

Report of the UN-Women Executive Board Field Visit to the Caribbean

18-23 May 2019

Introduction

1. The annual UN-Women field visit of the Executive Board took place to the Caribbean Multi-Country Office (MCO) from 18 to 23 May 2019. The field visit is mandated by the Executive Board decision 2017/8. The delegation comprised the President and four Vice-Presidents of the UN-Women Executive Board, and two additional Executive Board member representatives from the Eastern European Group and the Western European and Others Group.
2. The purpose of the field visit was to observe how the UN-Women Caribbean MCO contributes to UN-Women's mandate to support national development priorities and the implementation of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021 in the Caribbean sub-region. The objective was also to understand how the UN-Women MCO works collaboratively with the offices of the UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in the sub-region, to support and contribute to the implementation of the sub-region's development priorities and plans and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. The delegation expresses its sincere gratitude to the governments of Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Barbados, and Antigua and Barbuda for their hospitality, for facilitating the visit and for the opportunity to engage in fruitful discussions on gender equality, women's empowerment and the rights of women and girls, with Heads of State and Government, Ministers and other high-level dignitaries.
4. The delegation would like to express its appreciation to the UN-Women Multi-Country Office and the entire UN-Women team for preparing a comprehensive agenda for the visit and ensuring a smooth trip. The delegation would like to express its appreciation to the UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in the sub-region. The delegation would also like to thank the Secretary of the UN-Women Executive Board and his team for ensuring a well-organised and interesting visit.

Visit details

5. The delegation was received on the highest level in all four countries visited and had the opportunity to engage with national gender machineries, implementing partners as well as programme beneficiaries.
6. In Trinidad and Tobago, the delegation was received by the President, Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes; the Prime Minister, the Honourable Dr Keith Rowley; the Minister of State for Gender, the Honourable Ayanna Webster-Roy; the Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses; Members of the Tobago House of Assembly, as well as the President and Judges of the Caribbean Court of Justice and Members of the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers. The delegation also attended

the launch of UN-Women's Cultural Collaboration for Beijing+25 and UN-Women's 10th anniversary with The Lost Tribe.

7. In Grenada, the delegation was received by the Minister of Social Development, Housing and Community Development, the Honourable Delma Thomas. The delegation also met the Gender-Based Violence Unit in the Division of Gender and Family Affairs, the Royal Police Force of Grenada Special Victims Unit and the Legal Aid and Counselling Clinic.
8. In Barbados, the delegation was received by the Prime Minister, the Honourable Mia Mottley; the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the Honourable Jerome Walcott, and the Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs, the Honourable Cynthia Forde. The delegation also met with National Disaster Officers, domestic violence survivors, justice partners and civil society representatives.
9. In Antigua and Barbuda, the delegation was received by the Prime Minister, the Honourable Gaston Browne; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Immigration, the Honourable E.P. Chet Greene; and the Minister of Social Transformation, the Honourable Samantha Marshall. The delegation also visited the Support and Referral Centre for Gender-Based Violence.
10. The delegation met the UN Country Team in Trinidad and the UN-Women Multi-Country Office staff in Barbados. The delegation also met with senior officials at the Ministry for Gender Equality. On the last day of the visit, the delegation met with the press to brief them on the visit.

Context and key challenges

11. Some countries and territories in the Caribbean sub-region are categorised as middle-high-income, and have enjoyed economic growth in recent years. However, these gains are particularly at risk because of countries' high vulnerability to external shocks characterising Small Island and Developing States (SIDS), including recurrent natural disasters exacerbated by climate change – since 1950, 324 disasters struck the Caribbean, killing 250,000 people and affecting 24 million. For example, in September 2017, Hurricane Maria struck Dominica as a category 5 storm, causing \$1.3 billion in losses across the island, the equivalent of 224 per cent of GDP, including widespread damages to infrastructure, housing, and agriculture sectors.
12. Other shocks are related to external economic forces, conflict, migration and other factors. The presence of returning foreign terrorist fighters, and transit routes for organised crime and drug trafficking, together with considerable inequalities pose further human security and human rights challenges in the region.
13. In addition, these countries and territories face major structural impediments to sustainable development and resilience, including high levels of accumulated debt, the relatively smaller scale of the economies, limited availability of human capital, geographic isolation and connectivity challenges, and a narrow economic focus dependent on a limited number of sectors or exports. This results in lower investments in social services and social protection, further exacerbating human security challenges as well as rates of violence against women and girls.

14. The prospect of graduating from upper middle income to high income status by the World Bank means for a number of countries a loss of Official Development Aid (ODA), which poses an additional burden on national revenues. Moreover, the high development status of the region has proven to be a barrier to attracting “traditional” donors, and the presence of a number of regional intergovernmental institutions means a competition for funding.
15. Although efforts for gender equality have brought many advances for women and girls in the region, including in high education and employment rates, they remain disproportionately affected by these risks, including by a high prevalence of domestic and sexual and gender-based violence, a lack of access to decent work and barriers to disaster preparedness and resilience. Female-headed households are especially at high risk of being left behind.
16. All Caribbean governments covered by the MCO have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all form of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and signed on to the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UN-Women’s presence and focus areas in the region

17. The UN-Women Multi-Country Office, based in Barbados and with a program presence in Jamaica, covers 22 countries and territories across the Caribbean sub-region. It works with governments, civil-society organisations and regional inter-governmental bodies, such as the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) in the development and implementation of innovative approaches aimed at achieving gender equality, women’s empowerment and national growth and development. It works in partnership with five UN Country Teams (in Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago) and their UN Resident Coordinators, and the UN Sub-regional Team for Barbados and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.
18. The MCO is guided by the 2017-2021 United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (UN MSDF), which defines how UN agencies pool their comparative advantages to align with and support the overarching strategic goals of Caribbean governments and key stakeholders. It focuses on four thematic priorities, namely: economic empowerment, health, human security and access to justice, as well as sustainable development and disaster resilience. The 5-year MSDF covers 17 English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean countries and overseas territories, and gender equality and women’s empowerment is a horizontal priority across the Framework. The MCO is represented at the MSDF Steering Committee.
19. Within the context of the MSDF, the MCO’s 2018-2021 workplan focuses on four main outcome areas: (1) strengthening the normative framework - improving data collection, monitoring and evaluation, access to justice, and measuring progress on global commitments; (2) economic empowerment of women farmers and private sector opportunities; (3) prevention of violence against women and girls and access to quality essential services; and (4) gender-responsive disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and resilience. The MCO targets these thematic outcomes by the key support areas

defined in UN-Women's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, such as normative support, policy advice, UN system coordination, capacity building, social mobilisation and advocacy support.

Findings

Strengthening the normative framework - improving data collection, monitoring and evaluation, access to justice, and measuring progress on global commitments

20. The MCO supports CARICOM governments and civil CARICOM Governments and civil society representatives in the development of SIDS-relevant and gender equality tools and skills to monitor and measure progress on global commitments under the normative framework.
21. For example, UN-Women supports government and civil society representatives to better monitor and measure progress on their global gender equality commitments. The CARICOM Gender Equality Indicators are designed to enable governments to better assess and track their progress on gender equality, and develop evidence-informed and gender-responsive policies and programs to address inequities.
22. This includes the recently launched National Women's Health Surveys in Jamaica and the National Prevalence Survey 2017 in Trinidad and Tobago, which produced the first nationally representative estimates of the prevalence of intimate partner violence and non-partner violence against women in the Caribbean. The results of the studies depict a lifetime prevalence rate of physical partner violence of one in every four women in Jamaica and one in every three women in Trinidad and Tobago. These findings are in line with global estimates of lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence.
23. UN-Women provides technical support to the drafting of legislation protecting women and girls. One example from Barbados is the 2016 Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Amendment Act, giving powers of emergency protection orders to police. In Grenada, UN-Women facilitated the setup of close cooperation between police, the court and social service providers to provide timely and coordinated assistance to survivors of domestic violence.
24. In addition, UN-Women supports the development of gender-responsive court policies and procedures to ameliorate equal access to justice to women and girls. For instance, in Trinidad and Tobago, it provided assistance to the establishment of a Gender Equality Protocol.

Highlight: In Barbados, UN-Women gave expertise to the Canada-funded Judicial Reform and Institutional Strengthening (JURIST) project, which supported the Caribbean Court of Justice in eliminating gender biases in processes and decision-making in the judiciary, with special regard to survivors of gender-based violence. Judicial officers also participated at a gender sensitisation training organised by UN-Women in the framework of a South-South exchange with South Africa. And finally, the JURIST project supported, in 2019, the launch of a Sexual Offences Model Court in Antigua and Barbuda, which would provide gender-responsive services, coordination and response to sexual offences.

25. UN-Women also empowers women to participate more effectively in political processes so that they can take ownership, including by providing support and capacity-building programs for young women leaders to enable them to move to the top of their professions.

Prevention of violence against women and girls and access to quality essential services

26. UN-Women works with governments, civil society and community organisations to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls and to deliver quality essential services.

27. UN-Women is supporting a number of innovative and best practice interventions, including: work with judicial officers and courts; legislative reform; and in communities, working with men, families and supporting shelters. This includes a youth gender-based violence prevention programme and batterers intervention programmes in Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada and Barbados.

28. The delegation had the opportunity to observe UN-Women-supported services aimed at preventing violence against women and girls, and engage with beneficiaries in several settings. The discussions impressed upon the delegation the scale of violence against women and girls in the sub-region, and the need for accessible and affordable services such as those provided by UN-Women. The general feedback from beneficiaries was very positive, underlining, at several instances, the personalised treatment received, the long-term transformational impact of the services, and the fact that without the service centres visited, they would not have had anywhere to go and receive help in their situation. Implementing partners expressed the need to step up UN-Women's support to build local technical expertise and capacity to ensure the sustainability of the programs. The setup of small group meetings with beneficiaries was adequate, allowing for a safe space for substantive dialogue.

Highlight: The Antigua Directorate of Gender Affairs Support and Referral Centre for Gender-Based Violence (GBV), a one-stop centre that serves both victims and perpetrators of GBV, is supported by UN-Women and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women. The Centre's services range from urgent physiological care for victims of GBV to filing reports with the police, psychological and legal counselling, and even technological assistance to testify at court at a distance, all free of charge. The SARC also introduced a pioneer gender-sensitive data- management system for service providers across government and civil society.

At the centre, the delegation had the opportunity to talk to beneficiaries who were survivors of violence, as well as to a former perpetrator. The message from both sides was clear: the centre is direly needed and the only place where Antiguanians can receive all the services they need in one place. Survivors stressed the urgency of need for these services in Antigua, and testified of an outstanding level of satisfaction with the quality and availability of services, the long-term impact it has made on their lives, and the need for enhancing the capacity of the Centre to respond to the needs of a growing number of reporting survivors. The former perpetrator talked about the difference the counselling received at the centre has made in his life to understand his past behaviour and not repeat it.

Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and resilience, and women's economic empowerment

29. Natural disasters cause a higher loss of lives and livelihoods for women and girls. In addition, the higher proportion of small-hold farms, home-based businesses and women's representation in the services sector - mostly tourism -, in the informal economy and female-headed households all mean a higher likelihood of exclusion from mainstream disaster recovery and resilience building processes, thus leading to a vicious circle of vulnerability and poverty. In this context, UN-Women works with other UN partners to ensure humanitarian responses and resilience-building efforts are gender-responsive, including by engaging National Gender Mechanisms in all aspects of planning. Building production capacity and facilitating market access is yet another way UN-Women supports empowerment of women.
30. For example, as a response to Hurricane Irma in 2017, UN-Women with UNFPA provided immediate assistance to women displaced from Barbuda in the form of "dignity kits", as well as policy advice to Government on preventing violence against women and girls in temporary shelters, and supported the establishment of referral systems on gender-based violence.
31. In Dominica, UN-Women filled the gap in reconstruction efforts by providing smallholder women farmers with production tools. Moreover, in the aftermath of a flooding in 2018 in Trinidad, UN-Women held multi-stakeholder consultations - together with UNFPA, the Government, police and civil society - on integrating gender in disaster risk response, including data collection and assessment.
32. With regard to women's economic empowerment, UN-Women supported a UN joint programme 2013-2015 developing gender-responsive social protection policies in Grenada.
33. In Barbados, the delegation met National Disaster Officers to discuss how UN-Women's work in Climate Change and DRR has impacted Community Based Disaster Response. Participants highlighted the importance of community-level capacity-building, bridging the gap between grassroots and management levels, as well as government and civil society action, as well as effective communication, with special regard to persons with disabilities and people living in secluded areas.

Partnerships and collaboration

34. The delegation was struck by the strength and depth of the partnership between UN-Women and the countries visited, and particularly acknowledge the governments' support of local UN staff and UN office premises. The UN-Women MCO team enjoyed excellent relationships and strong collaboration with governments, implementing partners and civil society. Several Governments underlined the responsiveness of UN-Women to provide timely and adequate support in areas of concern, and a number of civil society representatives confirmed that UN-Women's work fills in gaps in tackling challenges that otherwise would remain unaddressed.

35. The delegation observed very strong commitment and leadership on gender equality issues at the very highest levels of government, and had the pleasure of meeting with a number of very senior women leaders.
36. UN-Women works well with “non-traditional” partners to secure funding and leverage its specific expertise and mandate.
37. The delegation observed that beneficiaries of some highly successful UN-Women projects were not aware of the organisation’s role in providing the services, or have not even heard about UN-Women before. There would be ample space for UN-Women to take credit for its important work and build recognition and support among populations in host countries.
38. The importance of mobilising more and better long-term support in the Caribbean should be emphasized, so that UN-Women can deliver sustainable and long-term results for women and girls.

Cooperation within the UN system

39. UN-Women MCO is commended for seeking joint programming opportunities with its sister agencies, such as in the framework of the Human Security Trust Fund or the EU-funded Spotlight Initiative. There would be a need for alleviating the administrative burden of inter-agency cooperation to enable more effective program implementation and adaptation.
40. The experience of the field visit confirmed that the strengths of UN-Women lie in its ability to provide for normative support, capacity-building and coordination, as well as convening power across governments and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Therefore, the Entity rightly focuses on these support areas, and should utilise its special mandate to complement the work of its sister agencies.
41. The delegation observed that, at times, UN-Women has been facing challenges when seeking inter-agency cooperation to respond to the gaps identified through gender-responsive needs assessment in the context of emergency and humanitarian response. UN funds and programmes should work more responsively to better incorporate these perspectives into their operational activities, and thus enable UN-Women to deliver on its specific mandate. This is especially true for agencies leading on agriculture and nutrition.
42. The field visit highlighted the challenges and costs associated with operating in the Caribbean sub-region, including remoteness and connectivity, as well as the unique challenges SIDS face in achieving sustainable development.

Recommendations

For the consideration of UN-Women

43. The delegation would encourage UN-Women to find ways to make its own work as well as contribution to joint projects more visible among beneficiaries and communities. We encourage UN-Women to build a stronger relationship with the media in order to shine a light on the challenges, as well as the solutions to achieving gender equality, women’s

empowerment and protecting and promoting the rights of all women and girls in the Caribbean.

44. The delegation encourages UN-Women to expand its work upholding the rights and addressing the needs of women and girls with disabilities, as well as those facing other multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization. UN-Women should continue to provide avenues of sharing gender-specific knowledge between Government and local levels.
45. The delegation recognises the challenges women face everywhere, but particularly in this region, in ascending to the top of their professions, and encourages UN-Women to continue its good work in supporting young women leaders.

Concerning field visits of the UN-Women Executive Board

46. A general Terms of Reference (ToR) for Board visits, across the Boards, would help the implementation of the visits.
47. Field visits should balance time spent with high-level officials, project site visits and interactions with UN teams. Consideration should be given to maximising the participation by all members of the delegation, where appropriate.
48. Meetings with implementing partners and beneficiaries could be allocated more time to allow for an even more in-depth discussion and hearing from all participants.
49. The delegation appreciated the practice of holding parallel and small-group meetings with beneficiaries so as to maximise its exposure to UN-Women's efforts in the field.
50. Background material provided by the MCO was very useful, and would be welcome to be received at least one week ahead of travel (in case the Joint Field Visit precedes the UN-Women field visit, one week ahead of the JFV).
51. Taking into consideration that the Joint Field Visit of the Boards traditionally takes place back-to-back, directly before the UN-Women field visit, and in order to maximise preparedness, de-linking the joint and UN-Women field visits could be considered, where appropriate, and in case it does not present additional costs.

Annex: List of participants

Region/Agency	Name
Africa	H.E. Ms. Koki Muli GRIGNON Vice-President of the Executive Board of UN-Women Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Kenya to the United Nations, New York
Asia-Pacific	Mr. Marwan Ali Noman AL-DOBHANY Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations, New York
Eastern Europe	H.E. Ms. Katalin Annamária BOGYAY Vice-President of the Executive Board of UN-Women, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations, New York Ms. Magdolna Pongor Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Hungary to the United Nations, New York
Latin America and the Caribbean	H.E. Ms. Pennelope Althea BECKLES President of the Executive Board of UN-Women, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations, New York
Western Europe and other States	Ms. Madeleine OLIVER Representing the Vice-President of the Executive Board of UN-Women, Advisor, Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations, New York Ms. Laura Alanko Advisor, Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, New York
UN-Women Executive Board Secretariat	Mr. Jean-Luc Bories Secretary