to examine the economic autonomy of women in the Caribbean*, (LC/CAR/L.509) 24 January 2017].

According to UNWomen, it is one of the central components to realizing women's rights and gender equality. While Trinidad and Tobago has taken substantial steps to ensure that gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution, recognized in a broad range of local legislation and through the ratification of international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), gender inequality persists in the culture and practices of state and non state entities. This discrimination and inequality is often engrained into the very essence of the socio-political structures that are meant to provide solace. For reference, the Industrial Relations Act (Chap 88:01) which seeks to provide protection and redress for workers, excludes

### EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT CORNER

#### INTERNAL

- Engaging with CEDAW (online)
- Convention Review Series - Deconstructing CEDAW articles

#### REGIONAL

- Symposium on mainstreaming gender in Water Resource Management for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Caribbean
- Regional consultation of the UN Working group on Discrimination against Women - Mexico City
- XIV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile

#### COMMUNITY / NATIONAL

- Outreach : The 'ME' in CEDAW Community engagements through collaboration
- Collaborate for Impact Part II
- CEDAW @40 Forum to examine four decades of commitments, engagements, progress, and unfulfilled promises. Reflect! Refocus! Renew!

#### INTERNATIONAL

- Civil Society round-table in advance of 12WAMM - Nairobi
- Strategic Dialogue on Women's Human Rights and Climate Justice - Bangkok



## CCoTT in Action



### BREAKFAST FORUM

MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS  
TOWER, GOVERNMENT PLAZA, 12TH FLOOR  
WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 18, 2019, 8:15AM-12:30PM

- 8:15am Welcome Remarks- Terry Ince, Convener-CCoTT
- 8:20am Remarks- Ms. Jacqueline Johnson,  
Permanent Secretary- Office of the Prime Minister  
Gender and Child Affairs
- 8:30am Panel 1 Discussion  
Grace Talma and Prof. Rhoda Reddock
- 8:55am Interactive Session



END GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



## Women's Discriminatory Legislation cont'd

domestic workers, who by and large are women. As these workers are not formally recognized, resultantly, their grievances including unfair or unsafe working conditions, extra work which is unpaid, personal abuse (verbal or physical), or even arbitrary dismissal with no hope of benefits - cannot be adjudicated under the Industrial Relations Act [Shereen Ali, "Raw deal for domestic workers," *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian* (May 17th 2014)]. Furthermore it is no secret that our girls outperform boys at every stage from nursery to tertiary yet only 60% of Trinbagonian women compared to 81% of Trinbagonian men participate in the workforce (*The Global Gender Gap Report 2016*). While on the surface, both men and women have the same legal rights in employment, education and property, the gender wage gap as of 2016 was US\$22,656 (for women) a year, while for men earn US\$41,527 (*The Global Gender Gap Report 2016*) and women account for less than 14% of land ownership. [Johan-Boodram, Juliana. "Gender, Poverty and Land Rights: Gender, Poverty and Land Ownership Linkages, *Global Perspectives on Women's Access to Land Rights & the Way Forward*." (2011) *University of the West Indies*.]

It is abundantly clear that tackling discriminatory legislation which prevents women from realizing gender equality is a pressing issue. However there must be simultaneous efforts to drive the institutionalization of mechanisms for the advancement of women and the implementation of gender main-streaming strategies that are desperately needed if we really are to foster women's financial independence and full participation, to finally give effect to the statement, "when women work, economies grow."

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- International Woman's Day Rally and March Saturday 7 March  
Queens Park Savannah
- 64th Session on the Status of Women (CSW64) Virtual, NYC
- Zero Tolerance on Domestic Violence Action January - November
- Generation Equality

- Forums (TBA)
- Discussion series April - December
- CHOGM Women's Forum - June 2020 Rwanda
- Fundraiser Gala September/October
- Annual Champion your Rights Run Walk - November/December

Written by Melissa Pulchan

WOMEN BE FREE

Kind and Beautiful but I know it's hard Sometimes  
With all your struggles in mind to move on and leave them all Behind  
But remember you are more than your past or what they Say  
Smile, cause you are so much better in every Way  
Don't let their ignorance bring you Shame  
You go out there and make yourself a Name  
They who looked down on you are nothing but Dust  
Forget them, they will get their share of what is Just  
So Women Be Free  
And let everyone See  
You are so much More  
Than what they Decree  
Your sole purpose on this earth is not to be Enslaved  
Under the guise of girlfriend, wife,

mother, grandmother, sister or in their minds - Maid  
As mad as it seems we are not just here to Procreate  
We possess gifts that fill this world, there's no Debate  
Use your hands and let them make Waves  
Unchain your feet and dance for Days  
Let your voices liberate us All  
So all women can be free and answer your Call  
Blessed are the mothers who bring forth Life  
And blessed too are the ones who bring forth Light  
Woman you are in all your Glory  
No man on this earth can compare to your Story  
So all Women be Free  
And let everyone See  
You are so much More  
Than what they Decree

Thank You for your contribution

Kebrisse James, Nikita Diaz, Melissa Pulchan, Terry Ince, Sharifa Ammon, Beatrice Mateyo (Malawi). Tanisha Gaspar (Puerto Rico)  
Council Members - Terry Ince, Lisa Theodore, Asha Permanand, Crystal Roberts, Nigel Phillips

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Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is established under article 17 of the Convention. It is composed of 23 experts who are elected by secret ballot by States parties. The Committee is tasked with the review of the reports of States parties submitted in accordance with article 18 of the Convention. The Optional Protocol to the Convention, which entered into force in December 2000, empowers the Committee to consider communications submitted by individuals or groups of individuals alleging violations of the Convention in States parties to the Convention and the Optional Protocol. The Optional Protocol also entitles the Committee of its own motion to inquire into grave or systematic violations of the Convention in those States parties where this procedure is applicable, in accordance with articles 8 and 10. Committee members serve in their personal capacities, and not as representatives of the States parties which present their candidature.