



# National review

## TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

In the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

**Division for Gender Affairs of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the way to Beijing+20**



UNITED NATIONS





**Ministry of Environment and Home Affairs  
Turks and Caicos Islands  
Beijing Platform+20 Report  
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## **Overview of the Turks and Caicos Islands**

### **Geographical Setting**

The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) is located south east of the Bahamas and around 90 miles north of Haiti. The archipelago consists of two groups of Islands separated by a deep water channel about 22 miles wide with a depth of over 7000 feet, known as the Turks Island Passage. The Turks Islands lie to the east of the passage and the Caicos Islands to the West. The Turks Islands consist of two inhabited islands, Grand Turk and Salt Cay and six uninhabited Cays while the Caicos Islands consist of six islands, four of which are inhabited, along with two major Cays namely, Parrot Cay and Pine Cay. The Caicos Islands form a bank – the Caicos Bank, with the islands separated from one another by shallow passages. Altogether, TCI have a total land area of 193 square miles (417 square kilometers).

### **Politics**

The Turks and Caicos Islands is a British Overseas Territory with a Governor and a Ministerial System of Government. In August 2009 the 2006 Constitution was partially suspended and an Interim Administration was put into place under direct rule from Britain. In November 2012 a new Constitution was revised and issued to the islands, however, there continues to be a Governor, who is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen, and is the Supreme Executive Representative-Authority of Her Majesty. There is a Deputy Governor, who must be a Belonger and appointed by the Governor; the Cabinet and the House of Assembly. There are two main political parties in the Territory: the People's Democratic Movement (PDM) and the Progressive National Party (PNP) formed in 1975 and 1980 respectively. The ruling party following the November 2012 elections was the PNP winning in a narrow majority.

### **The Population**

The 2012 population census reveals that the current population in the TCI is around 31,500 representing a 57.5% increase over the 2001 population of around 20,000. Throughout most of its recorded history the population of TCI has varied between 5,000 and 6,000 and it is only since the mid 1970s that there has been a rapid increase. This growth almost exactly parallels the development of the tourism industry.

### **The Economy**

The economy of the TCI is based on tourism, fishing and offshore services; and in recent years increasingly on development of real estate which has contributed to the rapid development of Providenciales, the largest island where the majority of the populace find sustainable employment in the tourism sector.

## **General**

The Ministry of Environment and Home Affairs, is charged with the responsibility for the Department of Social Development and Gender Affairs, and is committed to enhancing the lives of women, by ensuring that the national legislation is compliant with the rights of women as contained in the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and other international commitments.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Summary highlights the achievements and the challenges for the Turks and Caicos Islands in the process since the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPFA).

In 1994, the need arose to prepare a report for the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing, China. By virtue of Turks and Caicos being a dependent territory of the United Kingdom, which had previously signed on to the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), TCI was expected to present a report on the status of women in its territories.

With the financial and technical assistance from the British Development Division and CARICOM, the then Minister of Health Youth and Sports was asked to form a committee with the aim to prepare a report on the status of women in TCI. Information was obtained from primary sources which included six (6) workshops conducted in the various Islands; discussions; interviews; two national consultations and questionnaires. Secondary sources included consultations with Government Ministers and Institutions, Statutory Boards, Research Reports and Bilateral Institutions.

The report was finally completed and two representatives from the Turks and Caicos Islands attended the conference held in Beijing, China. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), called on all governments to develop, implement and supply strategies or plans of action in alignment with the BPFA agreement.

The BPFA became a consensus document reflecting, the concerns of women the world over, requesting Government to reaffirm and recommit themselves to numerous actions to support a common gender development agenda. It continues to serve as a framework for guiding, and reaffirming the commitment of world Governments to promoting equal rights and dignity for both men and women.

It was widely recognized that inequalities in gender undermine the effectiveness of development policies in fundamental ways, and research has shown that in all regions of the world gender gaps exist in access to and control of resources, in economic opportunities, in power and in political voice. Achieving, gender equality is therefore a central development issue, and must be a part of any development strategy that seeks to enable men and women alike to improve their standards of living and for enabling men and women to participate at all levels of their society. Some interesting findings were revealed from the report in 1994 such as:

- Of the number of registered business (sole traders) in the TCI only 14% were women compared to 46% men and 40% joint ownership.

- Violence against women existed but was never reported because of fear of embarrassment.
- Lack of trust in the legal system.
- Lack of confidentiality due mostly to the size, social make-up and close family ties existing in the islands.
- Lack of understanding of their rights as individuals. The police on the other hand, were unwilling to intervene in domestic disputes because women were reluctant to press charges.
- Rape cases were rarely reported because of fear and embarrassment. Also, there was insufficient use of the media to promote women's issues.
- Lack of insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women. Therefore, the establishment of a women's bureau was viewed as critical to advancing the status of women in the TCI.

As a result the first Women's NGO group, Women in Development (WID) was established. This group of women lobbied with Government for women's rights, which also included other areas where gender inequality were evidenced.

In February 1999, the Turks and Caicos Islands established the Women's Desk and the appointment of a Coordinator of Women's Affairs. On October 26, 1999, the Coordinator along with WID had the official launching of the Women's Desk. To highlight this event a book was compiled with profiles of women throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands who had made outstanding contributions in the various areas of the country. These women were known as the 'Trailblazers of the Turks and Caicos.'

There was continuous dialogue with the Government, NGO's, and local and international agencies to ensure that the 12 critical areas that emerged from the Beijing conference, dubbed today as 'The Beijing plus 20' was realized. The Department of Social Development and Gender Affairs describes itself as the legal body through which women and men rights are protected. In 2002, under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Women's Desk was renamed the Department of Gender Affairs and in 2012 the Department of Gender Affairs was merged with the Department of Social Development within the Ministry of Environment and Home Affairs.

## **Section: 1- Achievements in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action**

### **MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS**

The Turks and Caicos Islands since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, has made significant progress in the following:

#### **i). Establishment of the Women's Desk now known as the Gender Affairs Unit**

The Gender Affairs Unit (formerly known as the Women's Desk) within the Department of Social Development and Gender Affairs, was established under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in 1999. The Gender Affairs Unit, as the National Machinery for advancing the status of women and promoting the achievement of gender equality in the Turks and Caicos Islands, has played a pivotal role in raising awareness at the community level around issues such as poverty, domestic and gender based violence, health and women's access to and participation in decision making. The Gender Affairs Unit has advocated for the human rights of women and has been facilitating the development of policy and legislation for the empowerment of gender equity and gender equality.

#### **ii). Turks and Caicos Presiding Officer's Membership**

Another great advancement for the Gender Affairs Unit was the election of the Turks and Caicos Islands to the Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as one of the four (4) Presiding Officers. This status allowed greater representation for women on a Regional and International Level.

#### **iii). Domestic and Family Legislation Reform / Review**

In the areas of the Domestic family law reform and social issues, the Department of Gender has exerted some influence in shaping legislation and it has campaigned for the establishment of institutions like the Family Court. Subsequently, in 2003/2004 the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands entered into a project with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to reform the Legislation as it relates to women and children. As a follow-up to this proposed legislation another review was undertaken in 2012, resulting in six model legislation being drafted. The following model bills are currently awaiting passage into law.

- Status of Children Bill
- Custody of Children
- Child Care and Adoption
- Child Maintenance
- Domestic Violence
- Child Justice



#### **iv). The Equality Bill**

The Equality Bill is also awaiting passage into law. Once this bill is enacted it will address the removal of all forms of discrimination as outlined in our Constitution Order 2012. The Equalities Bill, when enacted, will prohibit victimization and will protect class of persons such as pregnant women on the job and also those who are not in work, disabled persons, including, accessibility of disabled students and overall access to public officers amongst other things.

#### **v). Establishment of Domestic Violence Foundation**

The establishment of a Domestic Violence foundation, though inactive, the goal of this organization was primarily to establish a crises center for women thus providing a viable alternative to staying in an abuse relationship. The Foundation has already identified and secured a parcel of land in Providenciales for the construction of a Crisis Center. The Foundation has a lease for a period of fifty (50) years from the Turks and Caicos Islands Government (TCIG).

#### **vi). Political Involvement**

In this area of political participation, the Turks and Caicos Islands has made significant progress in women's participation within the political and public service arenas.

In November 2012, after a period of three (3) years under direct rule, the country held its general elections which resulted in nine women being elected-nominated to the House of Assembly.

- Deputy Premier
- Minister of Education, Youth Cultural and Library Services
- Minister of Environment and Home Affairs
- Minister of Health and Human Services
- Leader of the Opposition
- One Governor's Appointed member to the House of Assembly
- One Government's Appointed member to the House of Assembly
- Deputy Speaker of the House
- Clerk to the House of Assembly
- Deputy Clerk to the House of Assembly

Additionally, women have advanced to prominent position in government. Women account for four Permanent Secretary positions out of a total of seven in the Government.

- Permanent Secretary- Ministry of Health and Human Services
- Permanent Secretary –Ministry of Immigration and Border Control
- Permanent Secretary – Ministry of Finance, Tourism and Trade

- Permanent Secretary -Ministry of Environment and Home Affairs

In 2012, the country's second female Deputy Governor was appointed and the most recent; we witnessed the installation of the first female local Attorney General was installed.

Overall, women in both the public and private spheres are dominating the managerial positions and the Turks and Caicos Islands has already surpassed the 33% quota set by the BPFA regarding women in politics to 46% an increase of 13%.

#### **vii). Establishment of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Unit**

In 2009 the Gender Affairs Unit was very instrumental in advocating for the establishment of a Sexual Offences Unit within Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force. This Unit, although spearheaded by a female detective, yet the Police department plays the leading role in its day-to-day function. However, the Gender Affairs is responsible for public sensitisation and education advocating against domestic violence and abuse in any form or fashion. This partnership between the police and Gender Affairs Unit has proven to be successful.

## **Section: 2- Challenges in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action**

- The lack of adequate financial /manpower resources
- The need for more sustained technical/professional capacity building and institutional strengthening of national machineries.
- The lack of coordination of the relevant agencies in reporting procedures.
- Delay in enacting/revising the appropriate laws/legislation
- The lack of strengthened political will

In order to respond to the larger agenda, and to coordinate efforts to assume the roles required by the government and other international obligations, the Gender Affairs Unit requires:

- i). Adequate staff to carry out the Unit's mandate.
- ii). Adequate financial support to carry out the research needed to implement programmes and influence policies to make a difference in people's lives.
- iii). Training and development of personnel
- iv). Materials and equipment to assist in various sensitization and empowerment programmes
- v). Political and societal support

The Beijing Platform of Action (BPfA) committed countries to three strategic objectives (H1, H2, H3) under the theme of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women. The BPF A provides for:

- The creation and the strengthening of national machineries;
- The integration of gender perspectives in the legislation, public policies, and programmes and projects;
- To generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information for planning.

At present, the Department of Gender Affairs in the Turks and Caicos is the main mechanism through which the vision and institutional capacities for gender equality in the country is being built. The actions for achieving these objectives listed above involve advancing women's issues, promoting the involvement of women, training and engaging with policy makers at all stages, and effectively coordinating activities relevant to gender equality and equity at various national levels. Therefore, the need for additional technical / trained staff to achieve these goals is an on-going challenge. The lack of funding and other vital resources are impacting the effective performance of the Unit to the point where programmes and other activities are extremely streamlined or are non-existing.

Strengthening political full support and will power to push the Gender Affairs agenda to ensure that the Unit achieve its stated goals and objectives is among the challenges facing the Unit. It must be noted, however, that although there is some miniscule support it is does not produce any waves that will intensify the Unit's results. This lack of support trickles into the various communities and further diminishes and lessens the Unit's role and authority to influence change.

Additionally, the relevant stakeholder's engagement to the reporting process and adherence to International standards as stipulated in the TCIG's signatory are not up to standard nor timely. Therefore, the information required is either deficient or non-existing and this influences the Unit's proactive approach to mobilize and sensitize other key agencies within society that can advocate for the development and progressive agenda of the Unit.

### **Section: 3 - REVIEW OF THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM**

#### **Women in Poverty**

The Department of Strategic Policy and Planning Unit (SPPU) in collaboration with the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), recently embarked on a country wide program to identify the following:-

- The current extent of characteristic trends and causes of Poverty in the TCI.
- To assess the effectiveness of current policies and programmers and their importance on the poor and the most vulnerable.
- To make recommendations for future policies and programmers that can be incorporated in future government policy.

This exercise is generally executed every ten (10) years and usually implemented during the Census exercise.

Members for the Department of Social Development and Gender Affairs played an integral role in the National Poverty Assessment Team. The team comprised representation from government departments and private sector organisation.

Women from various vulnerable groups in the society participated by providing information via focus groups, questionnaires and interviews. The recommendation of the report was presented to the Turks and Caicos Islands Government (TCIG) to be utilized as a guideline to implement policies in various sectors in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Based on the findings it was discovered that women in the TCI remain among the most vulnerable groups in society.

Significant findings reveal the following:

- **Gender**: that the poverty rate for female headed households is lower than that for those headed by men. This characteristic has been observed in several, but not all Caribbean CPAs.
- **Households with Children**: poverty in these households is higher than average and they account for over half of all poor households. Poverty is close to the average for single parent families.
- **Economic Activity**: the number of employed persons in the households has a weak relationship with poverty. Furthermore, the poverty rate where no one is employed is the same as the national average. Likewise poverty rates are higher if someone in the house is unemployed.

- **Educational Attainment**: households where the heads has not attended, or completed, secondary school have poverty rates over 30% - well over double those where the heads has completed secondary school or have some post- secondary education.
- **Poverty and Housing** – poverty rates are higher in households living in deficient housing and over 60% of poor households live in such housing. However, more poor households live in deficient housing and almost 40% of poor households live in dwellings that are properly constructed with a full range of services.

In addition to the findings, results reveal that poverty is dominant in the migrant groups which are mainly single parent households, usually headed by women.

In 2006, a programme was launched called Poverty Alleviation Citizens Empowerment also known as PACE, to assist all women in achieving their goals and striving for deeper input into the economic growth and development in all aspects of the community. This was seen as the most positive tool for women's empowerment. Through this programme all ages were encouraged to seek empowerment skills in positive decision making. Under this program the Sister-to-Sister program was introduced where women from echelons are assisting their female counterparts.

### **Education and training of women**

In line with international standards such as the right to education, the Ministry of Education, and by extension, the Government of the Turks and Caicos is committed to ensure equal access to education and training of women. The Turks and Caicos Constitution (Schedule 2, Sec. 12) as well as the Education Ordinance (Part III, Sec. 33) clearly outlined the right to education in a non-discriminatory manner for compulsory school-aged individuals.

### **Eradicate illiteracy among women.**

The Ministry of Education has been very proactive and continues to work closely with various linguistics persons to diagnose and provide the necessary support in ensuring that illiteracy is reduced to a minimum in the Turks and Caicos Islands. One such initiative is the National Literacy Program. The central tenet is to achieve a 99% literacy rate by 2020.

Improving women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education is also vital. In keeping with the improved access to vocational training, science, technology, and continuing education, the Ministry of Education has made financial contributions to the Turks and Caicos Islands Community College Technical unit for the refurbishment of the technical and vocational rooms and the purchase of modules to further expand Technical and vocational programs and teaching.

Furthermore, in keeping with the recommendations outlined in the Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2013 to 2017, the Ministry of Education has embarked on a drive to have the high schools positioned as centers for vocational education and training. Specific focus would be placed on Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ) levels I and II courses.

### **Develop non-discriminatory education and training.**

The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Department of Education conducted workshops in the area of bullying both for students and teachers. Additionally, a non-discriminatory approach to education and training has been adopted by the Ministry of Education in ensuring that everyone, irrespective of gender, religion, creed, or nationality has equal access to educational opportunities.

As outlined in the constitution, policy and ordinance, education is an obligation from ages 4 to 16 to all children.

### **Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.**

The Ministry of Education continues to make available, adequate resources to monitor and implement educational reforms. The recent publication of the Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2013 to 2017 is a clear indicator of the commitment on the part of the Ministry and the Government to ensure that systems are in place to build and strengthen the human resources sector. Areas that would be given priority attention as it relates to educational reforms include, technical and vocational education, professional development and capacity building, juvenile education, special education, boys' education, curriculum development, and classroom availability.

### **Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.**

The Ministry of Education in conjunction with other ministries and stakeholders has been a strong proponent of second chance or alternative education and training for girls and women. In light of this, institutions have been formed to render such services to girls and women who express an interest. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education is committed to strengthening Second Chance education programmes across the length and breadth of the TCI as it is the will of the Government to have each person given a fair chance in life to contribute to society in a meaningful way.

Women's achievement in education in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions should not be under stated, at all levels of the education system women have achieved parity in attendance and certification. These attainment levels are reflected in the increased levels of female participation in the labour force. Women in the Turks and Caicos Island outnumbered men in most graduating classes from college to university. But for all of these gains, gender

equality could only exist when indirect forms of discrimination are eliminated, but, also when indirect forms of discrimination are addressed.

The Gender Affairs Unit in keeping with its institutional programme sought to empower some teenage mothers, through the continuous Education programme which was established in 2000. Over two hundred young mothers in the Turks and Caicos Islands accessed this programme. The objective of the Program was mainly to give young women a second chance and provide them with the necessary skills to prepare them for the world of work. In 2002 several of the girls graduated from the Institution and the majority are in meaningful employment, whilst others are furthering their education. Today the school is still functioning, despite the many challenges encountered the school is still operational. The Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility with the assistance of the Department of Social development and Gender Affairs

All children are entitled and received compulsory education from 4-16 years of age. During the reporting process (1996-2013) a number of private schools were established at both levels and also extension to government schools to accommodate the drastic increase in enrolment.

The Turks and Caicos Islands Community College (TCICC) still serves as the local institution for continuing education, where the main college statistics shows that female students pursuing degrees account for a higher percentage than males.

### **Information Communication Technology (ICT)**

In keeping with the Beijing Platform for Action as well as other international commitments, students in the TCI are exposed to Information Technology upon entry into Primary School as well as Secondary School level, where it is offered as a course of study. Information Technology training is primarily delivered in the classroom. Students are prepared for Information Technology Examination locally and regionally. Local examinations refer to End of Term Examinations and regional examinations are those that are done to gain access to higher educational opportunities.

Training in Information Technology is also extended to students upon request. Over the years the Ministry of Education and other Private Sector Enterprises have extended training to students who meet the requirements to pursue training in Information Technology.

There are currently approximately 2300 students pursuing Information Technology classes and 12 Information Technology teachers employed with the TCI Government. Each school is equipped with computers, overhead projectors and other relevant material necessary to deliver computer instructions to the students. All government schools in the TCI are co-education institutions, meaning there are no 'All Boys' or 'All Girls' School, hence all students are given equal opportunity. Over the decade, women have made some strides in areas like education, and access to health, and social security assistance help provide critical support.



The ratio of girls to boys at primary and secondary school levels, and targets for enrollment rates for both girls and boys suggest that gender parity exists at primary and secondary school level. At the levels of tertiary education, reports indicate that girls have surpassed boys in enrollment levels. The visibility of women in senior administrative roles, and advances being made by girls at tertiary level education in comparison to boys are being viewed as achievements for women. This phenomenon was highlighted throughout the assessment and has given rise to a growing perception of women 'doing well' in comparison to men who are being 'marginalized'.

## **Women in Health**

The Ministry of Health and Human Services in the Turks and Caicos Islands is embarking on several research initiatives to understand the health and wellbeing of Turks and Caicos Islanders as a whole. However, as part of each of these initiatives special considerations will be made to understanding the health and wellbeing of the male and female population separately. These initiatives include a recently launched Youth Empowerment Survey (YESurvey) and the *Stepwise Approach* to Chronic Disease Risk-Factor (RF) Surveillance also known as STEPS.

The online Youth Empowerment Survey (YESurvey) is part of a TCIG Initiative spearheaded by the Premier's Office and conducted by the National Epidemiology and Research Unit (NERU) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MOE), other MHHS and TCIG Departments, and the Governor's Office. It will obtain baseline sociodemographic, SES and other relevant data to develop a profile of TCI Youth, age 18 through 35 years, to inform policy development to support interventions as appropriate to empower and positively impact TCI youth. Findings from this survey will be used to enhance youth capacities through, but not limited to: improving access to tertiary education and/or professional/skills training; labour intermediation and financial services.

The TCI is no exception to the regional and global trend whereby chronic non communicable diseases (NCDs) are increasingly proportionately among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality. The STEPS survey seeks to obtain baseline information to better understand chronic disease risk behaviours among adults (18 – 69 years) in order to develop a long-term systematic approach to the management and treatment of NCDs. It is still in the planning stage and expected to begin later this year. STEPS is being conducted or administered in collaboration with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA).

Women's health has been, and continues to be, a major focus of the work of the national women's machineries. Reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS and the particular vulnerabilities of women, is a growing concern. However, over the last decade significant improvements have been made.

There was the introduction of a National Policy on Health and Family Life Education for a healthy life skills programme in schools. The health conditions of the Turks and Caicos Islands

are generally good: as the life expectancy is high, infant mortality rates are low and the incidence of communicable diseases apart from HIV/AIDS is low.

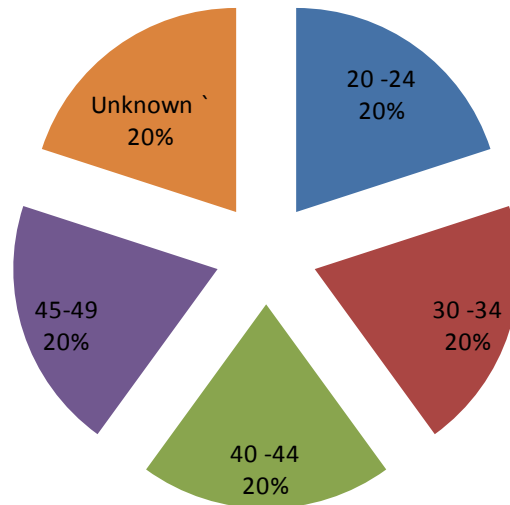
The Turks and Caicos Islands Government remain committed to the health of its people. In 2006 the Turk and Caicos Islands government embarked on a Health Care Renewal strategy which encompassed the construction of two state of the art hospitals which were launched. As a result of the geographical make up of the country, this necessitated the launched of two hospitals one in Providenciales, the Cheshire Medical Center and the other in, the nation's Capital, Grand Turk, which is named Cockburn Town Medical Center. The construction of these two facilities has improved the range and quality of primary and secondary care services available in the country. Women now have easy access to health care at a reasonable cost. In addition to the establishment of the new hospital: a National Health Insurance Scheme is also on stream

### **Campaigns/Programmes**

The Gender Affairs Unit works closely with the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Unit in a number of outreach programmes to the community. In an effort to curb the increasingly serious spread of HIV/AIDS and to reduce the impact on families, communities, and individuals specifically women. The National HIV/AIDs Prevention Unit has implemented several initiatives through outreach programs.

The HIV Unit has provided via its "Getting to Zero" campaign nationwide the inclusion of woman in messages that directly address stigma and discrimination. The campaign includes two posters targeted to adult women and female children in English, Creole and Spanish. The HIV Unit also provides preventative HIV education for young people via its youth arm. Rapport has reached over 700 persons for 2013 via one on one or group sessions which address proper condom use; delayed sexual initiation; self-esteem; making informed decisions, stigma and discrimination, drugs and HIV/STI information. Additionally information is provided via its website which boasts over 9000 views for 2013. HIV Education is also offered on a yearly basis to all grade 6 students via group sessions by HIV Unit personnel to all Primary schools.

## 2012 - HIV Positive (New Cases)



### National Insurance Contribution to Women (NIB)

The National Insurance Board (NIB) assists women with maturity grants, widow's grants and benefits. Another, very important aspect of social security legislations in keeping with social and cultural norms is the provision for payment of benefits to women who are not legally married but who are living in common-law relationships. National Insurance contributions have therefore enabled all women to improve their financial status.

### National Health Insurance Plan – NHIP

The NHIP programme is based on compulsory contributions from the population and small co-payments for all treatment. This program covers the recently unemployed registered through the Labour Department and contribution for prisoners. The government makes contribution to indigents and wards of the state. Children are covered under their parent plan.

The Government Health Clinics also provides maternal health for all women: universal access to immunization for children. Life expectancy at birth is currently estimated to be 82 years for women and 76.5 for men which are comparable to many developing countries.

The Department of Labour's role involves outreach. The committee operates in the context of advancing the mandate of the National HIV/AIDS. One of the critical areas is the precautionary or preventative measures that are vital to reducing the number of cases reported.

## **Social Services/Human Services Programs**

The Department of Social Development (DSD) within the Ministry of Environment and Home Affairs is responsible for the provision of Social Services in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Some of its main objectives are distribution of direct financial assistance to the very poor and destitute through the following programs:

- Social Enhancement Aid (SEA).
- Home help for elderly and disabled persons:
- Legal services

### **Social Enhancement Aid (S.E.A.)**

This service provides temporary intervention for persons who are socially and /or economically challenged while facilitating the attainment of sustainable self-sufficiency. The Social Workers conducts home assessments while collecting supporting documents such as pictures identification, birth certificates and financial receipts. Payments are made monthly. Persons who may qualify include orphans, dependents, children who were abandoned, the elderly, mentally/physically and emotionally challenged and persons with medical conditions. These clients require assistance with his/her basic needs and the parents or guardian earns less than \$600 per month.

- \$80 per month for one child
- \$50 per month per child for two or more children
- \$150 per month maximum for three or more children

All persons placed on Social Enhancement Aid would be reviewed within six (6) months. All applicants must be Belongers and residing in the Turks and Caicos Islands for five (5) consecutive years. Currently one hundred and one (101) clients throughout the TCI are accessing this service with fifty six (56) being women and children.

### **Indigent Aid**

This program provides temporary to long-term intervention for children and persons who are unemployed, unemployable, are socially and/or economically challenged to assist them to meet their health needs with access to medical coverage (medication coverage or full Indigent status). This program, in some cases, would work in conjunction with the SEA program (but not be limited to). Persons who may qualify include orphans, dependents, children who are abandoned, elderly, and dependents of an elderly person. All persons placed on Indigent Aid Status would be reviewed within six (6) months. All applicants must be Belongers and residing in the Turks and Caicos Islands for five (5) consecutive years.

Home Help Services are designed to provide supplemental care and domestic services to vulnerable persons who may not have immediate relatives to provide adequate care and protection and lacks financial resources to access care, and are deemed unfit to work as determined by a medical practitioner. Categories of applicants include special needs, low income families, medical conditions, and abandoned, unsupported, elderly citizens. All applicants must be Belongers and resident of the Turks and Caicos Islands for five (5) consecutive years; placed on for six (6) months then a review is conducted to determine whether the client continues to need the service. Clients are placed on part-time where the family receives \$100 weekly to assist in paying the helper or full-time where the family receives \$200 weekly to assist in paying the helper. Full time helpers are live in helpers, where the client does not have anyone to care for them and usually lives alone. Currently sixty (60) clients are receiving home help throughout the TCI with 40 being women.

### **Mental Health & Substance Dependence**

The Department of Social development and Gender Affairs provides counseling services to clients for various situations including depression, money management, behavioral problems, probation, parolee etc. Psychological services that cannot be provided by the Department are referred to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Department. Women normally access counseling through initial intake with the Gender Coordinator, who refer clients to the Mental Health and Substance Dependency Department for psychotherapy. The Gender Affairs Unit works with single parents.

### **Violence against Women (VAW)**

The Gender Affairs Unit in collaboration with the Turks and Caicos Islands Police, the Human Rights Commission, and the courts have been engaged in dialogue and action to ensure protection and justice for victims of domestic violence. This was done through awareness raising, advocacy, and law reform. The Convention on the Elimination of all Form of Discrimination against women describes Violence, as *“any act that violates one’s basic human rights.”* Freedom from violence is now understood as a human right to which women are entitled and for which the Turks and Caicos Island Government has an obligation to guarantee.

In spite of the progress made, violence against women is on the increase. The quality of data with regard to violence against women is not always readily accessible. Many women do not report incidents of violence for various reasons, such as, shame or humiliation; or agencies responsible for dealing with violent acts are sometime less responsive in treating the complaint; or the law does not make provision to protect single women from such violent acts.

The Department of Gender Affairs has been active in the area of domestic violence in the Turks and Caicos, and in 2002 sought assistance from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to review and reform the laws of the Turks and Caicos with respect to gender-based violence and in particular, domestic violence. The current legislation is under review as there are identified gaps in the laws of protection with regards to a holistic approach of the protection of all women.

Social inclusion and how this affects women and girls, being the vulnerable groups in society need to be addressed. Discrimination, equality and equity are areas that are predominant in the Gender Departments' scheme of providing empowerment. Policy review is needed to protect the migrant worker as most times they are the victims of abuse.

Concern highlights, where Be-longer Status and PRCs' play big roles in the success or deterioration of these relationships.

### **Challenges with Domestic Violence Cases**

There is an urgent need for a home (Crisis Centre) for victims of domestic violence in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The numbers of cases that the Gender Unit deals with is attached and a high percentage deals with domestic abuse. Working along with the Social workers, cases have also included sexual abuse in minors (girls attending high school and teenage pregnancy) and with adult women. With the influx of illegal migrants and the problems that families face, in terms of job loss, single parent homes, the majority are usually women. As a result, there has been an increase in many social ills, which includes domestic violence, health and mental problems.

The 16 Days of Activism ending Violence against women is observed in the Turks and Caicos every year. The Gender Affairs Unit in collaboration with the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Unit and the Human Rights Commission, participated in various activities such as.

- CEDAW Workshop,
- Appearances on various media outlet radio, and
- Candle light vigil brings about awareness on gender based violence.
- Distribution of Pamphlets
- PSAs

International Women's Day is observed and celebrated in the Turks and Caicos Islands; where activities are held simultaneously throughout the Islands. The Standing on the Bridge Campaign is also observed as part of the activities marking International Women's Day, where there are panel discussions addressing women's issues. There is also a Women's March to advocate for the end of violence against women.

The Turks and Caicos Islands has address gender equality legislation in the following ordinances-

- Sex disqualification removal ordinance
- Employment Ordinance,
- The 2012 Constitution
- Equality Law

The Domestic Violence (DV) bill (not enacted as yet) proposes to increase the scope and empowers the courts to increase the protection of applicants and have expanded the categories of persons who can apply for Protection Orders such as de facto spouse/persons in common law unions and persons in visiting relationships. The Bill also proposes to increase the powers of the police to intervene and expand the definition of domestic violence to include financial abuse and stalking.

Amended the Offences against the Persons Bill and include stiffer penalties for carnal knowledge of children

#### **Challenges:**

- The need to change the law to recognize common-law unions for the purposes of inheritance and property rights.
- There is an urgent need for a Crisis center 24 hour hot line, support services and case management of clients.
- A sustained education programmes and sensitization on domestic violence and child abuse
- Domestic Violence Intervention Training Programmes for the police, social workers and front line professionals.

#### **Women in Armed Conflict**

The Turks and Caicos Islands is a democratic society and government unrest has never been a part of the Turks and Caicos Island history, therefore women are not or ever have been exposed to civil war and its affects and post war challenges.

#### **Women and the economy**

Of late, the Turks and Caicos Islands economy has experienced a significant shift from a booming economy to one where the following features now constitute the TCI economic realities:

- Debt restructuring.
- Shrinking government expenditure in social programmes.
- Downsizing of government and its impact on economic and social life.

The National machinery has gradually begun to take on board linkages between realities of women's lives and the wider issues of the local economy and by extension the global economic system.

In 2006 a new cruise port centre was opened on the Island of Grand Turk with Carnival Cruise Lines being the main users. Women are the ones that are noticeably seen in the fore front of this port centre. The small Business Program managed by the Turks and Caicos Investment Agent (Invest) has provided loans to over 159 business women, and 61% of the total applicants and small business management advice and other support to a further 239 or 53% of the total assisted, to ensure that their business would be successful. Other Programmes provided by TCInvest, assisted single women, in building their homes at a low-cost , training and education in Entrepreneurship. Women in Turks and Caicos Island have access to land, own their homes and other resources to improve financial status.

Student loans have allowed women to pursue their educational studies and pursue their chosen careers at the highest level while business loans gave them the opportunity to realize their dream of becoming successful business owners.

The Employment Service Department continues through its (OSH) inspections to facilitate training and awareness as it relates to the safety and health of workers. The Employment Services Department partners with the National HIV/AIDS programme as it relates to employment discrimination. To the end, their revised Employment Ordinance has expanded sections on discrimination in the workplace; with a view to be able to bring charges against person's demonstrating such behaviour. Furthermore, to address workplace policies on "HIV/AIDS in the work place, the National HIV/AIDS prevention Unit in partnership with the Turks and Caicos Islands Hotel & Tourism Association and Employment Services Department has implemented wellness and healthy living programme in the hospitality industry.

The Employment Services Department will also be launching in the early summer, their National Skills development Unit, which will aim to offer programmes, courses, certification, etc. to the unemployed. Particular emphasis has been placed in designing programmes associated with women and youth. The Department has been instrumental in both changes made to the revised Employment Ordinance and the Public Service Ordinance. The labour Commissioner also served as a member of the review committee and advocated for change to the amount of maternity leave offered to fall in line with international trends.



## **Financial Instability**

Despite the fact that a few women continue to make their mark in both the public and private sphere, the status over the last five years have been affected by a number of incidences, these include the global recession and the devastation of two major hurricanes in 2008.

The Turks and Caicos Islands depend mainly on tourism for its survival. Once tourism is affected, a large percentage of women are affected, as so many are employed in the formal and informal sectors. Tourism has fluctuated over the years, and while there has been an increase in the past two years, revenue continues to decline as a result of the increases of taxation based systems for fees including driving licence, business licences, vehicle registration, water tax, fuel tax and electricity tax just to name a few.

In addition to the suspension of the 2006 constitution, the global financial meltdown and property crash in 2008 brought growth to an abrupt halt. As a result, the country continues to suffer from huge debt which crippled investor confidence nationally and internationally. In addition, salary cuts, cuts in budgets and programmes, while projects are being placed on hold. This has created an atmosphere of uncertainty. Many large projects were placed on hold inhibiting inward investment while jobs are made redundant.

All of the above affected women most, who are in social programmes are usually geared towards single parent families, which are usually headed by women.

The Promotion of Equal Remuneration Act came into force in 2005 by a legal notice. It states that all employers according to Law must pay employees of both sexes that are holding and performing the same job tasks at the same grading scale or rate, regardless of sex or origin. Such job tasks must be of equal or same value regardless of the need or demand or even the level of persons skills or physical ability or the environment or condition of which one has to work. Hence to determine any irregularities the difference in any form of remuneration, it would be at the discretion of the potential employer if required. Employers are also advised to keep proper records that can be used as evidence when requested to ensure that they are abiding by this law. Overall this act seeks to protect employees of both sexes from gender discrimination.

The Equality Act safeguards employees working conditions, protects employees being overworked and ensure that they are being compensated properly for work done. It also mandated equal pay for equal work to men and women performing work of equal value or holding the same position.

## **Women in Position of Power Decision Making**

The TCI has seen the emerging trend where there has been an increase in the total number of women in political and decision making positions since the general elections in 2012

In 2012, the Gender Unit merged with the Department of Social Development, which seeks to provide an efficient, effective structure for gender equality and social justice. This implies giving as much advantage, consideration and latitude to one party as it is given to another. In economy, politics, education, health, sports, etc., with regards to women and men. Programmes are implemented to empower and educate the youth to acquire skills that will equip them for the world of work. The department has identified and established programmes to address the current challenge during the period and these include:-

## **Women in Development**

A Woman in Development (WID) Organization was formed in 1994 in preparation for its participation in the fourth World Conference of Women, which was held in Beijing, China in 1995, at the invitation of the United Nations. After their return, Women in Development began to lobby for an institution through which women's issues was formally addressed. Four years later in March 1999, Turks and Caicos Island government established the Women's Desk under the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports with the first Coordinator of Women's Affairs. Within months, the formation of island branches of Women in Development was established throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands.

On September 13, 1999 The Advisory Council of Women in Development was formed and on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1999, the Women's Desk was officially launched.

One of the most successful combined efforts of the Women's Desk and women in development was the production of a magazine "Honoring Women of Turks and Caicos Islands". The magazines were sold for ten dollars each and have been circulated for years. Women in Development are also committed to the empowerment of women through education, and to this end the Women's Desk and the Women in Development established several programmes such as "The Continuous Education Program" for teen-aged mothers.

The Gender Affairs Unit in keeping with their commitment of combating violence in all forms and reaching out to women in need, Women in Development had set as its long term goal, the construction of a "Crisis Center" and after years of planning, that goal was finally realized with a ground breaking ceremony, held on International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Women in Development along with the Domestic Violence Unit, held the ground breaking ceremony under the theme: Communication in the Home is best. Let Domestic Violence Rest.

The Women in development provide family support through direct assistance to single mothers, awareness raising and provision of day Care.

### **Gender Website**

A Gender Website has also been established [www.genderaffairs.com](http://www.genderaffairs.com) where persons can access additional information. The Radio Program GENCO which is aired every Tuesday from 11:30 to 12:30pm has been re-established in November of 2011. The program addresses Gender underlying issues; Reproductive health and various international agreements (CEDAW; Beijing; MDGS) that protect the rights of women.

On-going training and sensitization continues through radio programmes, brochures, websites etc. The Human Rights Commissioner has been working also to bring awareness and sensitization of the problem throughout the country. Most of the technical support comes from international agencies like UN Women, ECLAC and UNFPA.

### **Empowerment Programmes**

In 2011 the Gender Affairs Unit sought assistance from the “Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Sub regional Headquarters for the Caribbean, to conduct a “National Training Workshop on the capacity building for the production of reliable disaggregated data”. The work shop was held on November 1 – 4, where key stake holders from the public and private sector participated. As part of the development of a the proposed National Gender Policy it was necessary to conduct a workshop of this nature, to ensure building and strengthening of institutional capabilities in generating reliable social economic and environmental statistics. The workshop also addressed the measurement of programmes created by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Beijing Platform for Action and other international agreements to which the Turks and Caicos Islands Government is a signatory. Staff members from the various government departments benefitted from this important initiative.

### **Institutional Strengthening Program**

The Gender Affairs Unit, with the assistance of UN Women, Caribbean Office, embarked on a program which aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of the Gender Affairs Department in the TCI. Emphasis on gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and results-based management was the main focus. The specific areas that were addressed and strengthened were: gender mainstreaming, gender analysis and project management. Technical assistance was provided to government and NGO partners. The Institutional Strengthening Programme also addressed the need for greater understanding of governance and management, group dynamics and team building which are critical tools to build sustainability. This is in keeping with the Beijing Platform for Action and one of the agreements of the Brasilia Consensus for

Strengthening of National Institution mechanism for the advancement of women, which is one of the 12 critical areas in the Platform.

This program was very effective as there was general consensus that as a result of the workshops there was a greater understanding of gender mainstreaming and gender awareness. The staff of the Gender Unit also acquired knowledge and skills to more effectively perform a gender analysis and mainstream gender approach, sparked motivation that would enable personnel to better make sound decisions and significant contributions to formulate public policies by identifying the gender indifferences through a gender mainstreaming approach.

### **International – Training Workshops**

- The Turks and Caicos Islands Government participated in a Regional Conference in August 2012 sponsored by the Bahamas Crisis Centre, Nassau Bahamas. The main objective of this conference was to bring together local and Caribbean Crisis Centres and other NGOs and Agencies to deepen the discussion on the causes consequences of a best practice responses to gender based violence
- The Turks and Caicos Islands Government visited Jamaica and participated in the Workshop sponsored by CEDMA which focused on (Women and Girl the resilience to change December 2012)
- In March 10 -15 2013 , the coordinator participated in the, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57) work sponsored by UN Women at the UN Headquarters in New York. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established in 1946 by the Economic and Social Council to prepare recommendations and reports for the council on promoting women and girl's rights in the political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. The Commission also makes recommendations to the Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of Women's rights. (Report attached)
- The Turks and Caicos Islands Government participated in a workshop in St. Lucia on Gender mainstreaming in basic Need Trust Funds (BNTF) March 2013)

‘Women and Girls in Sports and Physical Education’- This initiative was successfully launched In March 2013. The Department collaborated with the Commonwealth Games Association on a program on April, 18, where women from a cross section of the community participated. This was a joint initiative to promote Gender Equity in Sports and Physical Education it was recognized that women and girls encountered numerous challenges through sports. This initiative was very timely and would be used as a vehicle to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

As a result the Women and Girls' in physical Education programme was launched in April 2012, in In December the (WIS) Association hosted their first community fund raising event, under the Theme

'Strength of women' where proceeds from this activity went towards sponsorship for women and girls' participation in sports at local and national level.

Women in sports (WIS) are affiliated with the Canadian Commonwealth Games Associations Women in Sports. The group comprises a cross section of women throughout the communities of the TCI, which aspire to bring about gender equality in all sectors of society as well as persons in sporting activities.

### **New Beginnings School and the Business College**

The Continuous Education Programme was established in 2000 which was designed to accommodate females who dropped out of school due to pregnancy and were not emotionally able to continue in the Public school for fear of discrimination and being ostracized. In 2002-2004 a number of young girls (mainly teenage mothers) graduated from this programme.

The Second Chance Programme is aimed at anyone who for whatever reason was unable to complete their education and those who need another opportunity to get ahead. Ages from 16 to 35 can apply. Persons are now able to gain a trade in Cosmetology, Carpentry and Cabinet Building. This was a pilot program for two years and took place at the Business College in Grand Turk. In June 2002 eighteen teen-aged mothers graduated from the program. The majority was able to be placed in suitable jobs and some moved on to higher learning and others launched their own small businesses. For the want of further funding this program was temporarily put on hold.

In 2005, with the opening of a Gender Affairs Office in Providenciales "The Continuous Education Program" was revitalized. The school still functions, however, during the past four years the school has encountered many challenges. The department is in the process of developing partnerships with academic institutions and the Ministry of Education to review the schools SOP so as to raise the standards of the school and provide financial/technical support.

### **Women & Human Rights:**

The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Human Rights Commission's (HRC) has the responsibility to promote the understanding and observance of the Fundamental Rights and Freedoms enshrined in the 2011 Constitution. The Constitution forbids discrimination and the infringement of the human rights of all persons without regard to sex, race, and place of origin, political opinion, color or creed.

In addition the TCI signed onto the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1986. It is the principal Convention and provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life including the right to vote and to stand for

election as well as education, health and employment. State parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. In essence, CEDAW works as the blueprint to achieve progress for women and the girl child in the TCI.

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) was established in 2008 and serves as the National Institution vested with the competence and the power to protect and promote human rights. The office of the Human Rights Commission is engaged in promoting human rights with its goals being:

- To foster the development of values and attitudes which up-hold human rights;
- To inform and educate the public;
- To encourage action aimed at defending human rights violations.
- 

The HRC has successfully launched Public Service Announcements increasing awareness on issues of Domestic Violence, Anti-discrimination and the Rights of the Child. Education is fostered through the dissemination of Brochures, leaflets and booklets designed to sensitize the public. The Commission host a bi-monthly Radio Show 'Human Right and You' which seek to educate, empower and bring about an awareness of issues such as Domestic Violence, and provide general education on current and relevant issues relating to human rights.

The HRC has been very instrumental in its support for and the setting up of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit with the RTCIPF. The new Domestic Violence Bill cover stalking, unmarried couples and will aim to provide the same level of protection for all women. The HRC engaged in and encouraged a review of the TCI Criminal Laws for Offences against the Persons Ordinance, and as a result, new sentencing guidelines came into place that increased the sentencing powers of the court for the sexual offences committed against the girl child.

Women have made great strides in the Turks and Caicos Islands in many areas, including access to education and employment. Indeed, there is a commonly expressed view in the country that women are 'taking over' and that men are the ones being marginalized. Nevertheless, systematic and structural barriers to women's equality remain, and the goal of gender justice continues to be elusive. However, women are making significant contributions towards their advancement. They are given the opportunity to meaningfully advance in the political process as voters, campaigners and candidates which has translated into an increased number of women holding elected offices. As a result we have witnessed an unprecedented number of women holding key positions in the House of Assembly, Civil Service, NGOs and the Private Sector. They play an important role and are represented at the highest level of Decision and Policing making.

On the whole, women do enjoy equal rights with men under the Constitution and the legal framework. However, various aspects of the present laws and practices impact in ways that undermine these rights. The problem with illegal migration and exploitation continues to create challenges for the Human Rights Commission. Many foreign women are brought into the country under the disguise of legitimate employment opportunities. At times, their entry into

the country are legal, at least on paper, they have genuine visas. The deception lies in the fact that some of the women are not destined for work as bar maids, waitresses, and baby sitters but are exploited and used to ply sexual favors as prostitutes. The absence of significant criminal penalties helps to create the conditions for high profit, low risk criminal activity profiting in the human misery that human trafficking brings. These women are first and foremost human beings and are deserving of the basic human rights and dignity. With the proposed introduction Anti-Trafficking legislation slated to come on stream will seek to criminalize human trafficking, and ensure that crimes of trafficking and traffickers are appropriately punished.

Teenage Pregnancy is an on-going concern in the Turks and Caicos. The Human Rights Commission is currently in the process of highlighting various disadvantages and continued discriminatory practices placed on the pregnant teenager. The continued unwritten policy of putting the girl child out of school and never to return following the birth of the child is not only discriminatory but further exacerbate the cycle of poverty.

All islands have Primary Health Care Clinics. All women whether they have insurance or not are encouraged to seek assistance and receive antenatal care at the various clinics.

The HRC continues to seek support and agitate for special measures to be in place for women living with HIV/AIDS and women who are living with other Disabilities who have experienced difficulty obtaining employment, accessing education and health and social services. The HRC is actively pursuing for the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in order for it to be accepted by the Turks and Caicos Islands as one of its Core Conventions.

## **Women and the Media**

The Human Rights Commission PSAs on: Domestic Violence, Anti- Discrimination, 16 days of Activism. The Gender Unit also have a GenCo radio Program that addresses Reproductive Health, Domestic Violence, Single Parenting underlying gender issues.

## **The Girl Child**

Soroptimist International is a vibrant, dynamic organisation for today's professional business women. They are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realize aspirations and have an equal voice in creating, peaceful communities worldwide. The Soroptimist works closely with the Gender Unit on issues and opportunities that transform the lives of women and girls.

There three branches of Soroptimist in the Turks and Caicos Islands, all working together in sisterhood. Their commitment to advancing women and girls in the TCI led to a number on initiatives spear-headed by each club. These include:

- Construction of a Day Care Center which catered to the underprivileged conducting remedial classes.
- Hosting debates and participation on Radio Talk Shows

In most recent years the Soropimist Club has established a mentoring initiative focusing on girls within the carious school, in addition to making annual donation of personal care items to the local high school, breakfast programs within the primary schools and creating public awareness on the many social ills of women and girls.

The Child Abuse and Prevention and Awareness Association (CAPPA) is a non profit organisation established in 2005. Since the inception the organisation has been a catalyst for the rights of children, regardless, race ethnicity religion, cultural etc. Their main focus areas are mentoring and empowering teenage mothers through workshop and other training initiatives.

The organisation provides financial assistance to schools (public/private) throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands they also advocate for alternative programmes for children who are expelled from schools; they also lobbied for the establishment of a family court, legislation and other issue affecting girls.

In Addition, the Gender Unit also hosted workshops during the mentioned period with emphasis on child protection, these workshops were sponsored by the DFID funded project, safeguarding the Children in the Overseas Territories, in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Public Safety. The purpose of the workshop was to engage community civic leaders on the importance of safeguarding and exploring how child abuse is defined and how it makes us feel and how this may impact on our practice. Sexual abuse continues to have a high profile on the Department's agenda

Access to education for teenage mothers – The incidence of teenage pregnancy has increased in the TCI and as a result so has the rate of poverty among teenage mothers. The reintegration of teenage mothers into the education system remains a challenge; many of the teenage mothers do not go back to school after giving birth due to an unwritten policy of discriminatory administrative or bureaucratic practices. The Commission is working diligently with the various Ministries to provide continued education for those affected and to exercise the rights of the teenage mother to return to school.



## **Section: 4 Emerging priorities for the future (2014 – 2017)**

### **Enforcement of the family law legislation into parliament**

Fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, and protection from discrimination are provided for in the Turks and Caicos Constitution of 1988 (cap. 1 Art. 67 and 68) irrespective of one's race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex. The establishment of a Human Rights Commission in the Turks and Caicos is viewed as part of efforts to advance human rights protocols, and to help develop legislation in line with international treaties such as the Convention to eliminate all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Turks and Caicos conforms to reporting requirements under CEDAW, and presented its last report in 2011.

Existing legislative framework provide protection for men and women in areas like employment and conditions of work, and in promoting friendly employment policies like statutory paid maternity leave as well as paternity leave. Minimum wage legislation ensures that women in lower paid employment are protected.

Sexual harassment is covered under Employment legislation, but remains an issue for women in male-dominated areas of work. Work towards development of a National AIDS Policy is an effort to develop effective policies for HIV/AIDS in the workplace. Some issues like human trafficking and domestic violence have received some consideration and draft legislations are being considered to prevent trafficking and for protection of vulnerable persons.

The TCI does not recognise common-law relationships, so women in such situations may be at distinct disadvantages in terms of inheritance rights, and rights to family provisions in the event of death of a partner.

The need for developing Family Legislation in areas like maintenance, divorce and Domestic Violence Protection has been identified, and has received support from Government. However, draft bills which reflect broad revisions under the OECS family Law and Domestic Violence Reform Project, as well as work towards the establishment of family court, are still under consideration. Although domestic violence affects both men and women, the issue of lack of practical support for women fleeing spousal abuse situations and domestic abuse is continuously highlighted.

In the areas of family law reform and social issues, the Department of Gender has therefore exerted some influence in shaping legislation and it has campaigned for the establishment of institutions like the family court. There has also been work towards the establishment of a Crisis Centre for victims of domestic violence. However, to date none of these initiatives have been institutionalised.

The Turks and Caicos Islands Government (TCIG) recognizes that without supportive social, political, cultural and economic systems working in harmony, it will be impossible to achieve realistic developmental goals. Therefore the government accepts that women have an instrumental role to play in modernizing and transforming the Turks and Caicos Islands and are therefore actively continuing to place them at the center and at the forefront of the TCI building agenda. Therefore the following initiative has been identified as part of the emerging priorities for the way forward.

- Judicial sensitization.
- Established safe house, crises intervention centre.
- Strengthening relationships through a multi-agency collaboration between the police, gender and the human rights commission, health - ensuring that there are proper procedures and establish protocols.
- Special program for barterers, skill and conflict resolution.
- Poverty Alleviate mechanism to alleviate women in poverty in the Turks and Caicos Islands – redevelop existing social programs to alleviate poverty. Vocational and technical skills training
- Provide small business loans for women to create their own companies
- Provide Parenting programs to teach parents how to adequately raise their children
- Program to address children and disabilities, and tackle the stigma surrounding disability
- Policy for teenage mothers to enable them to return to school, to balance roles as students and mothers while completing their education.
- More opportunities for Gender Affairs to share best practices and overseas attachments and internship.

### **Gender Affairs Unit – Current Position**

The Gender Affairs Unit, presently a two-person unit, a Gender Coordinator and a Deputy Coordinator, each officer with responsibilities for running separate offices in Grand Turk and in Providenciales under the Social Services Department of the newly created Ministry of Environment and Home Affairs. That Ministry now covers Departments of Environmental Health, Road safety, District Administration, Planning, Agriculture, Environment and Marine Affairs, Fire Services, Her Majesty's Prisons, Ministry of Environment.

In the context of a small Island territory like the Turks and Caicos where skills and capacities are limited, accessing the Department of Gender Affairs in a central coordinating department of government with strong links to key ministries may enhance the department's influence and impact in gender sensitive issues across all departments of governments.

## **Conclusion**

The Department of Social Development and Gender Affairs Unit through the Ministry of Environment and Home Affairs remains committed to the empowerment of women, and despite the significant progress made throughout the years, we are still lagging behind. The lack of scarce resources, both human and financial, has hampered the Unit's ability to implement programmes for future economic and social development of women. There is also a lack of logistical support. Additionally, the absence of domestic violence legislation and lack of support systems for victims makes it difficult to address the problem in a holistic manner. Therefore human and financial resources are needed to ensure that programmes are successful and sustainable.

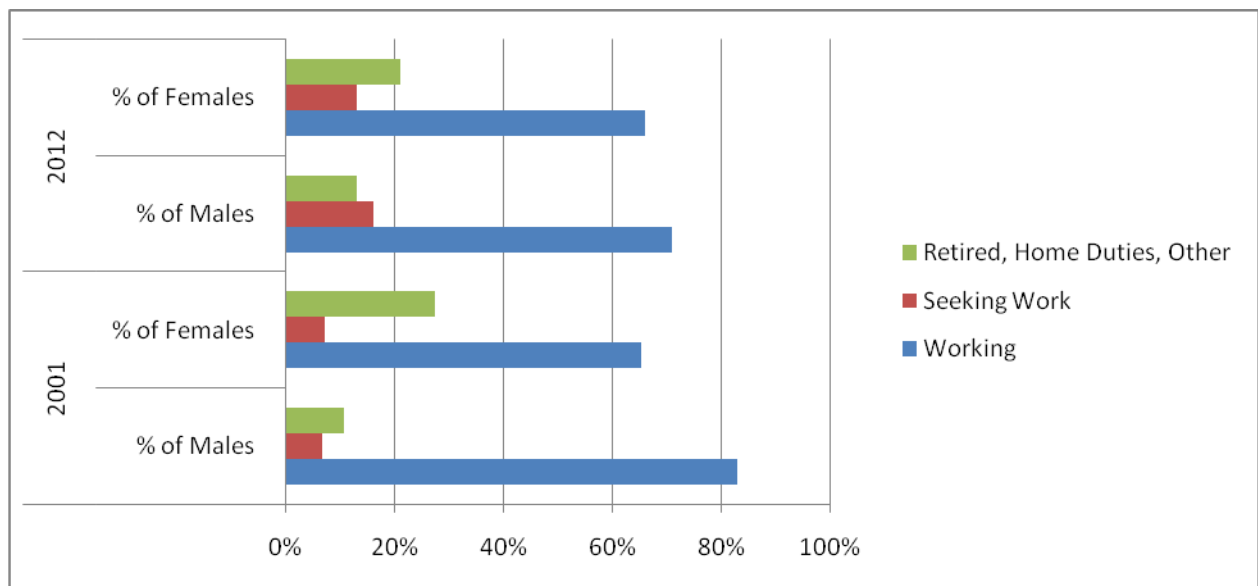
**The Report on the Turks & Caicos Island was prepared by the Gender Affairs Unit within the Ministry of Environment and Home Affairs with input from relevant Government Departments and NGO'S to which the report relates. The preparation of the report has enabled each organization to become more familiar with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and to consider the measures that they have taken to implement its provisions. We wish to thank and acknowledged all the stakeholders who participated in the Development of this report.**

## ANNEX: 1

### Economic Activity of Population aged 15 to 64 years by Gender: 2001 & 2012

Economic Activity Status of population aged 15-64		2001		2012	
		% of Males	% of Females	% of Males	% of Females
Active Population/ Labour Force	Working	83%	65.3%	71%	66%
	Seeking Work	6.7%	7%	16%	13%
Inactive Population	Retired, Home Duties, Other	10.5%	27.3%	13%	21%

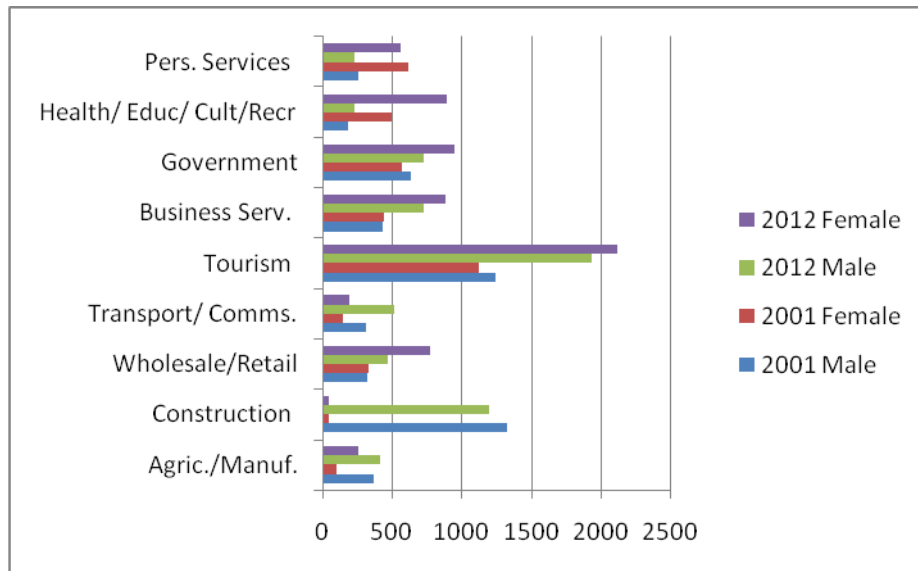
In 2001 80% of the economically active persons in the Turks & Caicos Islands were in the labour force. Males held the higher percentage for employment with 83% of all males in the labour force being employed. The employment profile for females in 2001 was not as glaring as it shows only 65.3% of females was employed. The inactive population was higher among females than males with 27.3% and 10.5% respectfully. The reason for this is that more females tend to stay home to carry outhome duties. Compared to 2012 the labour force grew by 3%. Males still hold the higher percentage of persons employed, however this figure has decreased by 12%. The employment figures for females increased to 66%, there was also a significant increase in unemployment among females. Proportionately, more males, 16%, were unemployed than females, 13% compared to 2001's figures showing more females unemployed, 7% compared to the males 6.7% unemployment.



## ANNEX: 2

### Employed Persons by Industrial Group and Gender: 2001 & 2012

Industrial Sector	2001		2012	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agric./Manuf.	369	102	417	258
Construction	1329	43	1203	47
Wholesale/Retail	324	336	467	773
Transport/ Comms.	318	151	518	197
Tourism	1242	1125	1934	2119
Business Serv.	432	447	732	886
Government	639	575	725	952
Health/ Educ/ Cult/Recr	183	499	231	895
Pers. Services	258	622	231	564
Total	5094	3900	6458	6691

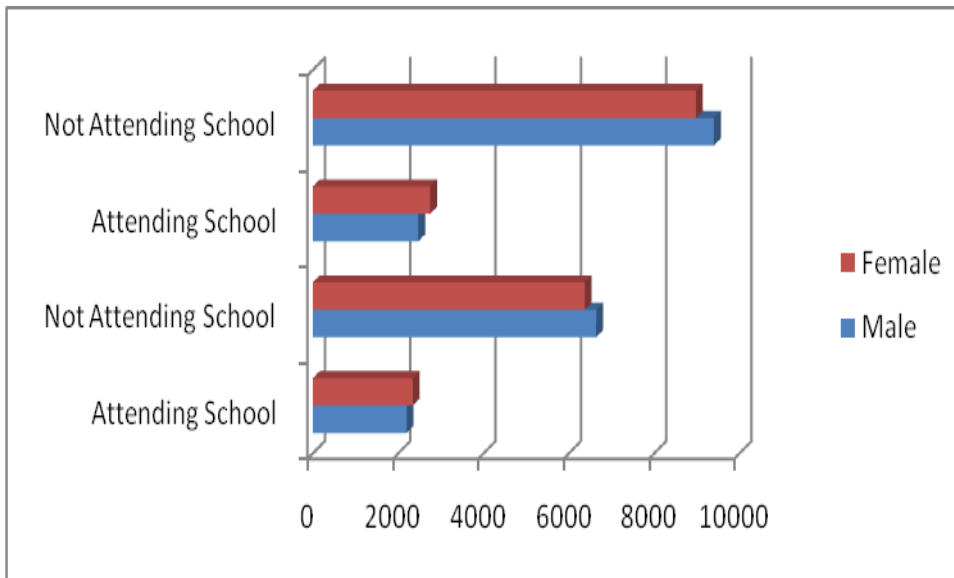


In 2001 males were concentrated, by order, in construction, in hotels, restaurants, and in general government, having 26.1%, 24.4% and 12% respectfully. Females on the other hand predominated in hotels, restaurants and tourism, personal services and government having 24.4%, 15.9% and 14.7% respectfully. 2012 compared to 2001 shows women are still leading in sectors such as Tourism and Government with 31.7% and 14.2% respectfully. However there is a .5% decrease in the Government sector but a significant increase of 2.9% and 1.5% increase among women in the tourism and business services sector respectfully. Overall the performance of women in 2012 has been a tremendous one compared to men. This is evident as more women are pushing themselves to break the glass ceiling and hold positions such as Deputy Governor, Deputy Premier, Attorney General, Human Rights Director and Complaints Commissioner. Women continue to lead in Business Services, Wholesale & Retail and Personal Services.

### Annex: 3

#### Persons Aged 5Years and Over by School Attendance: 2001 & 2012

Sex	2001		2012	
	Attending School	Not Attending School	Attending School	Not Attending School
Male	2200	6644	2472	9403
Female	2343	6376	2750	8982
Total	4543	13020	5222	18385



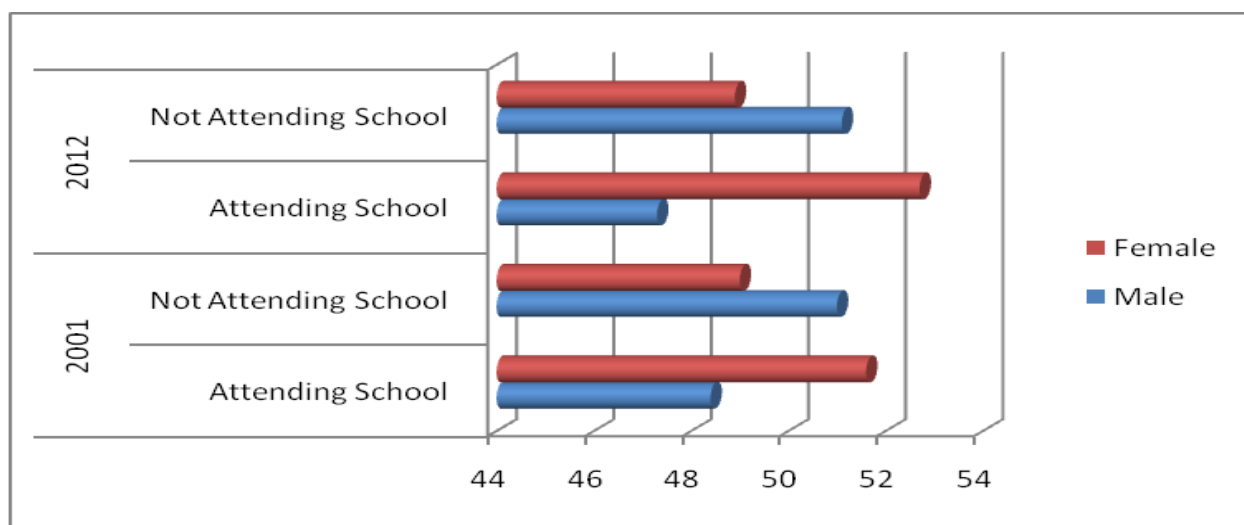


### ANNEX:3

#### Percentage of Persons Aged 5 Years and Over by School Attendance: 2001 & 2012

Sex	2001		2012	
	Attending School	Not Attending School	Attending School	Not Attending School
Male	48.4	51.0	47.3	51.1
Female	51.6	49.0	52.7	48.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

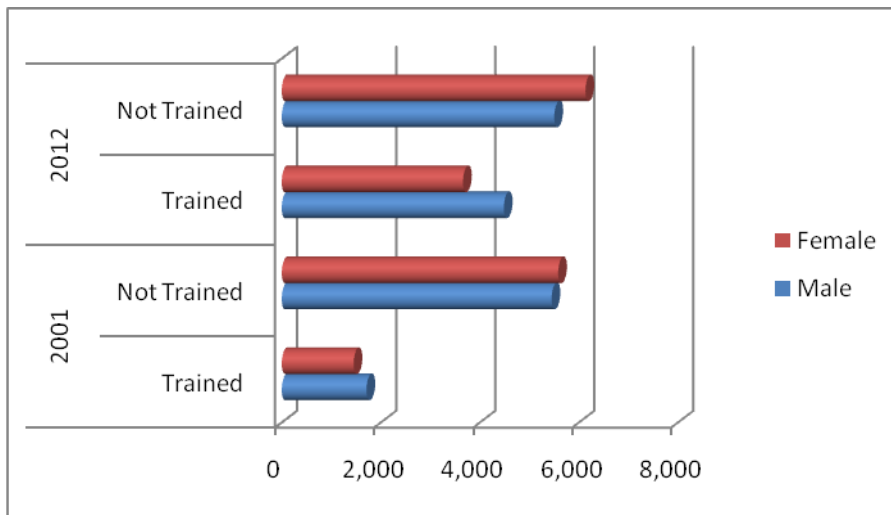
There was proportionally more females than males aged five years and older attending school in 2001 with females holding on to 51.6%. In 2012 it shows that females still have a higher percentage of attendance showing an attendance increase of 1.1. The overall percentage for males five years and older has decrease compared with 2001. The reason for this could be that more females are interested in furthering their studies after obtaining a high school diploma whereas males are more interested in joining the workforce after they leave high school.



## ANNEX: 4

### Persons Aged 15 Years and Over, Exposure to Training by Gender: 2001 & 2012

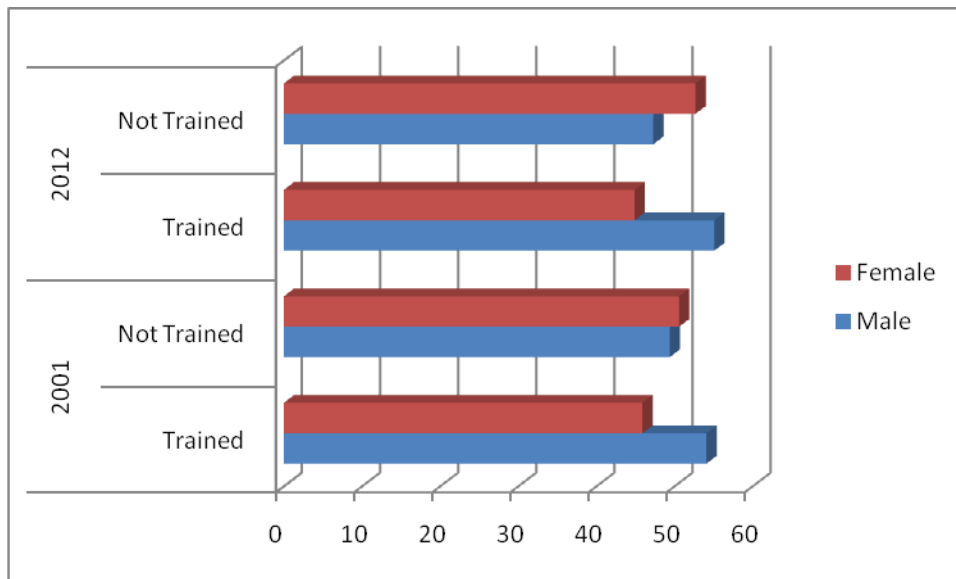
Sex	2001		2012	
	Trained	Not Trained	Trained	Not Trained
Male	1,711	5,449	4,485	5,504
Female	1,451	5,582	3,660	6,133
Total	3,162	11,031	8,145	11,637



Percentage of Persons Aged 15 Years and Over, Exposure to Training by Gender: 2001 & 2012

Sex	2001		2012	
	Trained	Not Trained	Trained	Not Trained
Male	54.1	49.4	55.1	47.3
Female	45.9	50.6	44.9	52.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

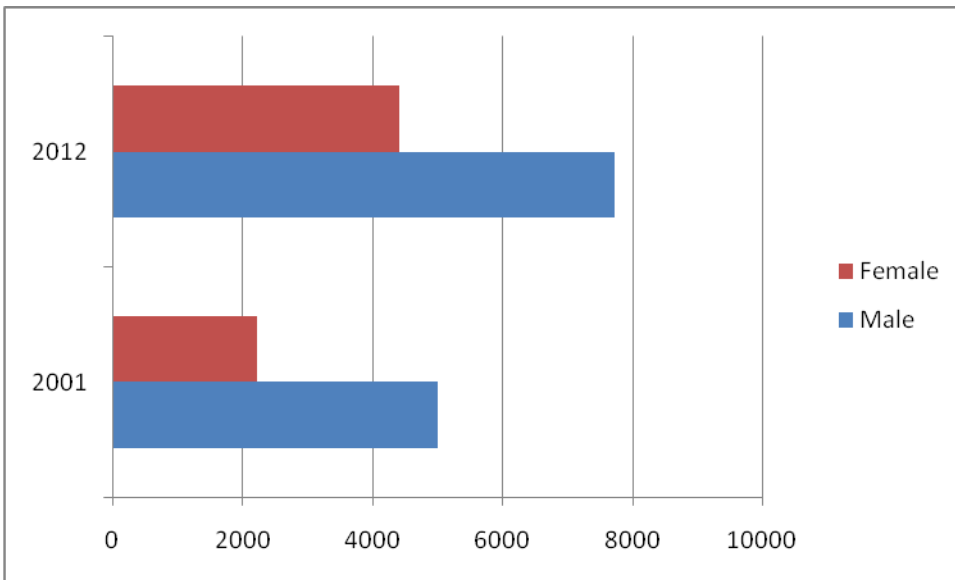
About 54.1 % of persons that were exposed to training in 2001 were male compared to the 45.9% that were female. In 2012 the males still dominated in the area of training with an increase of 1% compared to 2001. More females were not trained compared to those that were in 2012 with 44.9% being trained and 52.7% not trained. This is a slight decrease of 1% and 2.1% respectively compared to 2001.



## ANNEX: 5

### Householders by Gender: 2001 & 2012

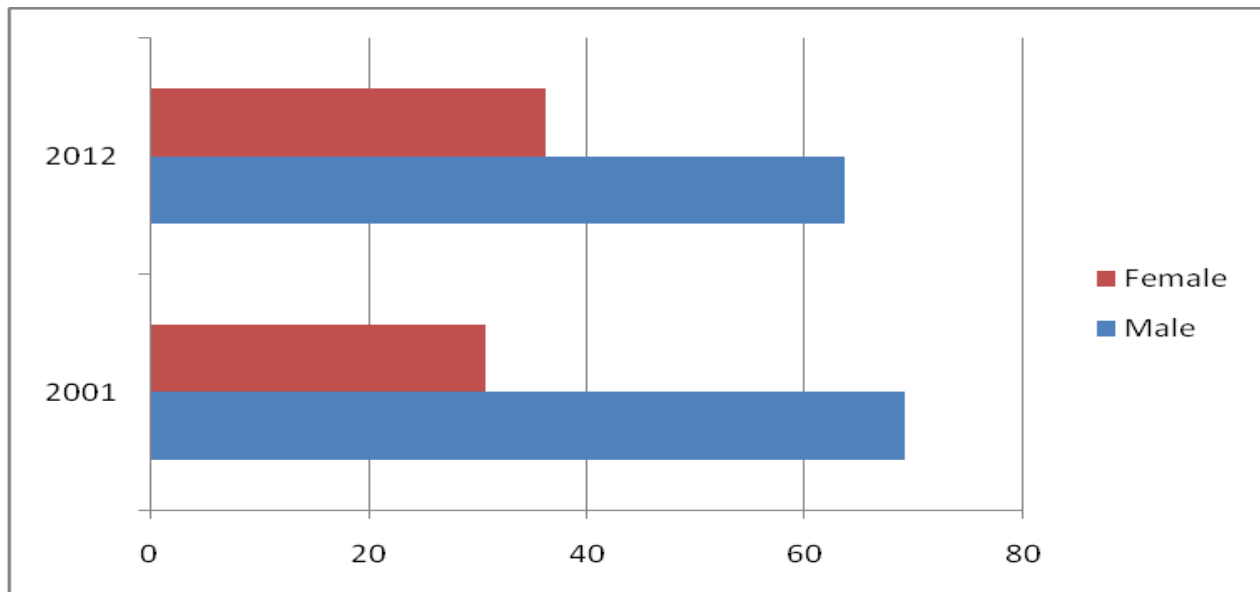
Sex	2001	2012
Male	5018	7724
Female	2235	4411
Total	7253	12135



### Percentage of Householders by Gender: 2001 & 2012

Sex	2001	2012
Male	69.2	63.7
Female	30.8	36.3
Total	100	100

As might be expected, there was a larger percentage of male householders (persons identified as heads of their households) than female householders in 2001. About 7 out of 10 or 69.2% were male. In 2012 males are still dominating as householders however the percentage has slightly decreased. The female householders have increased by 5.5%.

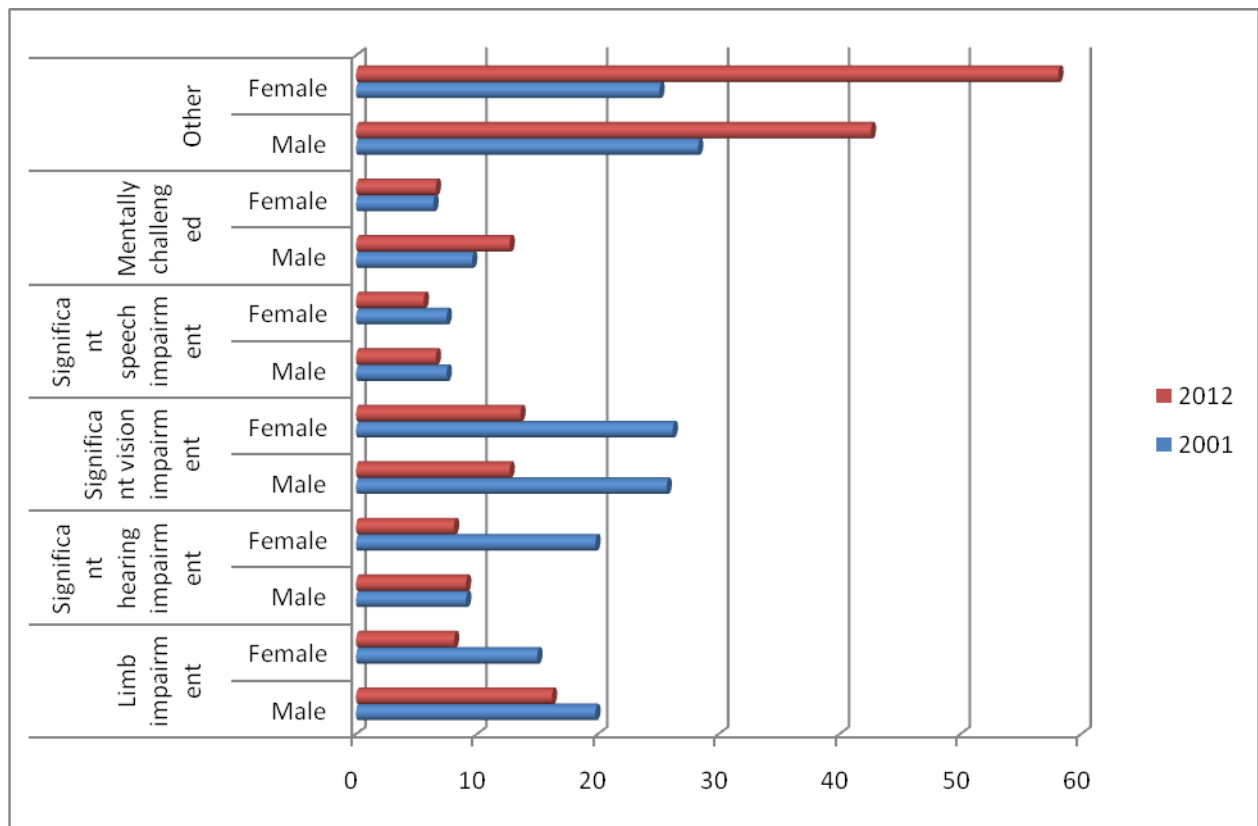


## ANNEX: 6

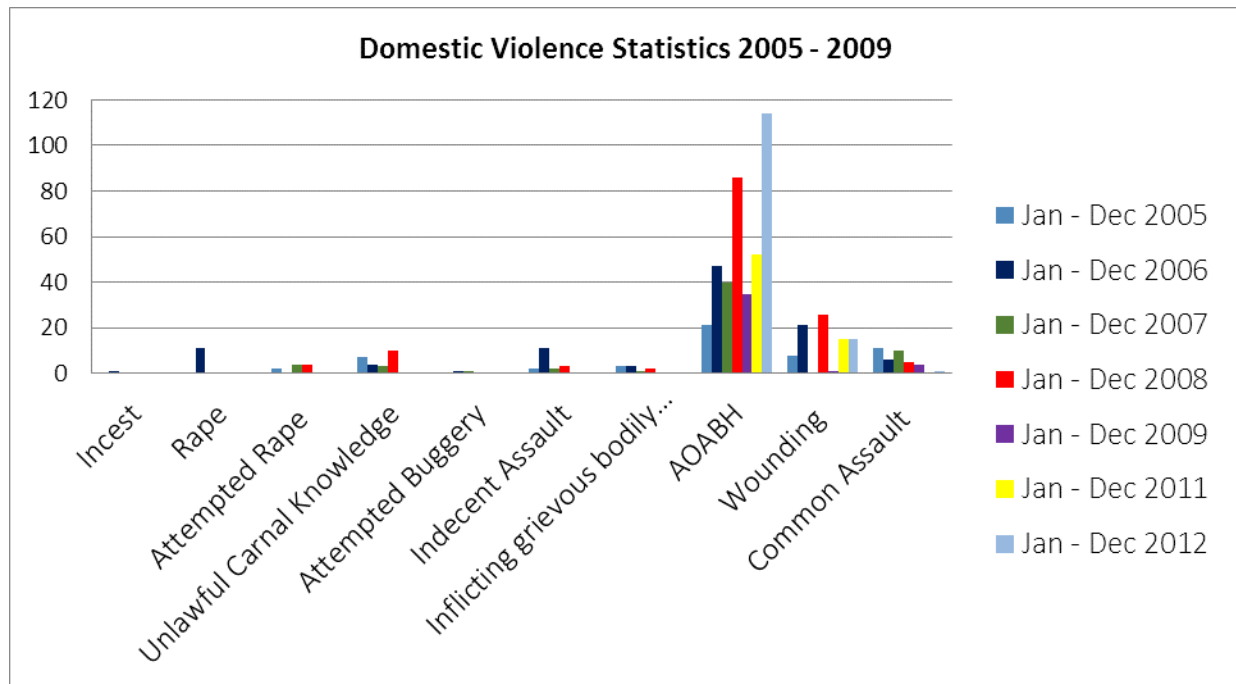
### Number of Persons by Type of Disability

Type of Disability	Sex	2001	2012
Limb impairment	Male	19.8	16.2
	Female	15.0	8.1
Significant hearing impairment	Male	9.1	9.1
	Female	19.8	8.1
Significant vision impairment	Male	25.7	12.7
	Female	26.2	13.6
Significant speech impairment	Male	7.5	6.6
	Female	7.5	5.6
Mentally challenged	Male	9.6	12.7
	Female	6.4	6.6
Other	Male	28.3	42.6
	Female	25.1	58.1
Total	Male	100	100
	Female	100	100

In 2001 there were 374 cases of persons with disabilities where males and females were equal accounting for 50% each. Significant Hearing Impairment was the disability with the highest amount of people. The number of persons recorded as having visual impairment was almost even among males and females: 25.7% and 26.2%, respectfully. There was a 5.6 percent increase in persons living with disabilities in 2012 compared to the number recorded in 2001. The number of persons recorded as having visual impairment decreased significantly compared to 2001 and only accounted for 12.7% and 13.6%, males and females respectively. Substantially more females than males reported disabilities with 52% to 48%.



## Annex: 7





*Reference:*

Turks and Caicos Poverty Assessment Report: CEDAW Report 2007/11: Turks and Caicos Intuitional Strengthening Report 2012, Human Rights Commission, Attorney General Chambers, Ministry of Education Youth Sports and Library Services, nation HIV/AIDs prevention Unit. Soroptimist Club, Department of Planning and Statistics (DEPS)