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Advancing the economic empowerment and autonomy of women in the Caribbean through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Sheila Stuart
Lydia Rosa Gény
Abdullahi Abdulkadri



UNITED NATIONS



FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT WITH EQUALITY

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This document has been prepared by Sheila Stuart, Social Affairs Officer, Lydia Rosa Gény, Associate Social Affairs Officer, and Abdullahi Abdulkadri, Coordinator, all in the Statistics and Social Development Unit of the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Candice Gonzales and Sinovia Moonie, Research Assistants with the Statistics and Social Development Unit, performed data collection for the study, and Leeanna Joy Seelochan, Research Assistant in the same Unit, edited earlier versions of this paper.

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List of abbreviations

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGA	Country Gender Assessment
CPA	Country Poverty Assessment
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GDI	Gender Development Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCD	Non Communicable Disease
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NWM	National Women's Machinery
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Islands Developing States
SMEs	Small and Medium Size Enterprises
UWI	University of the West Indies

Abstract

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls play a central role in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda is designed to catalyse action at all levels, during the next 13 years, in areas deemed critical to the attainment of sustainable development, as highlighted in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the associated 169 targets. Many of the targets recognize gender equality and women's empowerment as both the objective and as part of the solution. SDG 5, the stand-alone gender goal, is dedicated to achieving these ends. In this regard, the SDGs represent a significant step forward in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment and autonomy, covering for the first time areas such as the recognition and valuing of unpaid care and domestic work.

This paper is focused on the economic empowerment and autonomy of women and girls as a strategy for accelerating gender equality through the implementation of the SDGs, which provides the framework for mainstreaming gender issues into all stages of national policies and programmes. In making this argument, the paper highlights some of the major challenges facing the Caribbean subregion in its efforts to achieve greater equality, particularly gender equality, and to promote sustainable development for all.

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a comprehensive and people-centred framework for advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. The 2030 Agenda is designed to catalyse action in priority areas deemed critical for the attainment of sustainable development. It is intended to ensure dignity, greater equality, prosperity and sustainability with a focus on the most disadvantaged groups. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which represent the cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda, recognize gender equality and women and girls' empowerment as a key objective in the stand-alone gender goal (SDG 5). Gender equality and pursuit of empowerment of women and girls are not limited to SDG 5 as many of the targets for the other goals are also aimed at achieving this. As such, women and girls have a central role to play in all of the Goals.

The monitoring of progress in attaining gender equality is not new. In fact, recent available evidence indicates that despite the progress being made towards achieving gender equality, there are many areas in which gender inequality persists in the Caribbean. These include gender pay gap, discriminatory practices in the labour market, sexual division of labour, imbalanced distribution of time and sharing of responsibilities for domestic and unpaid care work, including in decision-making, and unequal access to and control over productive and natural resources, credit, incomes, education, and social protection, among others (ECLAC, 2015a).

Given the transformative stance of the 2030 Agenda, this paper seeks to examine how the SDGs, can be used as a catalyst to accelerate the achievement of economic empowerment and autonomy for Caribbean women and girls. The paper examines the gender dimensions of economic empowerment in the Caribbean subregion in order to identify the outstanding issues and the contributory factors that will need to be addressed to achieve not only women's economic empowerment and autonomy, but also sustainable development and equality, including gender equality, by 2030.

This study articulates a position for enhancing women's economic opportunities through employment and entrepreneurship in order to promote the economic autonomy of women in the subregion. The assessment made would inform policy-makers on how to address the contributory factors that limit or hinder women's economic empowerment and autonomy, thereby providing a pathway for attaining sustainable development with equality. In this context, the linkage between gender and full and productive employment and decent work, which is the focus of Target 8.5 of the SDG 8, is highlighted for the Caribbean subregion.

The paper also identifies specific areas where strategic actions, through well-planned and targeted programmes and policies, could be implemented to advance women's economic empowerment and autonomy. These actions must take into consideration the specific characteristics of Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including their narrow economic base, limited infrastructure and capacity, and vulnerability to economic shocks and natural disasters (Drakes and Winston, 2015, p. 6).

Overview of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an ambitious and transformative framework for development, which aspires to 'leave no one behind'. The 2030 Agenda acknowledges the critical links between inequality, social exclusion and poverty, hence the vision of the SDGs and associated targets, is that of a world in which every woman and girl fully enjoys their human rights with no legal, institutional, social, economic and political barriers in order to effectively contribute to national sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda also envisages a world in which every country enjoys sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all (United Nations, 2015, p. 3).

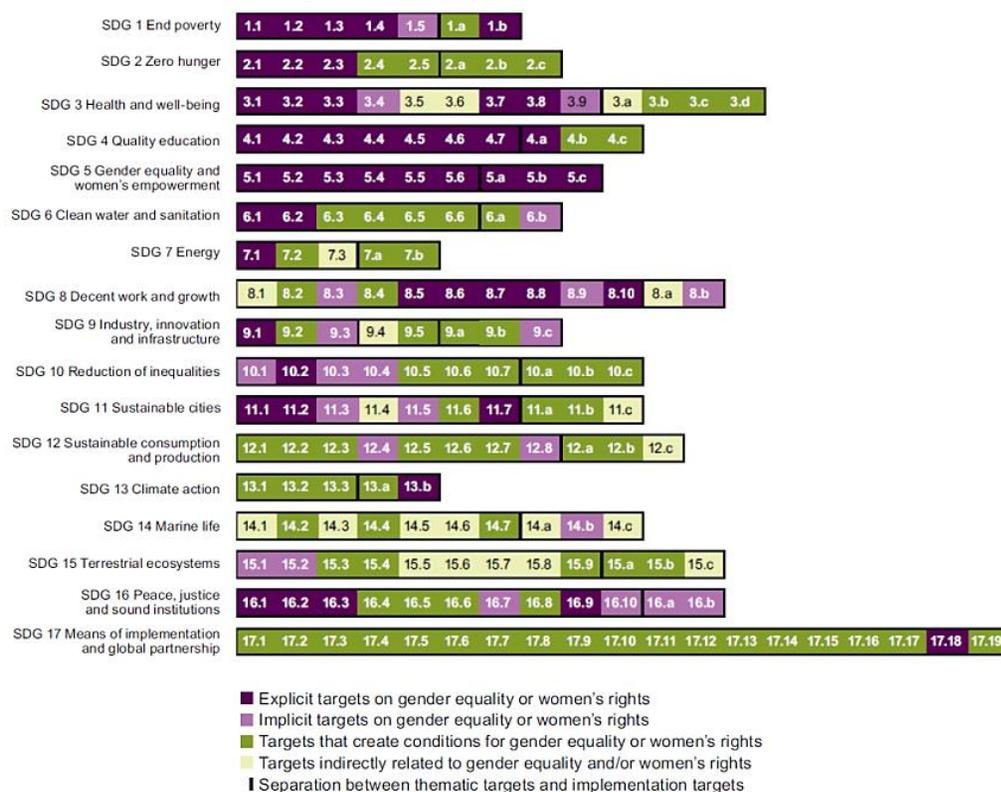
Reducing inequalities is arguably one of the strongest commitments of the 2030 Agenda, as exemplified in SDG 10. In this goal, the global community aspires to reduce inequality not only within countries but also among them. Of the many targets set for this goal, Target 10.4 calls for governments to "adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality" (ibid).

With respect to gender, the stand-alone Goal 5 on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is formulated on the basis of strong gender analysis, which recognizes the interconnections between gender inequality and the economic, political and social aspects of sustainable development (OXFAM, 2016, p. 5). The attainment of gender equality therefore is central to the overall achievement of the SDGs, and is more deeply integrated in the 2030 Agenda in comparison to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (ECOSOC, 2015). As a result of the stronger gender analysis in the 2030 Agenda, the articulation of gender issues in the other "non-gender-specific" goals is more evident. Broadly, the United Nations General Assembly has emphasized in the Agenda that the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls would make a crucial contribution to progress across all goals and targets. With this aim, ECLAC has made a proposal (see figure 1) for mainstreaming gender equality in all goals of the SDGs.

The SDGs are designed to accelerate progress through a more inclusive path to sustainable development and include a "strong commitment to increasing gender equality" (Bandelet, 2016/14, p. 8). In this regard, the SDGs represent a significant step forward in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, covering for the first time, areas such as the recognition and valuing of unpaid care and domestic work. Many other SDG targets show the linkages between women's rights and the three dimensions of sustainable development (see figure 1). To advance the attainment of these goals, concrete means of implementation are articulated within each group and in Goal 17 that is dedicated to means of implementation.

Tangible legal, political and institutional changes as well as cultural paradigm shift are required to ensure women's rights, and redress entrenched gender discrimination, which are barriers to the attainment of gender equality (UN WOMEN, 2015a). This will also require that greater attention be paid at national and local levels to the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in synergy with the regional gender agenda.

Figure 1
Proposal for mainstreaming gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Equality and Women's Autonomy in the Sustainable Development Agenda (LC/g.2686/Rev.1.), Santiago, 2016, Figure I1, updated at 8 March 2017.

As mentioned earlier, the development of the stand-alone gender equality goal is formulated on strong gender analysis which is seen across many of the other SDGs and targets, but for the purpose of this study, the main focus will be on the goals illustrated in box 1:

Box 1
Selection of SDGs with gender perspective

1. Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Among the targets for this goal, Target 4.4 is focused on substantially increasing by 2030, the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship;

2. Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Target 8.3 specifically calls for the promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services. Along the same line, Target 8.5 focuses on achieving by 2030, full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Box1 (concluded)

3. Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Within this goal, Target 10.2 aspires to, by 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. Relatedly Target 10.3 plans to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard. Target 10.4 promises to adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

Source: Author's compilation.

However, while it has been acknowledged that progress was made in getting gender equality and women's rights on to the international development agenda, many questions remain regarding how and the extent to which countries will include the SDG framework in legislations, policies, programmes and institutional mechanisms, in conformity with previous international and regional commitments, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme for Action on Population and Development, and more recently, the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, among others.

In assessing the potential of the SDGs to serve as a platform for gender equality and empowerment of women and strengthening their autonomy, this paper discusses some conceptual and definitional issues with respect to women's economic empowerment and autonomy and gender equality, and the importance of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development alongside other international and regional agreements that are aimed at achieving gender equality and ensuring women's economic empowerment and autonomy. This forms the focus of Section I.

Section II gives a brief situational analysis of the challenges facing women with respect to employment opportunities and participation in the labour force and focuses attention on a number of barriers to the attainment of women's economic autonomy, including unpaid care work which serves to restrict women's full participation in the labour force, business development, and entrepreneurship.

Section III presents an analysis of women and decent work and employment in the Caribbean subregion, including an examination of issues such as labour force segregation and the gender pay gap. It provides an overview of the participation of women in business and entrepreneurship, seeks to identify the challenges facing these women, and offers suggestions on policy interventions to address these obstacles.

The discussions presented in the first three sections of the paper are consolidated in Section IV and inform a series of recommendations made for policy and programme actions to foster the attainment of the economic autonomy of women in the Caribbean subregion.

I. Conceptual and definitional issues

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and their autonomy are arguably important catalysts for accelerating the achievement of the SDGs and multiplying their impact in different spheres of life. In this context economic empowerment of women has been identified as a prerequisite for sustainable development, and a key factor in achieving gender equality with the ability to boost economies (Global Banking Alliance for Women). As such, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents an opportunity to shape the world for women by serving as an entry point for all to achieve human rights and social justice with the eradication of economic inequality and poverty, through the pursuit of the SDGs.

The focus on the economic empowerment and autonomy of women will no doubt highlight many of the challenges facing women at the national level and will raise important questions for policy discussions. To fully ventilate those policy issues, an understanding of some concepts and definitions is essential. This section presents an overview of conceptual and definitional issues relative to gender equality, the economic empowerment and autonomy of women and labour markets as gendered institutions.

A. Gender equality

Equality, particularly gender equality, is an essential component of sustainable social progress. As it is at the very heart of human rights and one of the core values of the United Nations, it does not need justification, yet gender equality has multifaceted and positive implications for development in all its economic, social and environmental dimensions and can contribute significantly to economic growth (Ward et al, 2010). Therefore, promoting gender equality has the potential to foster sustainable development.

Inequalities are fundamental social and economic barriers to sustainability, and underlie most of the social development challenges in the Caribbean SIDS, including poverty, violence, crime, emigration and unequal gender power relations in public and private spheres. Inequalities based on sex are a product of socially constructed norms and practices, and power relations, and are a pervasive feature of all societies (UNRISD, 2005). Men are assigned the role of breadwinner in most societies and

as such are more likely to be placed under greater obligation to participate in paid work, which gives them greater access to financial resources and economic empowerment.

However, as highlighted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), men have a role to play in promoting women's economic empowerment by assisting their female partners and family members to access resources that are essential to their economic autonomy. Men can also benefit from greater gender equality, given that "the pressure of being the main breadwinner of the household is lifted and they build healthier relationships with their wives and children" (2014, p. 2).

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) articulates that "employment is the master key for achieving equality" (2015). Further, the Caribbean Human Development Report 2016 states that work in all its forms, including paid employment, unpaid care work, voluntary work and creative work, contributes to the richness of human lives and is a major factor in the progress on human development in the past 25 years (p. 3). According to UNDP 2016, human development involves:

"expanding choices, which determine who the persons are and what they do. These choices depends on several factors, including capabilities; the social and cognitive constraints and social norms and influences that shape the values and choices in a specific society; the empowerment and the agency for exercising individually and as part of groups in shaping the options and opportunities; and the mechanisms that exist to resolve competing claims in ways that are fair and conducive to realizing human potential". (p. 8)

In that sense, it recognises that a large amount of human potential remains unused; for instance due to the fact that women face lower wages and reduced opportunities for paid work while bearing a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. It is therefore essential to create opportunities to put to work the untapped potentials of all people in order to overcome the human development deficits (UNDP, 2015).

To better comprehend how these inequalities and barriers operate in the labour market, it is necessary to understand how the household interacts with the market and other institutions and how gender composition plays an important factor in this interaction. Gender as a concept is regularly misunderstood. An understanding of gender, including gender analysis, is necessary in formulating and implementing policies and programmes for achieving gender equality, including equitable social and economic development. For example, the World Bank conceptual framework on gender identifies three domains of gender equality, namely human endowments such as health and education; economic opportunity, as measured by participation in economic activities and access to and control of key productive assets; and voice and agency, as expressed in freedom from violence, the ability to have voice and influence in governance and political processes and the ability to exercise control on key decisions such as marriage, sexual activity and child-bearing (2015).

Good health and education are important in their own right. Together they are major enabling factors which contribute to women's ability to participate in economic activities, as well as their capacity to exercise voice and agency. The necessary investments must therefore be made to enhance what Seguino refers to as "social infrastructure" (Seguino, 2016, p. 7). In terms of constraints to women's voice and agency, gender-based violence has been identified as the most restrictive because it leads to reduced mobility, reduced access to certain jobs, loss of productivity and high absenteeism among both men and women, and causes long term trauma and mental health issues.

B. Gender equality and autonomies

For ECLAC, equality is an "idée-force that has become the fundamental value that the development model must achieve" (2017c, p. 11). It is understood as the entitlement to rights, which requires that the State play a role in attaining thresholds of well-being for the whole population, through applying consistency between economic and social policies, strengthening democratic and participatory institutions, reducing territorial inequalities and promoting profound cultural changes (ibid). It therefore

acknowledges a broader concept of equality, in which all women and girls can exercise the full spectrum of human rights under conditions of full equality with men and boys. In this framework for achieving gender equality in the region, ECLAC has focused on the concept of autonomy, which refers to people's capacity to make free and informed decisions about their lives, enabling them to be and act in accordance with their own aspirations and desires, given a historical context that makes those possible (2011). More specifically, in the context of gender equality, autonomy is understood as:

“women's degree of freedom to act according to their own choices rather than those of other people. There is therefore a close link between women's achievement of autonomy and their individual and collective empowerment. An individual's degree of autonomy is inseparable from the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the social group to which he or she belongs. Accordingly, the personal autonomy that a woman can develop depends on the potential autonomy of her social group and of women within her society in general. In short, the autonomy of a social group does not depend exclusively on the personal desires of its members” (Fernández, 1999, cited in United Nations, 2005, p. 114).

The autonomy of a woman does not only mean having the capacity but also the concrete conditions that will give her the freedom to make decisions that affect her life. Hence, ECLAC has identified three forms of autonomy: economic autonomy, autonomy in decision-making, and physical autonomy:

- Economic autonomy means women's capacity to generate income and personal financial resources, based on access to paid work under conditions of equality with men. This parameter takes account of time use, and of women's contribution to the economy;
- Autonomy in decision-making refers to women's involvement in decision-making at various levels of the different branches of government, and their full participation in decision-making that affect their lives, individually and as a group;
- Physical autonomy means the control over their own bodies and it is mainly measured through reproductive rights and gender-based violence.

Given the multidimensional nature of sustainable development, ECLAC emphasizes the interrelation and interdependence between the autonomies in order to establish sustainable sectoral and cross-cutting policies aimed at eliminating gender inequalities and guaranteeing the effective enjoyment of human rights by all women, without discrimination.

This comprehensive and inter-sectorial approach was recently reinforced in October 2016 with the adoption of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030. The Montevideo Strategy is built on previous international and regional agreements on advancing women's rights and autonomy. The 10 pillars established for its implementation are: (1) normative framework; (2) institutions; (3) participation; (4) capacity-building and capacity-strengthening; (5) financing; (6) communication; (7) technology; (8) cooperation; (9) information systems; and (10) monitoring, evaluation and accountability. These pillars are considered to be interconnected priorities that create the conditions and means for the full and effective implementation of public policies aimed at eliminating inequality and ensuring that women in all their diversity can enjoy all human rights (ECLAC, 2016b, p. 6). The Strategy also seeks to overcome the structural challenges entrenched in the current unequal power relations in Latin America and the Caribbean, including socioeconomic inequality and the persistence of poverty, discrimination, violence and patriarchal cultural patterns and the predominance of a culture of privilege, the sexual division of labour and the unfair social organization of care, and the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere (p. 8). Particular attention is given to the region's heterogeneity, the special needs and particular challenges facing landlocked developing countries, SIDS, highly indebted and vulnerable Caribbean countries, among others. It also recognises the need to increase resources and technical support to those countries in order to guarantee the necessary resources for the implementation of the regional gender agenda.

As recognised in the 2030 Agenda and the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda and previous agreements, it is clear that the achievement of gender equality cannot be isolated from the interactions within and between households, markets-including labour markets-and public institutions. Attention must therefore be focused at all times on the different aspects of gender equality, namely the personal, private, and public life that also influence sustainable development and economic empowerment and their autonomy.

C. Economic empowerment and autonomy of women

Women's empowerment and autonomy are indispensable for the achievement of gender equality, and represent the political and individual processes for the full exercise and enjoyment of their human rights. According to Benavente and Valdés (ECLAC, 2014, p. 18), both terms are usually used in an undifferentiated manner, but they refer to different aspects of the same process: Empowerment is the process of becoming stronger and control over one's life and autonomy is the status of being free and able to make decisions that affect one's life, thus together form the complementary conditions for equality (p. 20).

The concept of empowerment has its roots in social change work, and is essentially concerned with changing and transforming power relations. Early applications of the concept was influenced by feminist thought which was deemed radical and concerned with the transformation of power relations in favour of women's rights and the attainment of greater equality between women and men. Sen, for example, states that empowerment is, first and foremost, about power, and its transformative value lies in bringing about change in power relations in favour of those who previously exercised little power and control over their own lives; "If power means control, then empowerment therefore is the process of gaining control" (Sen, 1997, p. 20).

However, it must be emphasized that empowerment is not something that can be bestowed by others but is a process of understanding and recognizing inequalities in power and rights, and taking action to bring about structural change in favour of greater equality through access to, and control over material resources as well as access to institutional structures. This includes providing women with access to credit, entrepreneurship training and business opportunities, as well as the means to generate income to enable them to better manage their economic situation.

The empowerment of women and girls has become a mainstream development concern, championed by development agencies, donors and global NGOs "as a means to lift economies, drive growth, improve infant and child health, enhance women's skills and open up opportunities for women's economic and political engagement" (Cornwall, 2014). It is within this context of providing opportunities to increase women's economic participation in the labour market and other economic activities that the concept of economic empowerment is addressed in this paper.

Economic empowerment takes place when both women and men have the ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from economic growth processes in ways that not only recognize but value their contributions, respect their dignity, and make it possible to negotiate a fairer and more equitable distribution of the benefits of growth (OECD, 2011). In this respect, an integral measure of economic empowerment relates to the level of income earned by women in comparison to men, primarily through their participation in the labour market.

Economic autonomy, in turn, is understood as "the sense of women's capacity to generate income and personal financial resources, based on access to paid work under conditions of equality with men. It takes into account the use of time, and women's contribution to the economy".¹ Women's economic autonomy is analysed through several lenses, including their effective access to decent work, control over resources such as financial resources, credit, natural resources, and assets; creating enough free time for combining training, personal and professional development with active participation in social

¹ ECLAC, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. See <http://oig.cepal.org/en/autonomies/economic-autonomy>.

and political life as well as caring for family members; all of which will allow them to realize their own aspirations (ECLAC, 2016a, p. 37).

A woman is economically empowered and autonomous when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions (Golla et al, 2011, p. 4). When women are empowered, their access to resources and opportunities such as jobs, financial services, education and skill development, property and other productive assets is increased. More critical is that when women are economically empowered it transcends their family members and their immediate communities because these women are more likely than men to invest their earnings in the health and education of family members, especially children in the household, as well as in community projects. Studies have found that whenever women control a greater share of household income, spending patterns change in ways that benefit children. As a result, children are healthier and better educated, and better prepared for the future.

The benefits of women’s economic empowerment and autonomy extend far beyond the household level; empirical evidence has demonstrated that economies grow when more women are in paid employment. A recent report by the McKinsey Global Institute asserted:

“Gender inequality is not only a pressing moral and social issue but also a critical economic challenge. If women—who account for half the world’s age population—do not achieve their full economic potential, the global economy will suffer”.²

The World Bank in its Gender Action Plan for the Fiscal years 2007-2010 describes the economic empowerment of women as “smart economics” in recognition of the finding that the increased participation of women in the labour force and the associated earnings are linked with a reduction in poverty and faster economic growth. Not only do women benefit from their economic empowerment, men, children and the society as a whole also do. According to the World Bank (2006), the lack of women’s empowerment not only endangers economic growth and poverty reduction, it also creates a number of other negative impacts “including less favourable education and health outcomes for children” (World Bank, p. 2).

Box 2

Importance of women’s economic empowerment and autonomy for pro-poor growth

Higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children’s education, health and nutrition, which leads to economic growth in the long-term. The share of women in waged and salaried work grew from 42% in 1997 to 46% in 2007.

Total agricultural outputs in Africa could increase by up to 20% if women’s access to agricultural inputs was equal to men’s.

Women-owned businesses comprise up to 38% of all registered small businesses worldwide. The number of women-owned businesses in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America is growing rapidly and, with that growth, come direct impacts on job creation and poverty reduction.

Source: United Kingdom Department for International Development (2010), “Agenda 2010 –The turning point on poverty: background paper on gender.”

As cited in: Women’s Economic Empowerment. DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) 2011, p. 7. (<http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/45249900.pdf>).

² McKinsey Global Institute, “Executive Summary. The Power of Parity: How advancing women’s equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth”. p. 1, (2015), See <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>.

D. Labour markets as gendered institutions

Gender inequality is one of the most widespread and persistent forms of social and economic inequality. This extends to labour markets, which are shaped by social norms and power inequalities and further magnified by disparities in educational attainments and experiential assets. While policy-makers are slowly recognising its importance to development processes, gender inequality continues to be poorly understood and even misunderstood.

The gender norms and attitudes in societies are often very subtly embedded in both the formal and informal practices of labour markets. This is reflected in the types of jobs to which women and men have access or are deemed suitable with women's occupations tending to be lower paid. Persistent gender wage gaps are evident in all industries, even in those industries where female participation is comparatively high, particularly in the services sector.³

While women are not necessarily excluded from the workplace, cultural beliefs continue to underlie unconscious biases and assumptions, which serve to limit female participation at all levels of the labour market.⁴ Women are less likely than their male counterparts to have access to working capital, social contacts (through networking) and the different types of skills and experiences necessary for improving their participation in the labour market. Gender-based inequalities and related barriers are often responsible for these differences (UNRISD, 2012). These gender-related constraints combined with labour market forces interact in shaping the extent and patterns of women's labour force participation (Kabeer, 2008, p. 67).

When compared with other regions, there is the recognition that women have a strong presence in the labour market in the Caribbean. However, this strength is weakened by the fact that their entrepreneurial potential is not being realized. The trend is for women in the Caribbean to be “over-represented at the lower end of the labour market, and under-represented at the high end... where the greatest potential for contributing to economic growth is located” (Lashley, 2009, p. 63). Furthermore, for the few women in top positions, they receive lower pay relative to men in similar positions. And this indicates that the gender pay-gap also exists at the top management levels.

³ This point is emphasized by the World Economic Forum, *The Industry Gender Gap. Women and Work in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, (2016).

⁴ Ibid.

II. Gender and the economy in the Caribbean subregion

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) undertakes Country Gender Assessments (CGA) and these assessments provide a situational analysis of gender and the economy at the national level in a select number of countries.⁵ For the countries covered in these assessments, the analysis reveals that they have introduced a range of policies aimed at addressing economic issues such as poverty and unemployment, affecting women. For example, the Grenada's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) 2012-2016 identified a number of key priorities aimed at promoting economic growth and reducing poverty, including those specifically targeting women. Among these are: the promotion of domestic entrepreneurship and small business development; economic diversification through the strengthening of the knowledge-based component of the economy; improving female employment levels; strengthening and expanding education (including skills training) streamlining and strengthening social protection system to protect the most vulnerable and ensuring a relatively even special distribution of economic activity.⁶

The promotion of domestic entrepreneurship and small business development is being pursued by Caribbean governments to help grow the economy. Barbados, like many other Caribbean countries, is a predominantly service-based economy with the services sector accounting for a significant percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) value-added and employment. In 2014, the services sector's share of the GDP was estimated at about 84 per cent and employment in the sector represented 74 per cent of the labour force (The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015). The significance of these statistics lies in the gender distribution of employment in the services sector. Although women dominate this sector in terms of employment, they only represent a fraction of services sector business managers and owners. This is because the enabling environment to promote women's entry into domestic entrepreneurship and small business development is virtually absent in Barbados, as is the case in most Caribbean countries. Much remains to be done to reduce gender gaps in entrepreneurship rates and in employment and wages in the

⁵ These countries include Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

⁶ As contained in the Country Gender Assessment (CGA), Grenada (Final Version), Caribbean Development Bank, (2014).

sub-region and to fully capitalize on women’s potential to effectively build a culture of climate resilience and participate in sustainable community risk management system and development.

Although the many country strategy papers of the CDB identify gender as a cross-cutting issue and an important component to achieving good governance, social equality and sustainable economic development, it is also recognized that at the national level there exists a general lack of clarity regarding the role of the national machinery with responsibility for gender equality in respect of authority, human and financial resources and capacity to ensure that gender equality policies are properly developed and fully implemented throughout the work of all ministries and government offices. In addition, another area of concern is related to the weakness of State’s capacity to collect, analyse and disseminate sex-disaggregated data and qualitative information on the multidimensional features of gender equality (CDB, 2013, p. 12).

Among the strategies identified for addressing these challenges in Guyana was the provision of technical assistance to the government “by exposing core technical staff to training in project management with respect to project cycle management and managing for development results and the gender dimensions therein”, as well as by reinforcing “capacity building to support the operationalization of the country gender strategies through the provision of grant support under CDB’s Gender Equality Policy and Operational Strategy”. This would help to improve evidence-based gender responsive decision-making and build leadership for promoting gender equality. However among the risk and mitigation factors was the “lack of political will to support the enhanced status of the National Machinery for gender equality, and the need for continuous policy dialogue with senior government officials and decision-makers in the regional debate on good practices and lessons learned for sustainable gender mainstreaming” (iv & v).

Box 3

Women and the economy diagnosis: six strategy objectives

Promote women’s economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.

Facilitate women’s equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade.

Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women.

Strengthen women’s capacity and commercial networks.

Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.

Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

Source: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: The Fourth World Conference on Women 1995. pp. 68-78.

A. Women and employment

There are synergies between Goal 8 of the SDGs aimed at decent work and economic growth on the one hand and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA),⁷ and the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 - which identified the role of women in the economy as one of the critical areas of concern, on the other. The BPfA proposes six strategic objectives (see box 3) on “women and the economy” as areas for action at the national level to bring about the empowerment of women and girls and gender equality in

⁷ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: The Fourth World Conference on Women 1995. pp. 68-78. See <<http://www.un.org/esa/gopher-data/conf/fwcw/off/a--20.en>>.

the world of work. These actions include facilitation of equal access to employment and the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men. The 2015 Human Development Report identifies work as a “foundation for both the richness of economies and the richness of human lives”.⁸ It goes on to argue that work is more likely to be viewed for its economic value rather than in terms of its potential to enhance human development.

Although Caribbean women have historically participated in the labour force since the days of plantation slavery, their participation rates remain noticeably lower than that of their male counterparts. The determinants of female labour force participation and earnings are complex. This requires that any policy intervention to address these complexities be in an informed manner, rather than take the customary route of assuming that “one size fits all”. With “one size fits all”, generic gender-neutral macroeconomic policies are designed and implemented on the assumption that both men and women will benefit equally from these policies aimed at generating economic growth and creating employment opportunities.

As Andrew Morrison et al. (2007) states, there must be targeted action designed at bringing about transformative change based on an understanding of the underlying factors which influence women’s decision to participate in paid and/or unpaid work which are immense.

UN WOMEN has identified three priority actions that are required “to transform economies and realize women’s economic and human rights” (2015b, p. 13), namely (1) decent work for women; (2) gender-responsive social policies; and (3) rights-based macroeconomic policies.

In essence, the policy framework has already been laid out and agreed upon. The 2030 Agenda provides the framework for action and for strategic implementation of these policies to advance women’s economic empowerment. In addition to the BPfA, Caribbean States are committed to the ILO Decent Work Agenda⁹ (ILO, 2013), which is defined as not just the creation of jobs, but also the creation of jobs of acceptable quality. It makes clear that the level of employment (quantity) cannot be divorced from its quality, including the different forms of work and different conditions of work. Complementarily, the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 also highlights the needs to address the gender gaps in the labour market, wages, employment quality and access to productive resources, such as credit, training, technologies and time (ECLAC, 2016b, p. 7).

B. The link between gender inequality, unemployment and social exclusion

The effective promotion of social inclusion requires analysis and understanding of the multidimensional factors and dynamics that work against it, namely social exclusion¹⁰ and poverty. Exclusion can be identified when individuals, based on a number of variables, are unable to participate in economic, social, political and cultural life. These variables include age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, as well as socio-economic, health and migratory and marital status.

Unpaid work therefore serves to exclude women from the paid labour force relegating many to the informal sector, which tends to be more precarious and vulnerable and devoid of social protection. In many cases, women are excluded from the labour force because of a range of other barriers, including the unequal access to paid work. Box 4 below provides a representation of the linkages between gender equality, the household and participation in the labour force and the impact on poverty.

⁸ UNDP United Nations Development Programme, “Overview: Human Development Report. Work for Human Development”, Foreword pp iii. (2015). See http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf.

⁹ CARICOM Member States signaled their commitment to the Decent Work Agenda during various Meetings of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) in the period 2000-2011.

¹⁰ The dynamic of social exclusion is further elaborated in United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Leaving no one behind: progress towards achieving socially-inclusive development, report of the World Social Situation, (2016).

Inequalities across class and gender persist in the Caribbean subregion and women continue to experience the highest incidence of unemployment and poverty. Women often lack the technical skills required to respond to labour market demands, subjecting them to further vulnerability to poverty. The higher levels of female unemployment is a further indicator of the gender dimension of poverty, which is reflected in the nature of their economic participation and evidenced by the tendency of females to be more concentrated in menial low paying jobs, often without access to social protection, and to predominate as providers of unpaid labour associated with domestic and caring roles.

The unequal gender division of unpaid household work “has displayed a remarkable resilience and continues to shape the terms on which women are able to take up paid work”. It also serves to limit the “transformative potential of employment for enhancing and improving the situation and status of women in the private sphere of the home as well as the public sphere in the wider society”.¹¹

The CDB routinely conducts Country Poverty Assessment (CPA) across the subregion. These assessments have shown that high proportions of populations live below the poverty-line in many countries and this is of concern to governments in the subregion. Despite the CPAs, large data gaps still remain with respect to the measurement of poverty, and much of the national level data are not disaggregated by sex. Some of the challenges identified by the United Nations in the collection of poverty data on women are linked to the methodologies that are used to measure poverty, which are predominantly based on income or consumption data collected at the household level, rather than at the individual level. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Report indicates that, “This makes it difficult to differentiate poverty rates within households, and hence understand gender differences in the incidence, severity and impact of poverty” (2015, p. 18).

The 2015 Millennium Development Goals Report also identified a number of factors which contribute to the heightened vulnerability of women to poverty. Among these factors are “unequal access to paid work, lower earnings, lack of social protection and limited access to assets”.¹² It follows that in order to eradicate poverty, realize gender equality, and achieve sustainable development, women must be economically empowered, because social and economic progress will not be attained unless women are economically empowered, given that “women are overrepresented among the world’s poorest, but are nonetheless critical to lift societies out of poverty”.¹³ As documented in the 2015 MDG Report, women were more likely than men to live in poverty in 41 out of 75 countries with data. Further, it was found that “in countries where women were overrepresented in the lowest wealth quintile of households, the households were more likely headed by women or to have no adult males”. Analysis of this information therefore suggests that the risks of poverty were greater amongst single mothers, women who are widowed or separated, including self-reported heads of households without a male partner (see footnote 42).

Available data in the Caribbean are mostly derived from CPA, which have outlined patterns in which households headed by women are more likely to become susceptible to poverty, although these patterns vary from country to country. This has been attributed to the “gender inequalities that have existed in the labour force for decades, because of the inability of female labour force participants to secure employment at the same levels as their male counterparts. Access to decent work remains a limiting factor to the sustained social mobility of women” (CDB, 2013, p. 15).

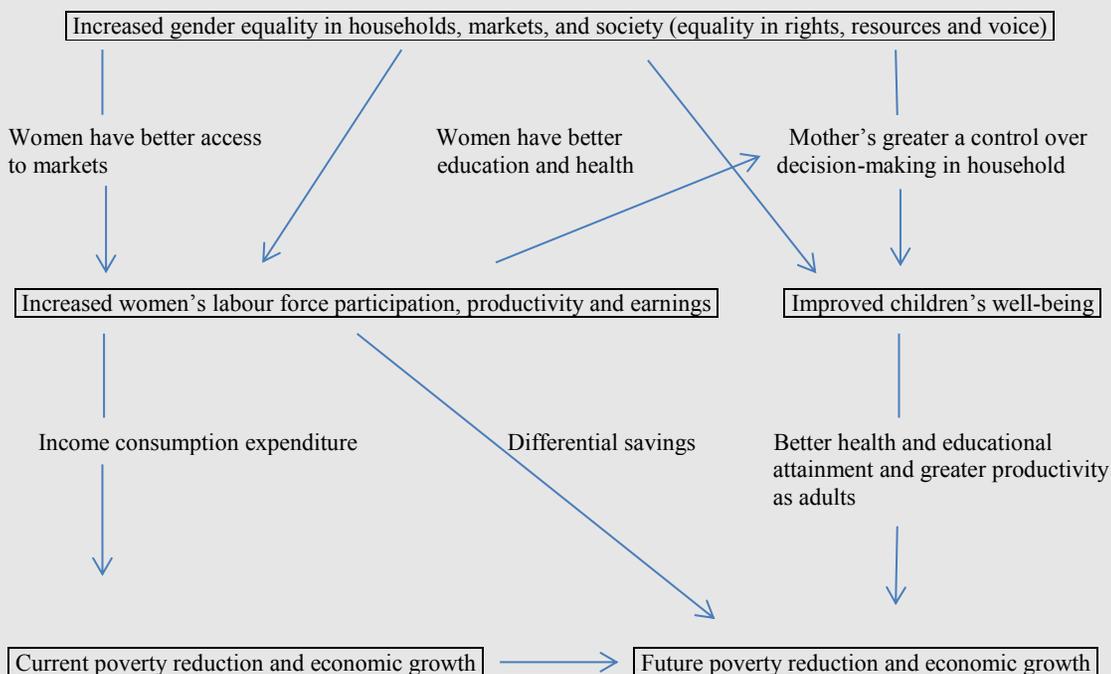
¹¹ United Nations, “World Survey on the Role of Women in Development Women’s Control over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources including Microfinance”, New York, p. 9. (2009). Available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/WorldSurvey2009.pdf>.

¹² See [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%2015\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%2015).pdf).

¹³ International Trade Centre (2016), Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment. ITC Executive Director Address to the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, 11 February 2016. Available from <http://www.intracen.org/noticias/Trade-and-womens-economic-empowerment-en/>.

Box 4 Framework for understanding the linkages between gender equality and growth/poverty reduction

A framework for understanding the links between gender equality and growth/poverty reduction



Source: Andrew Morrison et al. "Gender Equality, Poverty and Economic Growth". Policy Research Working Paper 4349. The World Bank, Gender and Development Group, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network. September 2007.

Data derived from the CPAs over the years provide a snapshot of the variations in national poverty levels among males and females. For example Saint Kitts and Nevis recorded a poverty rate of 29 per cent for males, and 32 per cent for females in 2000. By 2008, the country had made good progress in lowering the prevalence of poverty and in narrowing and reversing the gender gap in poverty with 23.2 per cent of female reported as being poor compared to 24.2 per cent of males. Similar trends were found in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, where the female poverty rate of 39.5 per cent exceeded males' rate of 35.2 per cent. However by 2008, the trend was reversed with figures of 29.4 per cent poverty rate for females and 31.0 per cent for males (see table 1).

In all the countries for which data are available, poverty levels are higher in household headed by females (see table 1). Available evidence also highlights the fact that female-headed households are more likely to face additional burdens, especially where there are more occupants in the household effectively raising the dependency ratio.

These burdens could be addressed through better quality jobs available for heads of household. The CDB notes that "a one-unit increase in the average hours worked per employed person significantly reduces the probability of being poor by 0.1 per cent for both multidimensional and consumption poor" (CDB 2016, p. 88). Other factors which were found to influence being poor include the occupation of the head of household and the sector of employment. Occupations such as managers and professionals in both the public and private sectors significantly reduced the likelihood of being multidimensionally poor, whilst those employed as technicians, associate professionals and plant and machine operators were more likely to be consumption poor.

Table 1
Poverty rates in the Caribbean
(Percentages)

Country	Year	Persons			Heads of households		
		Poverty rate (males)	Poverty Rate (females)	Poverty femininity index ^a	Poverty rate (male HoH)	Poverty rate (female HoH)	Poverty femininity index ^a
Anguilla	2002	24.8	22.0	89	17.9	24.1	135
	2009	8.1	3.6	44	3.7	3.8	102
Antigua and Barbuda	2006	19.7	17.3	88	13.5	13.2	98
Bahamas	2001	9.1	9.6	106	3.7	7.4	199
Barbados ^b	1997	...	...	...	6.5	11.6	179
	2010	18.0	20.5	114	11.5	19.4	169
Belize	1995	32.8	33.1	101	23.6	30.5	129
	2009	42.0	40.0	95	32.0	29.0	91.0
British Virgin Islands ^c	2002	17.4	24.1	139	13.6	21.6	159
Cayman Islands	2007	1.7	2.1	124	1.1	2.0	178
Dominica	2002	23.2	23.2	100	14.6	16.7	114
	2009	28.8	28.9	100	...	...	...
Grenada	1999	32.7	31.5	96	22.3	25.3	113
	2008	39.5	36.2	92	21.6	29.5	137
	1995	29.2	27.7	95	20.0	20.6	103
Jamaica	2000	19.8	17.8	90	12.8	13.2	103
	2005	15.2	14.4	95	9.6	11.8	123
	2010	18.7	16.5	88	11.1	13.8	124
Montserrat	2009	30.0	33.0	110	26.0	20.0	77
Saint Kitts and Nevis							
Saint Kitts	2000	29.0	32.0	110	12.0	20.0	161
	2008	24.2	23.2	96	...	...	...
Nevis	2000	26.0	36.0	138	16.0	17.0	106
	2008	16.1	15.8	98	...	...	...
Saint Lucia	1995	25.5	24.7	97	17.4	20.4	117
	2006	30.8	27.0	88	22.0	21.2	96
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1996	35.2	39.5	112	27.9	34.1	122
	2008	31.0	29.4	95	...	...	...
Trinidad and Tobago	1998	23.7	24.4	103	17.1	21.4	125
	2005	17.0	16.5	97	10.0	13.1	131
Turks and Caicos Islands	1999	25.9	25.9	100	17.4	20.4	117

Source: Caribbean Development Bank Country Poverty Assessments and National Surveys of Living Conditions.

^a The Poverty Femininity Index: poverty rate among women / poverty rate among men x 100.

^b The Barbados survey in 1997 used a different methodology to the other poverty assessments so estimates of poverty are not strictly comparable.

^c The poverty rates and femininity index for households in the British Virgin Islands are based on data which distinguish between households with adult males and households with no adults males.

^d The Poverty Femininity Index for Montserrat is calculated based on data for adults aged over 15.

C. The care economy

Society's dependence on women's unpaid work constitutes an obstacle to women's attainment of economic empowerment and autonomy. This results in women's increased time poverty,¹⁴ which in turn restricts their ability to fully engage in paid work in the formal sector, and other economic activities. The unpaid care work performed primarily by women, which includes cooking, cleaning and taking care of children, and other family members, underpins all Caribbean societies, and contribute to well-being, social development and economic growth. It is estimated that if monetary value is ascribed to unpaid care work it would constitute between 10 and 39 per cent of the GDP.¹⁵ However, it is generally not reflected in the system of national accounts and this valuable contribution goes unrecognized by policymakers.

Unpaid care work continues to contribute to gender inequality because of the unequal sharing of reproductive work between women and men in the care economy. The high incidence of single female-headed households in the Caribbean further places women at a significant disadvantage, since women's income often has to be spent on members of the immediate and extended family. Some twenty years after the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, very little progress has occurred in the Caribbean subregion with respect to the recognition of women's contribution to national economies, yet the provision of care is central to Caribbean societies. In order to redress the inequalities in the household, Seguino (2016) has recommended public investment in physical infrastructure, such as transportation and on-site care facilities, to reduce women's care burden and free up their time to spend in paid work, alongside complementary employment policies and skills training to enhance employability and ensure the substitution of market work for unpaid work (p. 6-7). As a further measure, care work should be redistributed and become the collective responsibility of not only women, but also that of men, particularly those who are parents. Public and private sector investment in the provision of childcare and homecare services for older persons are critical in providing an enabling environment for the full engagement of women in the labour market. Furthermore, with the ageing of the population, women are also often in charge of caring for their elderly parents and relatives. Home-care services has not yet been sufficiently addressed at the global and regional levels and it is crucial to develop comprehensive and integrated care system, which can provide assistance, including human rights, medical and human resources trainings, counselling as well as financial, social and psychological support to informal caregivers, including women and older women themselves who are ageing and still have to take care of their elderly aged 80 or over.¹⁶

There is need for far reaching changes in the sociocultural expectations regarding women's greater responsibilities for household duties, care work, and child-rearing, which leaves them with less time to invest in paid work, networking and skills building. "Social policy for childcare and parental leave can help shift cultural mores and create more time for working mothers",¹⁷ through action to change the gender division of unpaid work to encourage more men to share this work. Only two countries in the Caribbean, namely Dominica¹⁸ and the Cayman Islands, have policies on parental leave for both parents, however it remains to be verified how many men are taking advantage of this policy and the extent to which it has enabled more women to engage in economic activities.

¹⁴ Women are often described as "time poor". Due to the gender division of labour in the family prevailing in many countries, women's responsibility for unpaid household labour leaves only few hours daily for engaging in work outside the household (UNIFEM, 2005). The situation is further aggravated in cases where women are the sole head of household. Women's ability to free up time depends to a great extent on the availability of service and infrastructure, (OECD, 2009, 137).

¹⁵ As reported by Francesca Francavilla, Gianna Claudia Giannelli, Gabriela Grotkowska and Mieczyslaw W. Socha, Use of Time and Value of Unpaid Family Care Work: A Comparison between Italy and Poland. Institute for the Study of Labor, discussion Paper No. 5771, Bonn Germany, (2011).

¹⁶ Homecare services are addressed by Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, Comprehensive report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. A/HRC/33/44. (2016).

¹⁷ International Trade Centre (2016), Women's economic empowerment and how we can help. See <http://www.intracen.org/noticias/Womenseconomic-empowerment-and-how-we-can-help-en/>.

¹⁸ The Social Security Act provides for twelve weeks maternity leave. Males employed in the public sector are entitled to paternity leave (pursuant to an agreement between the main trade union and the government signed in December 2008).

Although several States have sought to collect data on women's unwaged work and time use in the National Census, Trinidad and Tobago is the only country in the Caribbean to have introduced a legislation in 1996, which calls upon the Central Statistical Office and other public bodies to conduct time-use surveys in order to collect and value the unremunerated work undertaken by both women and men. These surveys focus on the frequency and duration of human activities and attempt to measure the different ways in which individuals use their time during a twenty-four hour period. A primary motivator for the conduct of time-use surveys is a growing recognition that traditional statistical methods, such as national censuses, undervalue women's contributions to the economy.¹⁹

A number of national gender policies such as the 2011 National Policy for Gender Equality of Jamaica, and the Draft National Policy on Gender and Development of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago include policy recommendations on gender and care work. The Jamaican policy calls for the implementation of time-use surveys for understanding and measuring how unpaid work contributes to the national economy. It also calls for the creation of a system to capture, quantify and value unwaged/unpaid care labour and domestic work in the household and elsewhere.²⁰

The Caribbean therefore remains the only region that is yet to carry out a full scale time-use survey to quantify unpaid work undertaken primarily by women, but also includes unpaid work carried out by men; "This is deemed to be a major data gap in statistical systems in the Caribbean, where the valuation of unpaid work is statistically invisible. This continues to be a serious omission because it means that unpaid work, despite its important contribution to economic development, is not reflected in the economic statistics used for policy making – namely the national accounts and the official labour market statistics".²¹

Data are critical for the measurement and quantification of unpaid work. Gender-sensitive indicators that capture the Caribbean situation and reflect the value and extent of unpaid work must be developed, which would help to identify and implement specific actions and policies to overcome current challenges faced by women in the subregion. In order to facilitate the conduct of time-use surveys, legislative and policy changes would need to be implemented and additional resources provided to the National Statistical Offices to enable the collection of adequate and disaggregated data to increase staffing, and resources would need to be allocated for country statistical offices to collect adequate and disaggregated data on unpaid work on a regular basis.

¹⁹ This point raised by Mary Joyce and Stewart Jay, "What can we learn from time-use data?", in *Monthly Labour Review*, Bureau of Labour Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labour, Washington D.C., August 1999, pp. 3-6, contributes to an ongoing debate on the inadequacy of GDP as a measure of productivity.

²⁰ For example, these are mentioned in the Jamaica National Policy for Gender Equality, pp. 77-78, (2011).

²¹ ECLAC, "Situation of unpaid work and gender in the Caribbean: The measurement of unpaid work through time-use studies", Sheila Stuart p. 5. (2014). Available from http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/36619/1/S2014006_en.pdf.

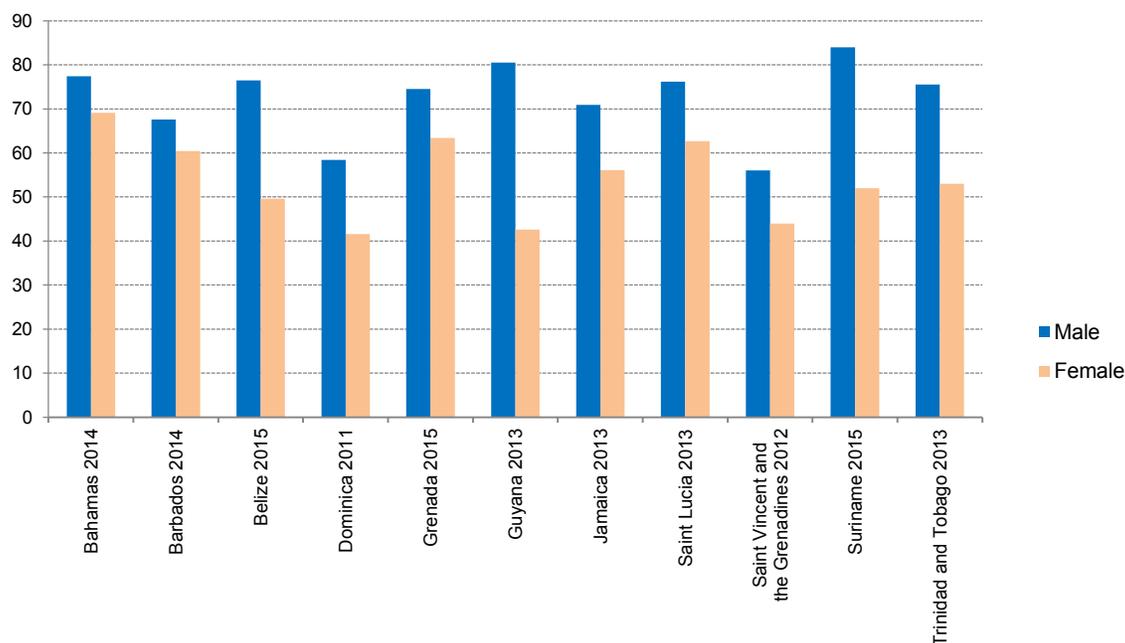
III. Decent work

As it has been elaborated upon in the preceding sections, women face many challenges with respect to their full participation in paid productive activities and suffer wage discrimination (see p. vi footnote 1). Available statistics reveal that more men participate in the formal labour market than women, and that unemployment rates for women are always higher than those for males. Even for those employed in the formal sector, wage discrimination persists. At the global level, it is stated that in 85 of the 92 countries with unemployment data by level of education for the years 2012-2013, women with advanced education were found to have higher rates of unemployment than men with similar education levels, and that women “earn 24 per cent less than men” (see p. 8, footnote 42).

SDG 8 calls for the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, with Target 8.3 calling for the promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation; and Target 8.5 calling for the achievement by 2030, of full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Available data on labour force participation rates in the Caribbean reveal gender disparity in the labour market with respect to women’s status, showing that males are more active in the labour force than females (see figure 2), despite the fact that in most countries females comprise over 50 percent of the population. One of the challenges associated with analysis of the labour market in the Caribbean is the incomplete and often inconsistent collection of data (World Bank, 2005; ILO, 2013).

Figure 2
Labour force participation rates by sex 2011- 2015^a
 (Percentages)



Source: Commonwealth Secretariat 2014. Small States: Economic Review and Basic Statistics. Vol.17. London UK; Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica; Central Statistical Office of Grenada; The Bahamas Statistical Department; the Barbados Central Bank; Statistical Institute of Belize; UNDP Human Development Report, 2014. Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience; UNDP Human Development Report, 2015: Work for Human Development. ILO Stat 2015. CDB Country Gender Assessment (CGA) 2012.

^a Data was not available for Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

During the past ten years there has been some narrowing of the gender gap in the labour force participation rate, which has been attributed to a combination of factors, namely (i) an increased demand for female labour, which is cheaper; (ii) the pressure on women to seek paid employment in order to replace or complement the (falling) earnings of other household members, due to the lingering effect of 2008/2009 financial and economic crises; and (iii) the growing trend on the part of women to seek paid employment because of their increasing levels of education, decreasing fertility rates and changing aspirations (UNRISD, 2012).

This is an interesting development when juxtaposed against the fact that unemployment rates for both males and females declined during the post-crisis period. However, data show that while the male participation rate declined slightly in Guyana, the rate for female increased marginally. The Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada and Saint Lucia all recorded high levels of female participation in the labour force, which indicates a narrowing of the gap between males and female participation rates. Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago also showed increased female participation rates. Dominica, Suriname, Guyana and Belize recorded lower participation rates for females. However more research is needed to comprehensively assess the challenges faced by women, including all impediments to employment and social inclusion in the subregion.

A. Unemployment and gender trends

The rates of unemployment amongst Caribbean women have for decades been higher than those of their male counterparts and this trend has not changed during the last twenty years, even though the participation rates of females have increased. Given the high rates of female-headed households in the

Caribbean, and therefore, extensive reliance of women on paid work to support children, this situation is a cause for concern. Difficulty encountered by women in securing paid work makes them dependent on men, the State, and their family for sustenance (Seguino, 2003, p. 1).

Notwithstanding their overall higher levels of participation and performance at the secondary and tertiary levels of education systems, many Caribbean women are either underemployed or unemployed. This situation is linked to almost all employment sectors. For example, data on the level of education of women employed in the tourism sector suggest that many were graduates (50.3 per cent) or had completed tertiary level education (66.2 per cent) (UN WOMEN/World Tourism Organization, 2010). Available labour market information for Caribbean countries shows a consistent trend of higher unemployment among women. In addition women earn less than men and tend to work longer hours.²²

Unemployment in the Caribbean subregion results not just from lack of economic growth, but is also reinforced by austerity measures, such as the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) that many governments are forced to implement in response to the tight fiscal constraints with which they are confronted. The changing economic conditions in the Caribbean brought about by the financial and economic crises of 2008/2009 has been linked to the increased rates of unemployment amongst both women and men, particularly in those economies that are services-based. In order to obtain new loans from the multilateral financial institutions with the goal of restoring national economies to a steady growth pattern and to balance their budgets, Caribbean governments implemented a range of stabilization and adjustment measures, which included retrenchment of employees in the public sector, and which were followed by “opportunistic” job losses in the private sector leading to increased unemployment.

The high levels of unemployment amongst females in the Caribbean have implications for poverty and improvements in the social situation of women and their families. For example, a review of the 2007/2008 Country Poverty Assessment²³ indicates that in Grenada the average unemployment rate was 49.6 per cent for females in the poorest quintile in comparison to 25.3 per cent of males in the same quintile. Further, while the national unemployment rate was 24.9 per cent, the unemployment rate among the poorest quintile was 37.8 per cent. Data for Saint Lucia²⁴ indicated that 66.1 per cent of all household heads were active in the labour force. When disaggregated by sex, 75.8 per cent of male household heads were active in the labour force, while only 53.6 per cent of females were active in the labour force. Of this 53.6 per cent, 39.4 per cent were from poor households.

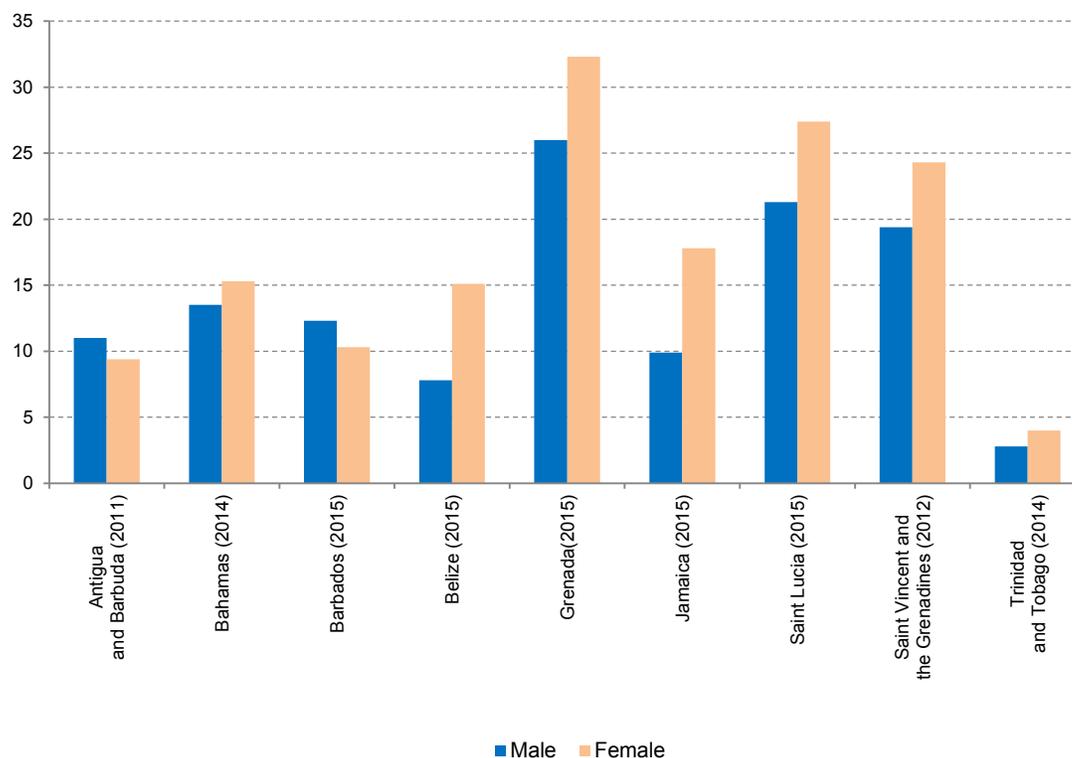
Data presented in figure 3 show gender variations in unemployment rate with female unemployment rates evidently higher than those for male in The Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. This points to the critical need for country data to be available in a timely manner to assist with the accurate assessment of situations that require action. The dearth of data is an issue that requires priority action by Caribbean governments.

²² Caribbean countries such as Barbados, Jamaica and Saint Lucia produce periodic Labour Force Information.

²³ CDB (Caribbean Development Bank) (2007/2008), Final Report: Country Poverty Assessment: Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique, Vol 1. See http://www.caribank.org/uploads/publications-reports/economics-statistics/country-poverty-assessment-reports/Grenada+CPA+-+Vol++1+Main+Report+_Submitted_.pdf.

²⁴ Kairi Consultants (2007), Trade Adjustment and Poverty in Saint Lucia 2005/2006. p. 55. See <http://www.caribank.org/uploads/2012/03/SLUCPAMainReport.pdf>.

Figure 3
Unemployment rate by sex
(Latest year available)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on official data.

In 2014, Caribbean countries adopted a record number of structural economic reforms aimed at improving their business environments through private investment in the productive sectors. It was reported that “costs in terms of lost services and employment are painfully high amongst those who have the least savings and assets to weather the economic storms, including women” (Seguino, 2016, p. 9).

In addition to the unemployment created by the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), other burdensome austerity measures include the privatization of government assets and services, cuts in public expenditure as well as welfare policies, health and social protection. Women stand to be impacted more from cuts in social protection programmes due to their economic status.

Apart from the negative impacts of the austerity measures, there are the economic and health costs associated with long-term unemployment, including the loss of productivity. Prolonged unemployment can lead to the erosion of skills and is also linked to health problems such as loss of self-esteem, mental anxiety and poor cognitive performance. This can lead to diminishing the probability of being hired in the future due to the lack of skills-use.²⁵ As a result, employers instead have a preference for hiring younger employees with updated knowledge rather than those more experienced but inactive. For women, long-term unemployment results in negative macroeconomic outcomes because, “a mother’s poverty has the potential to impact early childhood development”. Unemployment should therefore not be considered “a transitory problem when it persists for so long that it reduces labour productivity” (Seguino, 2016, p. 9-10), leading to vicious cycles of poverty and social exclusion.

²⁵ Seguino, Stephanie, *Macroeconomic Policy in Times of Slow Growth and Crisis*. p. 2, (2015) See http://stephanieseguino.weebly.com/uploads/2/3/2/7/23270372/seguino_tips_brief_macroecomic_policy_in_times_of_crisis_3.pdf.

Perhaps a positive effect of the SAPs would be that many women and men have turned their unemployment situation around by resorting to self-employment opportunities as an avenue for economic autonomy and empowerment, although much of this is in the informal economy providing a range of personal services. However, informality often brings with it a number of disadvantages such as low pay, and limited access to credit, technical expertise and business networks.

B. Labour force segregation

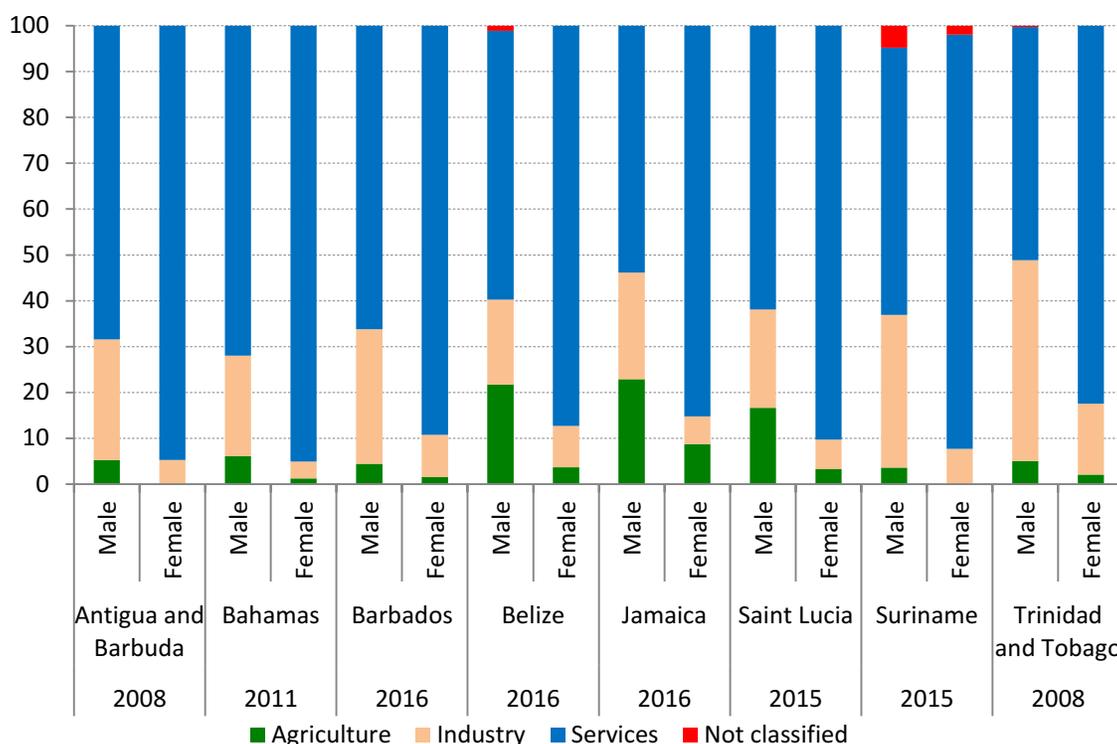
The gender divide in employment persists in the subregion, mainly because women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation which is defined as the separation of women and men into different occupations and the existence of gender wage gaps. The majority of women in the Caribbean subregion continue to be positioned in the lowest sectors of the labour market, earn lower wages than men, and experience greater levels of unemployment and poverty. In addition they are under-represented in decision-making positions of social and political institutions and lack real autonomy (Bailey, 2001, 24). The gender dynamics in employment is revealed in types of work that women do, as well as the conditions under which they work and their access to opportunities for advancement, which differ from men (Progress of the World's Women, 2015-2016).

Figure 4 shows that Caribbean women were recorded to be concentrated in the services sector in the countries represented. Further to note, the Global Report on Women in Tourism²⁶ indicated that women were found to be “concentrated in low status, low paid and precarious jobs in the tourism industry”. The Caribbean, where most of the economies are tourism-based, not surprisingly, had one of the highest proportions of women in the tourism industry, who were found to be concentrated in the service (42.9 per cent) and clerical areas (67.3 per cent).

In Guyana, where the economy is more diverse, data from the 2002 Census show that workers were concentrated by sex and industry and by sex and occupation. The male dominated industries included construction (98 per cent) agriculture and hunting (89 per cent); transport, storage and communication (88 per cent); and manufacturing (76 per cent). Female dominated industries included private households (78 per cent); health and social work (77 per cent); education (76 per cent); and hotels and restaurants (65 per cent). The patterns of occupational concentration indicated that men dominate among plant and machine operators and assemblers; craft and related trades; skilled agriculture and fisheries workers/farmers; legislators and senior officials and managers and in elementary occupations. Women were, however, overrepresented among clerks and technicians and associate professionals. The segregation patterns by industry and occupational groupings suggest a smaller range of employment opportunities for women in the labour market, which was considered a factor leading to their lower participation rate (CDB, 2013, p. 3).

²⁶ The labour participation of women in the services sector is reported in UN WOMEN and the World Tourism Organization (2010), Global Report on Women in Tourism.

Figure 4
Distribution of employed labour force by industry groups and sex
(Percentages and latest year available)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on official data.

C. The gender pay gap

Globally, on average, women's earnings are 24 per cent less than men's (Progress of the World's Women report, 2015-2016). More specifically, the earnings of females in tourism were reported to be between 10 to 15 per cent less than their male colleagues. In that sense, gender stereotyping and discrimination is reflected in this sector, since women mainly tend to perform jobs such as cooking, cleaning, and hospitality and are subject to the insecurity of tourism employment, mainly seasonal that fluctuates according to the volatility in the industry. It was also found that females in the Caribbean contributed a significant amount (84 per cent) of unpaid work to family-owned tourism businesses, compared to (51 per cent) in other sectors (UN WOMEN/World Tourism Organization, 2010: i).

According to the World Bank, the low returns to education in salaried work often acts as a factor which propels women towards self-employment. However, it is often more than responding to the wage gap. Additional factors such as the lack of decent work opportunities in the labour market and barriers to entry also influence women's decision to become entrepreneurs. Further, the flexibility afforded by self-employment may actually outweigh earning differentials.

D. Women's economic opportunities in the private sector

Entrepreneurship is considered one of the key engines of economic growth and development, and is known to contribute to a vibrant private sector. This is because entrepreneurs stimulate broader economic growth, generate income and create job opportunities, which also leads to increased productivity. Another important aspect of private sector development is that entrepreneurs, as innovators, tend to bring knowledge and new ideas to the economy, which is an important element of

growth and development. The promotion of women entrepreneurs is therefore increasingly “viewed as an important lever for private sector development” (World Bank, 2010, p. 13).

In a report on the progress made on the promotion of entrepreneurship for development, the UN Secretary-General emphasised the changing scenario for entrepreneurship promotion brought about by the 2030 Agenda.²⁷ There are several initiatives aimed at promoting women’s entrepreneurship that could be replicated in the Caribbean. For instance ILO Women’s Entrepreneurship Development Programme which provides entrepreneurship training and follow-up support, combining regular business management training with gender-specific curricula through the Gender + Entrepreneurship Together (GET) Ahead for Women in Enterprise training package and resource kit. The Empretec Women in Business Awards, established in 2008 and supported by UNCTAD, is a biennial awards programme and represents another initiative. It raises awareness of the economic gender gap and has made a significant impact on the lives of recipients. The International Trade Centre (ITC) SheTrades is a web and mobile application designed to help women entrepreneurs from across the world to connect to markets. UNIDO’s activities in capacity-building for women are also notable initiatives as drivers of poverty reduction, promotion of female investors and entrepreneurs, and recognition of the link between gender equality and safeguarding the environment to promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization.²⁸

This is important in the Caribbean subregion because the private sector employs the majority of people in the Caribbean (both employees and self-employed people) in the labour force with percentages ranging from 64 per cent of total employment in Antigua and Barbuda to 93 per cent in Barbados. The largest share of employment is provided in the services sector, with women considerably more reliant on the service industries for employment than men.²⁹

The creation of employment opportunities as well as reforms in the labour markets is deemed fundamental to increasing economic growth and improving social development. This includes, but is not limited to changes in redistributing more equally the responsibilities for income-earning, caregiving and domestic work. It also requires the creation of enabling regulatory environment to facilitate entrepreneurship, including the simplification of administrative procedures to start a business. In this context, the development of the private sector should be viewed as a priority for the majority of Caribbean countries, since it is a key to economic growth and to alleviating many of the development and social problems facing the subregion.

E. Entrepreneurship: situational analysis of the Caribbean subregion

Entrepreneurship has been acknowledged as one of the critical engines of economic development, growth and sustainability. Baldacchino (2005) argues that small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make robust contributions to economic growth and the creation of sustainable employment. The contribution is seen as “more readily evident in the context of massive lay-offs from large firms and especially appreciated in epochs of long term structural unemployment. It is commonly understood that SMEs have a general capacity for flexibility and innovation, enabling them to respond more quickly to structural changes and to adapt just as rapidly to changing consumer taste and demand”. Further to note, “SMEs play an even more pronounced role in the case of small island territories, since the typical average enterprise size is even smaller than elsewhere” (p. 2).

In this respect, SDG 8, as mentioned earlier, recognizes the potential of entrepreneurship as a strategy for promoting sustainable economic growth and for providing productive employment. Target 8.3 calls for the promotion of development-oriented policies that support entrepreneurship, and innovation,

²⁷ The linkages between entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda are elaborated in the United Nations Secretary-General’s report on Entrepreneurship for development, A/71/210. (July 2016),

²⁸ Ibid. p.6.

²⁹ The extent to which women are dependent on the private sector for employment is revealed in the Inter-American Development Bank, The Private Sector Assessment Report for the Bahamas. Compete Caribbean Programme, (2014).

and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

The power of SMEs has already been recognized in the Caribbean as having the potential to make significant impacts on economic growth and development. As Ramkissoon-Babwah (2013, p. 32) reported, “policy makers confront the challenging question of how to create employment to enable people to meet their basic needs, they have increasingly endorsed the development of self-reliance through the creation of small business operations as the panacea for improving the economic marginalisation of the masses”.

In this regard female entrepreneurs are receiving more attention from governments, international organizations and other development stakeholders who have recognized the significant contribution that is being made to national economies by female entrepreneurs in terms of employment creation and poverty reduction (ILO, 2014, p. 2). This is supported by findings from a study conducted by Barriteau, where female entrepreneurs stated that the most significant contribution that small business made to the economy was the generation of employment and the production of much needed goods and services (2001, p. 143).

According to the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce,³⁰ SMEs have mushroomed in the twin-island State during the last decade numbering some 18,000 at the end of 2010, employing 200,000 persons, and contributing nearly 28 per cent to GDP. However, there is no disaggregation of these data to identify how many of these businesses are women-owned. As Lashley and Smith (2015)³¹ state, there is a general lack of research on the types of women-owned businesses in the Caribbean subregion. Some local private sectors initiatives exist, such as Conflict Women, Ltd in Trinidad and Tobago that focuses on empowering women who were victims of sexual and domestic violence by providing them free training in jewelry making, business and conflict transformation, and a monthly income for their products.³²

F. Women, gender and entrepreneurship

According to Lashley and Smith the number of female entrepreneurs in the Caribbean subregion is significantly lower than male entrepreneurs. This is because traditional gender roles are still very prevalent in Caribbean societies and influences women’s ability to fully participate in all sectors of the labour force, including the creation of businesses. Among the major barriers to female owned enterprise development in the Caribbean subregion are social and cultural factors, which are “...critical in restricting women’s participation and growth in the small enterprise sector. Socialization in the home and community that women’s place is in the reproductive sector is further inculcated in education and in the labour market. These factors have led to women’s enterprises being located in low growth, low revenue, low status sectors” (2015, p. 15).

This finding is supported by the World Bank which identified the intra-household allocation of responsibilities and gender roles as a barrier to women’s entry into entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2010, p. 37).

³⁰ The Power of the SMEs, the Trinidad and Tobago Sunday Guardian, (2016), April 24. See www.guardian.co.tt.

³¹ Lashley and Smith, “Profiling Caribbean Women Entrepreneurs: Business Environment, Sectoral Constraints and Programming Lessons”. An InfoDev Publication, (2015) See https://www.infodev.org/infodev-files/profiling_caribbean_women_entrepreneurs_i-03.pdf.

³² For more on Conflict Women, see <http://conflictwomen.com/>.

Box 5
Barriers to female entrepreneurship

One of the most significant influences and barriers to women's entrepreneurship is the role held by women in their families/households where they have primary responsibility for the caregiving of children (and sometimes parents). As a result, women entrepreneurs often need to juggle both family responsibilities and entrepreneurship and this often restricts their ability to grow their businesses.

Child care may appear to be solution, but social pressures may dissuade women from putting their child in the care of others or the availability or costs may be prohibitive.

Source: Adapted from Kelley et al. 2013: 6 & 7

In the Caribbean, the social values attached to entrepreneurship are very low among both men and women, therefore being “an employee rather than being self-employed is preferred across” the Caribbean subregion (Lashley and Smith, 2015, p. 54). This low valuation is attributed to a mix of family, religious, cultural and community-related issues. As a result, entry into entrepreneurship development becomes the last resort for those persons seeking economic opportunities. This negative view, coupled with the low social valuation attached to enterprise development as an avenue for earning an income, constrains women's attempts to participate in self-employment. According to Ramkissoon-Babwah, researchers on Caribbean development have given very little attention to the “pivotal role of the Caribbean Entrepreneur as a catalyst for the promotion of economic growth and prosperity” (2013, p. 32).

In terms of what propels women's entry into entrepreneurship, the World Bank identified two main forces which drive both women and men into business. The first is the need for a supplemental income and “vision of a unique business opportunity”. The first was described as “push out factors” derived from necessity and stemming from lack of opportunities in the labour market and the need to supplement household income. Many of the push out factors were more specific to females since they are related to gender issues such as “women's traditional responsibility for family and child care, their roles as secondary wage earners and glass ceilings in the private sector”. The second motivating force is described as “pull in factors”, which are more likely to be related to the desire for autonomy and or flexibility following a life's calling, innate ability and motivation to capitalize on a business niche (World Bank, 2010, p. 20).

These two forces are also identified in Barriteau's study of female entrepreneurs in the formal sector of the economy, where many of the entrepreneurs cited unemployment – the push out factor– as the catalyst which propelled them into business development. As cited by the CDB, women in the Bahamas “sought means of making a livelihood by increasing their engagement in informal sector activities, mainly in insecure, unskilled activity such as street vending”, rather than continue to become discouraged in the labour force (2013, p. 15). However for some women it was the desire to have control over economic resources, together with a desire for independence – the pull in factors –which motivated them to start their own businesses (2001, p. 128).

Another push out factor-the need to balance caring responsibilities with income-earning activities-was also identified by Barriteau as one of the reasons why many Caribbean women were forced to establish informal businesses. These were often operated from within their homes because they provided the flexibility to earn an income, and at the same time spend time with their children. This also reduced their costs and risks.

The World Bank also identified a number of structural barriers faced by SMEs owned by women, including the fact that they do not have the same access to high quality financial services as men. Further, they are more likely than male-owned SMEs to be smaller, informal and home-based.

Box 6
Characteristics of female-owned businesses in the Caribbean

“Of all regions, women entrepreneurs in Latin America and the Caribbean are the most likely to operate without employees. Most run consumer oriented businesses, and they rarely sell outside of their national borders. Given that these economies are all in the middle stage of economic development and experiencing high economic growth, it may be concerning that many of the businesses women run show characteristics indicating lower potential outcomes and, thus, limited economic impact.”

Source: Kelley et al. 2013:39.

Available data on women’s participation in entrepreneurship activities show variations across Caribbean countries. For example, the World Bank’s 2010 Enterprise surveys (see table 2) show that the ownership of small firms was uneven in terms of gender with ranges from 76 per cent in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; 58 per cent in the Bahamas and Guyana; 38 per cent in Jamaica; 32 per cent in Dominica; to 12 per cent of adult women in the economy in Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Table 2
Women in business in the Caribbean 2010
(Percentages)

Countries	Firms with female participation in ownership	Firms with a female top manager	Proportion of Permanent full time workers that are female
Antigua and Barbuda	21.3	17.5	44.6
The Bahamas	58.3	33.2	44.3
Barbados	43.5	25.4	48.2
Belize	30.4	25.5	47.2
Dominica	41.0	23.6	32.1
Grenada	57.3	24.0	45.9
Guyana	58.3	17.7	39.1
Jamaica	38.2	24.1	44.5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	57.8	21.1	43.3
Saint Lucia	32.1	23.7	41.5
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	76.0	38.6	49.3
Suriname	18.3	15.0	34.1
Trinidad and Tobago	45.1	20.8	41.6

Source: World Bank Group. Enterprise Surveys: What Business Experience. “Gender”. <http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/data/exploretopics/gender>.

G. Challenges: financial

The challenges faced by female entrepreneurs are many, but are mainly linked to finance, education and intra-household responsibilities in the care economy. However, issues related to the care economy were already described in section II of this paper, therefore only the challenges with respect to the financial and educational challenges facing female entrepreneurs are discussed in this section.

The playing field for male and female entrepreneurs in the Caribbean subregion is very uneven. Access to financial capital remains one of the crucial barriers to the growth and development of women-owned businesses, which is caused mostly by women’s non-ownership of resources that could be used as collateral. Female entrepreneurs in the Barriteau’s study identified the unwillingness of commercial banks to lend them money. As a result many women are less likely to finance their businesses from commercial sources, opting instead to use their personal funds or loans from family or friends. However, the use of personal funds can increase their vulnerability as it leaves them without contingency funds for

emergencies, such as those relating to their health or those of their children. “Even when they can get credit, women-owned businesses have less access to other financial services, such as insurance”.³³ Barriteau in her study of women in the formal business sector however notes that “when women are constantly denied access to credit—even though they meet the formal requirements for obtaining it—then financial institutions and governments are shifting to women the costs of operating in the public domain of the economy...because women are seen as naturally belonging in the private sphere, there is a tendency to view their thrust into entrepreneurship as also privatized”.³⁴

Age was also found to be a factor, with younger and older women facing more obstacles in obtaining credit. Both age groups are unlikely to have the necessary collateral to guarantee the loans and access to insurance because age is a criterion for determining risk, therefore there is a need to eliminate all age-based discriminatory practices.

As outlined in Target 5.a of SDG 5, governments and all key stakeholders are urged to “undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws”; and Target 5c seeks to “adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels”. In a complementary manner, the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 also states that measure should ensure that the private sector, particularly the corporate sector, contributes effectively to the financing of women’s entrepreneurship, public services and social protection by paying progressive taxes, and that the State avoids the granting of tax privileges.³⁵

Financial institutions therefore have a role to play in terms of providing the enabling environment to allow women to more readily access the financial services they need in order to develop and expand their businesses, including in urban and rural areas. These include provision of more flexible and extended repayment periods on loans; revision of the types of assets to be used, including both tangible and intangible assets such as patents, trademarks, copyrights and trade names; the application of specialized interest rates for SMEs owned by women; and the establishment of internal systems with a targeted focus on women entrepreneurs to ensure on-going dialogue and engagement with them on a regular basis (Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, 2016).

The need to identify and access new sources of finance has led in recent months to the introduction of a new form of financing for women entrepreneurs in the Caribbean subregion, spurred by calls from heads of government to find “innovative, inclusive and accessible financing mechanisms as well as capacity building to advance women’s entrepreneurship”.³⁶

In July 2016, the first ever Commonwealth-wide crowd-funding³⁷ initiative was launched alongside the CARICOM heads of government meeting,³⁸ with the goal of leveraging crowd-funding to attract new capital flows to the subregion and ultimately to create new jobs and drive economic growth. The FundRiseHER initiative is led by two female Caribbean entrepreneurs with inputs from the Commonwealth Businesswomen’s Network. It is anticipated that this source of funds could help with the

³³ This point was made by the International Trade Centre (ITC), Executive Director in the “Address to the University of the West Indies”, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados 11 February, Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment (2016).

³⁴ The barriers to women entrepreneurship are explored in Eudine Barriteau’s, *Women Entrepreneurs and Economic Marginality: Rethinking Caribbean Women’s Economic Relations*. In P. Mohammed, ed., *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*, Kingston, University of the West Indies Press, (2002).

³⁵ Measure 5 of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030.

³⁶ As agreed at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Colombo, Sri Lanka (2013).

³⁷ Crowdfunding (a form of crowdsourcing) is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people, today often performed via internet-mediated registries, but the concept can also be executed through mail-order subscriptions, benefit events, and other methods. Crowdfunding is a form of alternative finance, which has emerged outside of the traditional financial system.

³⁸ Meeting held at Georgetown, Guyana July 4-6, (2016).

implementation of the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development given the financial challenges facing Caribbean economies.

The goal is to raise US\$1 million grant funding, through a global rewards-based crowd-funding campaign by ten participating Caribbean countries and Commonwealth member States to provide grant funding between US\$10,000 and \$25,000 to 50 women entrepreneurs.

H. Challenges: educational

Education can make a significant contribution to overall economic growth by improving the capacity and capabilities of the workforce, which leads to higher rates of individual productivity. Strategies to promote job creation and enhance the employment skills of the population should therefore include improvements in the quality of education. The challenge is that most educational systems do not foster inventive thinking, communication skills, problem solving or the other competencies that can help individuals to start their own businesses and create their own employment opportunities.

It is not surprising that female entrepreneurs identified the lack of appropriate education as a major challenge to their progress. Many cited the present curriculum as too academic with a primary focus on preparing Caribbean people to work for others, while the literature on women and employment in the Caribbean identifies the fact that higher levels of education were not translating into higher paying jobs for women. It seems, therefore, that there is a disconnection between formal education and the requirements of the world of work and business creation in the subregion.

Hence, collaboration is needed between governments, the private sector and educational institutions to change this situation and maximize the benefits of education. Entrepreneurial educational programmes should be developed and become part of the established curriculum of schools, colleges and universities (Ramkissoon-Babwah, 2013, p.34). In order to be successful, entrepreneurs need skills such as creativity, problem solving and communication skills. Many times these skills are acquired through hands-on experience—often from entrepreneurial failures—that help an individual entrepreneur to eventually succeed. Education, training and lifelong learning programmes specifically targeted at entrepreneurs can also be designed to develop these skills and provide individuals with “practical education and experiential learning” that build “soft skills, such as communication, social intelligence, and critical thinking, as well as hard skills like accounting and financial management” (Global Business School Network, 2013, p. 6-7).

In terms of meeting the requirements of the 2030 Agenda, action will have to be taken to bring about incremental changes in analysing and removing the barriers facing women in the economy, particularly as it relates to entrepreneurship, in order to facilitate and create the enabling environment for the economic empowerment and autonomy of women.

In view of the ongoing challenges of employment creation in the Caribbean subregion it is important that programmes are adopted to enable women to participate more constructively in economic activities (Kelley et al., 2013, p. 6). These are some of the issues which will have to be addressed and redressed to encourage more Caribbean women to become self-employed because, when women establish businesses, they create employment opportunities not only for themselves but for their families and the wider community. More educational programmes, including business apprenticeship and initiation programmes are therefore required “to increase the social acceptance of self-employment, expand females’ involvement in sectors with growth potential and improve access to developmental resources” (infoDev, 2015, p. 59).

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis in this paper leads to a number of conclusions and recommendations, which could assist governments and other stakeholders, including the private sector and international development agencies, to increase economic opportunities for both females and males in pursuit of the realization of the 2030 Agenda, particularly the economic empowerment and autonomy of Caribbean women through their participation in decent work and entrepreneurship. Efforts will be necessary to ensure an integrated, coordinated, coherent and participatory approach to mainstream gender in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and other international and regional agendas.

In this context, it is critical that women are provided with equitable access to productive employment and to income-earning opportunities that support their empowerment through the necessary enabling frameworks to strengthen their economic autonomy. The creation of better jobs for female heads of households through evidence-based formulation of appropriate policies should be designed and implemented to assist in reducing the levels of poverty experienced by these households.

Care policies aimed at reducing the burden of household work on women and allowing them to participate in paid economic activities need to become a reality in the Caribbean. It is fundamental to measure time use and the distribution of unpaid domestic and care work within households in order to tackle gender gaps and design redistributive policies that could break the vicious cycles of intergenerational poverty among women and their disempowerment. In this respect, there needs to be a transformation in the Caribbean in the formulation and interpretation of the role of economic policies, which is currently viewed primarily as the promotion of economic growth, as well as social policies, which are designed “to address the “casualties” by redressing poverty and disadvantage and reducing inequality”.³⁹ Broader goals such as gender equality and social justice can also be achieved by more strategically designed transformative macroeconomic policies. A gender dimension in all policies will not only improve understanding but also improve the follow-up, monitoring and periodical assessment of any actions carried out towards achieving women’s well-being (see p. 54, footnote 1).

In this regard, self-employment and entrepreneurship for women should be supported with relevant policies and programmes to improve the quality and efficiency of the regulatory framework for

³⁹ Razavi, Shahra, ILO (2015). See <http://www.recoveryhumanface.org/e-discussion-2013/april-30th-2015>.

business registration, create support and mentorship, including the facilitation of access to credit, business knowledge, the provision of financial services and technical assistance to help in the development of micro and small businesses. The importance of developing and implementing actions to support women's entrepreneurship has recently been emphasised by the UN General Assembly (Resolution on Entrepreneurship for sustainable development, A/C.2/71/L.20/Rev.1, 2016) and Caribbean countries should move towards its implementation, in conjunction with previous international and regional agreements.

A starting point could be the organisation of national and regional consultations on entrepreneurship, which will engage both the public and the private sectors in order to identify common objectives to overcome current challenges faced by women and other groups in creating their own micro-, small- and medium- size enterprises in the region. The formulation of policies, projects and programmes must be evidence-based reflecting a broad and inclusive participatory process at the local and national level.

The realization of the economic empowerment of women in the Caribbean can only happen if Caribbean governments, together with the private sector and other major stakeholders, take the necessary actions to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across the 17 SDGs and related targets in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This will require a systematic mainstreaming of the gender perspective into national development planning. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as mentioned in the introduction, must also be given greater and more visible prominence. The advancement of women's economic empowerment and autonomy will have to take a central place in the long term development plans of Caribbean governments, alongside specific gender policies and programmes designed to address issues of equality, and reflect the needs of women and girls in their planning and budgeting.

For instance, with regards to 'gender blindness in policy formulation, one of two problems are likely to occur. Firstly women are not recognized as important in the development process, and simply not included at the level of policy formulation. Secondly, development policy, even when aware of the important role women play in the development process, because of certain assumptions, often still "misses" women, and consequently fails to develop coherently formulated gender policy' (Moser, 1993, p. 6-7).

Governments of the subregion will therefore need to design enabling policies and implement economic, social and environmental programmes aimed at improving and advancing the economic status of women. It is crucial to change social attitudes and gender stereotypes regarding women's entrepreneurship in the subregion. This should encompass raising public awareness on the added value of entrepreneurship for women and supporting them to forge their own business in urban and rural areas.

At the institutional level, the CDB has identified a number of challenges facing Caribbean countries with respect to their institutional and governance capabilities which are deemed in many cases to be weak. For example, the Country Strategy Paper for Guyana 2013-2017 identified weak statistical capacity in terms of data coverage and accessibility; weakness in project management; and insufficient capacity to implement gender mainstreaming strategies. This general weakness in institutional frameworks is a common challenge that should be overcome across the Caribbean subregion, particularly within the National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Advancement of Women, which with few exceptions have tended to be marginalized (Rowley, 2003, p. 3). Among the challenges are the hierarchical standing of the National Mechanisms, the entrenched lack of resources, both human and financial, lack of qualified staff, low profile in government hierarchy, and lack of coordination across government ministries. The limited resources allocated to the National Mechanisms have always been deemed a reflection of the lack of an "enabling environment" for the promotion of gender equality goals at national level. The results of a recent assessment undertaken by the UN Women Caribbean

Multi-Country Office (Mondesire, 2014)⁴⁰ revealed that capacity issues impacting the delivery of mandates were linked to clarity and scope of their mandate and to resource limitations.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and regional gender agenda will also require the integration of a gender perspective across other ministries and at the local and national levels, with the active involvement of all stakeholders. As part of this process of strengthening National Machineries and frameworks, Caribbean States should pay particular attention to reinforcing the capacity of national financial institutions and banking systems in order to allow women make better use of remittances, and improve their access to credit and other financial services, especially in rural areas. States and other stakeholders should encourage women and young entrepreneurs to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges.⁴¹

Finally, the dearth of data within the subregion must be aggressively addressed. The continued lack of data on gender issues, including economic and social issues, results in the limited availability of timely and accurate information which is urgently needed to better inform policies and programmes to accelerate growth in the area of entrepreneurship for women. The limited availability of timely statistics, particularly gender statistics, is another major challenge to facilitating growth in Caribbean economies and, by extension, the inclusion of women in the economy. This is a major stumbling block to the development of evidence-based policy making and strategic planning. In this respect, action needs to be taken to properly measure and value unpaid work in the Caribbean, because it is very difficult to improve what is not measured. The same principle also applies to other areas, such as developing data and indicators to measure entrepreneurship and improving data collection on the services sector as an avenue for the economic empowerment of women.

This dearth of data may actually serve to delay achievement of the SDGs in the Caribbean. The SDGs therefore provide Caribbean governments with the impetus needed to make greater investments in the timely collection of data, and more crucially in the sex disaggregation of data to allow for gender analysis, by strengthening national capacities to systematically collect and analyse gender statistics to address the ongoing critical gaps in data. In a complementary manner, pillar 9 of the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda also encourages States to adopt measures aimed at strengthening the statistical capacities of Machineries for the advancement of women in the Caribbean in order to mainstream the gender perspective in all statistical generation or integration projects.

All of these recommendations could guide Caribbean countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a coordinated manner that will enhance synergies with other international and regional commitments as regards women's rights. The international and regional SDG framework brings an opportunity for Member States to assess their situation at the national and regional level. The Forum of Latin America and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development, organised annually under the auspices of ECLAC, will provide regional contribution to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up. By including the progress made in the implementation of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the specific recommendations on mainstreaming the gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related regional gender agenda, this Forum will present an opportunity to include discussions on the importance of women's entrepreneurship in order to provide further guidance to all States, including Caribbean countries in promoting decent job and entrepreneurship for women by 2030.

⁴⁰ This point was made by Alicia Mondesire, in a presentation at CARICOM National Women's Machineries meeting on 6-7 May (2014), Barbados, entitled "Institutional strengthening of National Gender/Women's Machineries: Bridge to Beijing + 20. A Review and Synthesis of the Status of Actions Leading to Gender Equality in the Caribbean".

⁴¹ This is contained in the UN General Assembly, Resolution on Entrepreneurship for sustainable development, A/C.2/71/L.20/Rev.1, 2016, para.14.

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