

1. Strengthening normative and legal frameworks

- a. • **What specific actions have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and regulatory frameworks that ensure gender equality and prohibit discrimination against women in the world of work?**
- i. In 2019, the Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy, through its Directorate of Gender Affairs (DoGA) drafted a national sexual harassment policy. The draft policy seeks to define harassment and discrimination within the workplace, prohibit these behaviours, and provide redress to persons who experience it.
 - ii. In 2020, the DoGA and the Department of Labour engaged in a mass sensitization exercise to inform the general public about the draft policy and its objectives. This was done in collaboration with the government information system (GIS).
 - iii. The DoGA has also led sensitivity training exercises with government agencies to raise awareness on sexual harassment, and how it upholds and contributed to gender inequality.
- b. **What specific actions have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and regulations that uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value in both the public and private sectors?**
- i. The Antigua and Barbuda Labour Code mandates women’s equal pay. It explicitly states that “No woman shall, merely by reason of her sex, be employed under terms or conditions of employment less favourable than that enjoyed by male workers employed in the same occupation and by the same employer.” Employers found to be in breach of the code may be subject to conviction.
- c. **What measures have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and policies to eliminate all forms of violence and harassment against women in the world of work and provide means of effective redress in cases of noncompliance?**
- i. The draft sexual harassment policy identifies systems of redress for women who experience sexual harassment in the workplace. These include both a formal and informal dispute resolution process, interim measures once a complaint has been filed, and the option to file a police report.

2.) Strengthening education, training, and skills development (paragraphs 40 (k) to (n)) • **What measures have been taken to mainstream a gender perspective into education and training programmes in order to facilitate the effective transition from education or unemployment to work?**

In Antigua and Barbuda one of the major priorities of the Government is to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into education and training programmes in order to facilitate the transition of citizens from education and unemployment into stable work. One example of this is the Antigua and

Barbuda Skills Training and Empowerment Program (ABSTEP) which is geared towards enhancing the employability and competence of citizens. The World Bank supported government initiatives aimed at improving the employability and the earning capacity of Antiguan and Barbudans. This included the Labour Department's Antigua and Barbuda Skills Training and Empowerment Programme (ABSTEP) and strengthening the One Stop Employment Centre (OSEC), which administers ABSTEP and also offers free public employment services to jobseekers and employers. Many women have benefited from both ABSTEP and OSEC and have been able to gain critical skills that they are able to leverage to gain employment opportunities.

ABSTEP's Temporary Employment Programme, a skills development initiative, accepted its first cohort of beneficiaries in Antigua on January 12, 2017. Beneficiaries engaged in non-traditional, hands-on work with non-profit organizations.

The beneficiaries were placed on community-based sub-projects focused on organic waste diversion and composting, electronic waste management and park and recreation management. Funding for these initiatives were provided under the Public and Social Sector Transformation Project, which was supported from a US\$10 million dollar loan granted by the World Bank to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

Moreover, in 2017 the Directorate of Gender Affairs implemented a Work and Life Skills Programme which saw 23 participants engage in a series of sessions meant to improve their personal and professional capacities in areas such as personal values, confidence building, maintaining healthy relationships, professionalism, time and money management, and family planning. The initiative also included modules on gender stereotyping and gender-based violence and featured a two-week internship programme. To date six (6) participants have gained full-time employment through the programme. The cohort was predominantly comprised of women.

Additionally, in June of 2021, The Government of Antigua and Barbuda, in collaboration with International Labour Organization (ILO), announced and implemented a free Entrepreneurship Online Training for the following groups of persons who had suffered adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic: Persons unemployed for at least 3 months, persons ages 18-35 and over 55, women who head single-parent households, former hospitality and aviation sector workers, persons currently receiving a social benefit, and persons with disabilities. This would allow many women in particular to be able to support themselves and create a source or an additional stream of income to boost their economic autonomy.

3. Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (o) to (mm))

• What steps have been taken to promote decent paid care and domestic work in the public and private sectors?

A. We recognize that since the pandemic, women in Antigua and Barbuda were faced with financial burdens and found it strenuous to support themselves and their families, and as such the Directorate of Gender Affairs in Collaboration with the UN Women was able to assist persons within the society at the initial stages of the hit of the pandemic in Antigua and Barbuda.

EnGender Small Grants Tourism Sector and Sex Workers - Enabling Gender- Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean, Project entitled “A Helping Hand Is Everybody’s Business” - EnGender Assistance Programme (EAP). The project’s aims were: Procurement of food items and personal care (daily essentials) for preparation of food packages. Providing assistance through food packages for persons affected by COVID 19 and their households within the tourism sector as results of lack of income due to the closure of the tourism sector. Identifying and distributing food packages to beneficiaries. The Directorate of Gender Affairs was offered a grant of USD\$25,000.00 to assist persons affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the form of food packages. A list of food items and personal care items were identified, and initial quotes requested from the suppliers for prices. The target for beneficiaries was 250 persons, while the actual number of beneficiaries for this program was 502 persons which reflected a double in the anticipated target.

EnGender project through United Nations Development Programme entitled Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean (ENGENDER). Supporting COVID19 response initiatives through established national recovery and response frameworks focused on the socio-economic needs of the most vulnerable and which enhance gender-responsive recovery in 9 Caribbean countries. The project aimed to meet the following targets: 30 women and girls receiving post-trauma counseling and/or psychological services on the effects of GBV, 2 advocacy/awareness programmes focused on decreasing levels of GBV, 16,000 persons (approx.) with a heightened awareness of GBV, 8 counsellors/social workers (and other related services) with increased ability to assist GBV victims", 20 households receive income support (female headed households), and 100 vulnerable persons that benefit from income support received.

- What actions and investments have been made to support gender-responsive social protection and care infrastructure and services?

b. Referral and Partnership. The Directorate of Gender Affairs (DoGA) through its Support and Referral Centre (SARC) partners with various social service providers (departments) within the Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resources and the Blue Economy, Legal Aid and Advice Centre and the special Victims Unit within the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda to ensure that clients who are victims of sexual and domestic violence receive optimal services to resolve their concerns.

The departments which are responsible are all under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resources and the Blue Economy. They include: The Directorate of Gender Affairs, Social Policy Department, Social Protection Department, Family and Social Services Unit, Financial Empowerment Centre, Youth Affairs Department, GRACE Programme, Elderly Care, Substance-Abuse Prevention, Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre (SPARC), National Office of Disaster Services, and Community Development.

The Directorate of Gender Affairs is presently working on a Gender Policy with the Caribbean Development Bank which will be beneficial for all in Antigua and Barbuda. It will help fill some of the existing gaps in the system, this will be a means of more aggressive ways to implement and mainstream gender.

The Child Protection Policy was implemented to provide for the care and, protection and adoption of children, operation of adoption services and other related matters and for connected purposes. The primary purpose is to protect children from abuse and neglect and to ensure that the best interests of the child is given paramount consideration in all matters relating to the child. In determining what is in the best interest of the child in any particular case the Director or the Court shall have regard to all relevant considerations including: the safety of the child; the capacity of the parent to properly discharge parental obligations with respect to the child; the spiritual, physical mental and emotional needs of the child, and the appropriate care or treatment required to meet those needs; the physical, mental, emotional or psychological development of the child; where appropriate, the views of the child; a secure place for the child and the development of a positive relationship as a member of a family; the love, affection and ties between the child and other persons in the life of the child; the capacity of persons other than a parent to exercise custody rights and duties respecting a child; and the continuity of the care for the child and the possible effect of disruption of that care on the child.

- What specific measures have been implemented to promote women's entry, reentry and advancement in the labour market?

c. One Stop Employment Center (OSEC) is a government department within the Ministry of Labour which offers training and employment opportunities to unemployed individuals. The department partners with various entities both public and private to enable visibility and public awareness of available job opportunities.

The Antigua & Barbuda Investment Authority (ABIA) is Antigua and Barbuda's official domestic and international business development agency. It is committed to developing local entrepreneurship by fostering the expansion of domestic investment opportunities and providing innovative training and business advisory services. These goals by extension serve to improve the quality of life of the nation's people by creating employment opportunities, reducing poverty and increasing the wealth of the nation by generating more income to fund government's social obligations.

Internship programmes – various departments and ministries within the public sector and private sector entities offer internship programmes to persons who have particular interest in the work and undertaking of the office. Specifically, the Directorate of Gender Affairs had interns in the past who were working along with the staff in day-to-day operations, with an intern eventually being on staff, while others have continued their tertiary education.

The Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Center (GARDC) provides vocational training and business advice to help vulnerable young people gain employable, technical and entrepreneurial skills to compete in a global work environment.

4.) Addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers (paragraphs 40 (nn) to (qq) • What measures have been implemented to promote the transition from informal to formal paid employment for women?

In Antigua and Barbuda, the informal economy is a big one in which many women in particular are engaged in things such as vending, food handling and care work, as well as agriculture. Efforts and initiatives have been made to promote the transition from informal work to a more formalized and incentivized level of employment being the norm.

The Ministry of Social Transformation was given an added portfolio of the blue economy and has since implemented trainings around things such as aquaponics and hydroponic farming which are modernized ways of farming that significantly reduce the physical strain typically associated with agriculture that would limit women's potential to be fully immersed and benefit. These trainings have allowed many women to benefit and begin their own entrepreneurial agriculture based ventures as a result. One such training was in 2017 when FAO supported the development of aquaponics throughout the Caribbean region, which began with a technical training workshop hosted at Indies Greens in Antigua and Barbuda.

Fifteen participants took part in the training activities which included lectures and theoretical discussions on the biological, chemical and physical requirements to ensure the production of the highest quality fish and vegetables.

Other topics included alternative energy and best construction practices to ensure the system is cost effective and resilient to severe weather. Lectures were reinforced with hands on practical sessions, with participants carrying out every phase of tilapia production from breeding, feeding and harvesting, and seeding, transplanting, pest management and harvesting of the lettuce and vegetables.

As a final take-home exercise, participants designed their own system, complete with financial analysis, for independent implementation after the training concluded.

Furthermore, The Directorate of Gender Affairs has been involved in advocacy and widespread awareness raising nationally on the need to value and pay greater attention to the informal economy by providing more economic incentives to individuals in this area and to also provide them with free opportunities to build their capacity.

In 2020 the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security Agriculture Project was launch and Antigua and Barbuda was one of the beneficiary countries. This is a multi-year regional project in which financial, technical and legal advisory support will be offered to women and youth to strengthen the agriculture sectors of the designated countries and in particular to facilitate the immersion of women and youth within agriculture and fisheries sectors. Some of the activities that have and will be taking place are a gender-sensitive assessment of the agricultural, fisheries and small business extension services, a review of national agriculture and small business support programmes and incentive schemes, support to the Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries in implementing the proposed and endorsed changes, including the expanded direct support facilities, with pilot assistance provided under the project and development, by insurance institutions in consultation and collaboration with national authorities, of appropriate low-cost insurance products.

5. Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (rr) to (ss)) • What specific actions have been taken to support women's access to skills

development and decent work in emerging fields, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics?

The Directorate of Gender Affairs led a nation-wide forum for young women and girls in leadership. The forum exposed young women and girls to transformational leadership, Science Technology Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) related fields, climate and environmental justice, and advocacy and social change. The theme of the forum was “Press for Progress” and the participants were between the ages of 12-35 years old which gave an opportunity for younger participants to engage in inter-generational exchanges and knowledge sharing.

Efforts have been made in Antigua and Barbuda for curricula to support the changing nature of gender labour roles, and further, to enable access for females to pursue courses in male-dominated fields, and vice versa. While the newly drafted Education Sector Plan does not however make explicit reference to encouraging or supporting the advancement of gender equality principles, or articulate concretely the strategies that are taking place at the ground level to encourage girls and boys on dismantling gender-based stereotypes recent years have seen the introduction of traditionally male-oriented subjects, such as Technical Drawing, into the curriculum at the nation’s only government-run all-female secondary school, and Home Economics is offered at the only government-run all-male secondary school.

The Gilbert Rural Agricultural Development Centre (GARDC) is another measure that is taken which is supported by the government. GARDC has embarked on a multi-year initiative to promote and support women in the pursuit of non-traditional employment fields that maintained significant income potential, and focused primarily on trade skills, technological and scientific fields.

6. What specific efforts have been implemented to support women’s participation and leadership in trade unions, workers’ organizations and employers’ organizations?

Antigua and Barbuda Trades and Labour Union

Despite the many negative concepts associated with COVID-19, it can be agreed that it has impacted or changed the world one way or another. The nation was thrown off of its normal way of life and into a warm hole of uncertainty, chaos and mass confusion. But, notwithstanding, all the distractions that were happening around us, the country remained resilient and focused on the few parts of life we could have had controlled.

The Antigua and Barbuda Trade and Labour Union in September 2020, partnered with Cipriani College of Labour & Co-Operative Studies to provide scholarships to its members, more so, its female officer, staff and other female members to support them in leadership roles. This collaboration would have seen five (5) members taking advantage of this opportunity. Further, one (1) of the members has moved on to completing her degree and more members have joined the program in 2021.

During the period of November 2020 to September 2021, the union would have conducted two (2) Leadership Programs and two (2) Seminars geared to educating its members on the effects of

COVID-19 on the workplace and how to live with COVID-19. In two occasions, the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) extended relief to our domestic workers who were displaced by the effects of COVID-19, and by the government's State of Emergency protocols. This gratitude of kindness gave them hope and saw the Domestic Workers Section implementing programs and even elected a new Executive Committee to charter them.

Currently, one of our officers sits on both regional and international boards where the Union's presence is felt and our voice is heard. In one instance, she is the IUF Regional Secretary for Domestic Workers. The union uses these avenues to advocate for support and encourage a more diverse inclusion of women in discussions.

The union remains committed and steadfast in ensuring that women are supported and participate in leadership roles.

7. What efforts have been undertaken to encourage private firms and institutions to mainstream gender equality considerations in policies and practices?

In 2020 the Directorate of Gender Affairs launched the Women of Wadadli Awards, recognizing twenty- six (26) women for their outstanding contributions to the development of various sectors within Antigua and Barbuda. One business was also awarded for having largest number of female managers. This initiative was also sponsored by various private institutions whose focus were primarily geared towards gender equality within their institution. Similarly, in 2021 the Directorate hosted the Emerging Female Leaders Mentorship Program, where ten (10) young ladies received mentorship from top female leaders within different sectors of Antigua and Barbuda. Likewise, The Directorate of Gender Affairs also launched the Emerging Female Leaders Public Speaking Competition. The competition aimed to allow young women to hone their research, writing, and speaking skills. The Emerging Female Leaders (EFL) public speaking competition allowed participants to network with women leaders from across the public and private sectors and discuss relevant issues such as women in leadership, women's political participation, harmful gender roles and stereotypes. This initiative was also sponsored by private institutions, with the interest of promoting gender equality.

What action has been taken to increase investment and support for women entrepreneurs?

The current downturn in the economy as a consequence of the Covid 19 pandemic and the resulting unemployment has forced the need to find alternative sources of sustainable income for the predominantly female labour force that was most impacted when the borders closed, effectively closing the tourism sector.

Against this backdrop the ABIA thought it prudent to seek out opportunities that would contribute positively to displaced females being able to retool and therefore allow them to generate income outside of the tourism sector.

As a consequence, the ABIA was able to access funding from the European Union for a project entitled “Targeted capacity building for critical skills in business development for the Agri-processing sector.” This project was for a duration of 3 months over the period June to August and targeted 26 women between the ages of 20 and 50 years who were unemployed or under employed as a result of the downturn in the tourism sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These persons were given an opportunity to reskill and retool and were guided in the process of creating small businesses in agro-processing through commodity utilization.

Training Modules

The training programme involved the following modules:

- **Life Skills**- provided skills in how to function in a changing environment and how to respond to the challenges of the work place, the market, and the environment;
- **Using Technology** – This module taught participants how to use technology such as smart phones to communicate with their customers, conduct and manage meeting and handle scheduling;
- **Pricing & Costing** – This module identified the elements of cost and showed how pricing should be approached;
- **Forecasting** – This module identified how to forecast sales and plan for increases or decreases in demand;
- **Customer Service** – This module addressed how to cater to and deal with customers;
- **Value Chains** – The module identified the supplies in the supply chains, how said supply chain can be affected by external factors, and the action which must be taken to mitigate risk;
- **Human Resource Management**- This module covered elements of staff management and Labour Laws
- **Payroll** – This module provided information on how to calculate payroll, deduct statutory payment and remit to the relevant authorities;
- **Unincorporated Business Tax (UBT)** – This module demonstrated how the most popular tax paid by small businesses, the UBT, is calculated;
- **Record Keeping** – This module provided rules for keeping records, identified source and control documents so that the relevant financial statements can be generated and the applicable taxes can be paid;
- **Commodity Utilization** – This module exposed participants to how to use local produce to address local market opportunities;
- **Marketing (Branding, Labelling, Social Media) Standards** – This module emphasised the importance of labelling, branding and marketing and showed how social media can be used as a low cost method to advertise and interact with potential customers;

- **Food Safety** – This module addressed issues of food safety and earned participants a local Food Handlers badge, which is a minimum requirement for handling food in Antigua and Barbuda. It also gave each participant the opportunity of attaining SERVSAFE certification, which is an international certificate in food handling.
- **Food Technology** – This module included methods of food preservation and an understanding of the science of food technology;
- **Business Plan** – This module walked each participant through the process of creating a business plan with an output of a business plan for the small business of each participant.

Entrepreneurial Development Programme

The Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP) came into being by an Act of Parliament in 2019. The EDP is intended to promote business activity in various sectors. Loan funds can be used for working capital, inventory purchases, machinery and equipment, furniture, fixtures, supplies, leasehold improvements, building renovation/rehabilitation.

Priority sectors/areas for which loans will be granted include agriculture and agro-processing; manufacturing; information technology and innovative internet-based businesses; tourism and related businesses.

The Entrepreneurial Development Programme has as one of its major mandates the recognition of the need for Gender Parity in the loan approval process. This is to ensure empowerment of female entrepreneurs by providing low interest loans up to EC\$75,000 for qualifying applicants, both for start-up as well as expansion. This is consistent with the Government's commitment to gender equality and women's economic empowerment.