

SEYCHELLES

PART 1 – Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment

To date, no official national gender policy has been adopted. However, action has been ongoing and progress has been made although in a somewhat haphazard and uncoordinated manner.

It is to be noted that Gender has long achieved portfolio status in the Government of Seychelles, however there have been a number of portfolio shifts since Beijing +5. At that time, it fell under the mandate of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Manpower Development and was specifically linked to the Seychelles Institute of Management. This was a 1-person unit who had to undertake gender matters as part of other duties until that person left the SIM. In 2001, responsibility for the SIM was transferred to the Ministry of Administration and Manpower and the portfolio responsibility for Gender was placed with the Ministry of Social Affairs & Employment.

Mainstreaming gender in our society’s development has not yet been achieved in toto. In January 2004, a new Minister for Social Affairs & Employment has been appointed and has the necessary political will and commitment to realise this objective and place gender firmly on the agenda. Our first task has been to relaunch a National Gender Steering Committee and this took effect as part of national celebrations of International Women’s Day on 8th March. The NGSC, which comprises of the three main sectors of society: government, NGOs & civil society, will be faced with many challenges.

A Gender Unit, which falls within the Social Development Division of the same ministry will consolidate and coordinate national efforts. However the task will not be easy as we are faced with certain constraints including lack of financial and human resources.

There is no gender policy per se however activities are being implemented by government, NGOs and civil society to (promote the development of a gender policy and also) establish ways of mainstreaming gender. Government is also taking the onus of coordinating the development of a monitoring and evaluation processes in order that we can evaluate changes systematically. A small group of individuals has received initial training. Their report is awaited in order to integrate recommendations into a national plan of action.

EFFECT OF MDGs ON SEYCHELLES

It is to be noted that Seychelles has met the targets for most of the 8 goals. However, although absolute poverty does not exist, nonetheless there is available data to suggest that there are pockets of poverty which have a feminine face. Notably, beneficiaries of Social Security payments, Temporary employment schemes have a majority female participation rate.

However, In specific references to GOAL 3: *Elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015* it must again be reiterated that the policy of free and compulsory education FOR ALL has ensured at all

boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 16 have access to primary and secondary schooling and participation rate is almost 100%. In post secondary there is still the tendency to see some gender stereotyping. Girls continue to be under-represented in the technical and vocational areas, however some encouraging signs are noted. The percentage of girls following Maritime Studies rose from 4% in 1994 to 16% in 2002. In the same period the percentage of girls in Engineering & Construction increased from 0% to 8%.

Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third session of the General Assembly.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A. Examples of Policies, Legislative Change and Programmes and Projects from 1999 onwards.

Two of the most important pieces of legislation dealing with family violence which have served to provide greater protection to women are the '1996 Amendment to the Penal Code' and 'The Family Violence (Protection of the Victims) Act 2000'. The enactment of these two new laws have provided victims of violence (95 percent of whom are women) with greater protection under the law and helped to relieve women and children of some of the traumas associated with domestic violence. The Family Tribunal set up by government in 1998, to deal with family problems especially those related to the maintenance of children and women, has been mandated with the same power as the courts in cases of domestic violence. The new law allows victims of actual or threatened violence to appear in front of the Family Tribunal to ask for protection. Protection is given in the form of a protection order that includes prohibiting the perpetrator from being at the family premises, and from harassing, contacting, threatening or intimidating the victim. It can also prohibit the respondent from taking possession of movables such as furniture and household effects. The setting up of the Tribunal has helped to expedite legal proceedings.

Punishments for perpetrators of domestic violence have also been revised. A person who contravenes a protection order under the Family Violence Act is liable to conviction before the Family Tribunal to a fine of R30,000 or to imprisonment for three years. The Family Violence Act also provides legal support to the victims and make provision for rehabilitation of the perpetrators. These measures have increased the number of cases being reported to the Tribunal. In 2000, out of the 122 cases of domestic violence registered by the Family Tribunal, only 3 percent were withdrawn by the victims. Of the cases that went to the tribunal, 87 ended with convictions. These ranged from home eviction to referrals for counselling to maximum prison terms of 2 years.

Another important project has been the publication of a national report entitled 'Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children' published by the Seychelles Institute of Management in 2002 and funded by SADC. It is the first serious study on violence against women in Seychelles. The study maintains that violence against women is a serious and growing problem in Seychelles and that 'society as a whole is still unwilling to openly acknowledge that this type of violent behaviour is abnormal and criminal'. The publication of this study has alerted government and agencies dealing with domestic violence on the extent of the problem. The numerous recommendations therein will help government to adopt a more coordinated approach in dealing with gender violence.

One of the major obstacles to combating violence is public attitude and perceptions. Since 1988, both government and NGOs stepped up

efforts to sensitise people about problems of violence against women and children. NGOs such as 'Alliance of Solidarity for the Family' have produced TV programmes, organized panel

discussions and debates on issues of domestic violence. It also produced numerous articles for the ‘Nation’ and organized exhibitions showing the harmful consequences of violence on women and children. In 2001, the ASSF organized an UNIFEM sponsored workshop on the development of information education and communication materials and in 2003 held a workshop on domestic violence. Following the workshop, a Domestic Violence Steering committee has been set up to ensure implementation of the workshop recommendations. A 24 hour hotline is also available for victims of domestic violence.

The National Council for Children (NCC) produced TV clips, spots and leaflets showing the harmful consequences of violence on children. National exhibitions held to promote the ‘Rights of the Child’ stressed the right of the child to be protected from all forms of exploitation, abuse and discrimination. The NCC advocated for the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools and ran workshops in conflict management and child protection techniques for school staff. Since 2003, it has been promoting programmes of ‘Living Values’ in schools.

Violence against women and children has been portrayed in the media and in public campaigns as a violation of human rights and not a ‘private internal family matter.’ The campaigns have also encouraged the public and people at large to break the silence surrounding cases of violence and denounce the perpetrators of such crimes. The national media SBC provided extensive coverage on the work of the NGOs and helped in the public sensitisation programme. In 2002, the Division of Social Development and Gender Links a South African NGO conducted a training workshop on covering gender violence for media personnel. The training included practical sessions on covering gender violence with sensitivity. Following the workshop, a new association called GEM Plus Association of Seychelles, a non-political body affiliated to Gender Links, was created to provide opportunities for the gender sensitisation of the media raise awareness of gender and promote gender equality. The government is represented on this association through its representative of the Social Development Division.

B. Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges

In spite of the more favourable legal environment, the greater protection provided to victims and serious efforts by the media and NGO’s to sensitise the public, much more needs to be done to openly acknowledge the problem and take coordinated measures to eradicate it. Some of the persistent challenges are:

1. Continued ‘stigma of silence’ surrounding domestic violence
2. Lack of a centralized data base and accurate statistics available to all agencies dealing with domestic violence
3. Insufficient data and qualitative research on causes of domestic violence
4. Insufficient coordination of actions by all agencies/NGO’s involved in supporting victims of family violence
5. Lack of rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators of violence
6. Unavailability of ‘shelters’ for victims
7. More rigorous application of laws relating to alcohol and drug abuse which have been shown to be major causes of violence

8. Insufficient sensitization of general public so as to enlist their help and support in stopping violence against women and children.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

A. Examples of Policies, Legislative Change and Programmes and Projects from 1999 onwards.

Equality of access to education has to a large extent been achieved and is not a problem in Seychelles. The government's policy of free and compulsory 'education for all' has ensured that both girls and boys from ages 3+ to 16+ have access to primary and secondary schooling and nearly 100 percent of children in this age group attend school (See Appendix 1). At the tertiary and post secondary levels, girls continue to be equally well represented as is shown in Table 1. In 2002 and 2003, there were more girls than boys attending post secondary institutions.

Table 1 Enrolment in Schools

	No: of Girls				No: of boys				TOTAL			
	1994	1997	2002	2003	1994	1997	2002	2003	1994	1997	2002	2003
Primary	4758	4630	4699	4610	4926	4774	4924	4867	9684	9404	9623	9477
Secondary	3768	3663	3758	3794	3728	3855	3767	3757	7496	7518	7525	7551
Post Sec.	804	698	813	898	898	640	691	754	1702	1338	1504	1652

In 2000, the Ministry of Education published a new policy document 'Education for a Learning Society'. Gender equality is one of the stated goals in the new policy. The new policy emphasizes the need to extend the concept of equity, to redress gender imbalances and provide optimum chances of success to both genders at all levels of schooling. A new gender action plan (2003-2015) has been developed in tandem with the EFA Plan of Action. The new Action Plan sets new and more realistic indicators of progress taking into account the achievements made by women and identifies new and emerging concerns such as the lack of access to ICT and technical subjects.

At the post secondary level, the number of girls proceeding to overseas studies under the national scholarship programme has continued to climb since 1994. In 2004, 50% of the 374 students currently following tertiary/university level studies are women. The national training budget has been significantly increased to cater for the reduction in foreign sponsored scholarships and to allow more students to benefit from training. The budget has been complemented by the introduction of a student loan scheme in 1999 and student contribution towards tertiary education and training

The majority of participants enrolled in certificate and diploma courses at the Seychelles Institute of Management are also women. Since 2001, the Seychelles Polytechnic has offered places on its regular courses to part-time and mature candidates. 66 out of the 158 students attending these

courses in 2001 were women. This initiative is further testimony of the government's commitment to cater for the continuous learning needs of adults and organizations.

In order to widen access to education and training opportunities and respond to a growing demand for personal and professional skills, Seychelles launched a National Distance/Open Learning Policy in 2003. The aim of the policy is to ensure a structured, harmonized and synchronized approach to the offering of distance education and harness the potential of new information and communication technologies to further widen The Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre (ALDEC) within the Ministry of Education and Youth has been mandated to ensure effective implementation of distance education programmes. An Education Web Portal project funded by UNESCO has been developed to implement the policy and provide increased access to computer and internet facilities by distance learners. Partnership agreements for specialized courses in distance education have already been signed with the Indira Gandhi National Open University, University of South Africa, Edith Cowan University, Perth, African Virtual university and most recently the Cable and Wireless Virtual Academic. Distance learning programme are especially attractive to women who are reluctant to leave home for overseas training because of family commitments. There are currently 101 students following diploma and degree courses through distance education with Universities abroad. Over 70% of the students enrolled on those courses are women. The expansion of distance education will further benefit women.

ALDEC is also responsible for running national literacy programmes. The adult literacy rate for women in Seychelles is currently 92% compared to 91% for men. In 1997 literacy programmes were offered in only 6 centres on Mahe. In 2004, there are 23 centres including centres on islands such as Praslin La Digue and Silhouette which provide literacy classes. ALDEC has also widened the selection of courses it offers to adults and out of school children. Courses now include 'O' and 'A' level subjects computing, technical writing soft furnishing and tailoring, macramé, patchwork, quilting, business writing and secretarial. Again women make up the majority of the students enrolled in these courses.

The Ministry of Education has an active Gender committee which continues to advocate and lobby for greater gender equality. Gender has been integrated into planning processes. Recent policy documents eg on discipline are gender responsive and recognise the differing needs of girls and boys. National Examination results and education statistics are now more systematically gender disaggregated so that the progress of both genders in education can be monitored and all disparities highlighted. Gender has been successfully integrated into the new Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan (ESP), initial teacher training programmes and major projects such as the school improvement programme.

B. Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges

In spite of a policy of equal access to scientific, vocational and technical education, the rigid stereotyping of subject and career choices especially at the post secondary level is a cause of concern. Girls continue to be grossly under-represented in the technical and vocational areas in spite of their good academic performance and the open door policy. Although Table 2 shows that the number of girls accessing technical areas is on the increase, there is still a long way to go in

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order to achieve parity. From 1994 to 2004, the percentage of women in maritime studies increased from 5 percent to 17 percent and in the Schools of Engineering and Construction from 0 %in 1994 to 8% in 2002. In 2004, girls made up 61 percent of the total number of students in agriculture. These are encouraging signs.

Table 2. Distribution of Girls and Boys in Post-Secondary Institutions

	No: of Women					No: of Men					% WOMEN				
	1994	1997	2002	2003	2004	1994	1997	2002	2003	2004	1994	1997	2002	2003	2004
Maritime Training Centre	1	1	9	7	9	21	6	46	44	43	5%	4%	16%	14%	17%
National College of the Art	14	0	84	74	79	11	0	28	29	34	40%	0%	75%	72%	70%
NIHSS (Health Studies)	10	32	157	195	226	1	8	43	25	27	90%	80%	79%	89%	89%
SHTTC (Hotel & Tourism)	29	0	177			21	0	36			58%	0%	83%		
ITC*			26					253					9%		
Business Studies	61	45	159	81	136	8	5	38	8	24	88%	90%	81%	91%	85%
Academic Studies	40	60	189			42	48	113			49%	56%	63%		
Technical Studies	0	3	12			63	98	131			0%	3%	8%		
FTC (Agri)	3	10	24	23	34	13	8	16	22	22	19%	56%	60%	51%	61%

* The Industrial Training Centre was created in 1999

There is a need for qualitative and participatory research to understand why girls are not accessing technological fields in greater numbers. Recruitment and retention policies in post-secondary and tertiary institutions need to be reviewed so as to further encourage women to take up non-traditional jobs in construction and engineering. Some employers are also reluctant to employ females in traditionally male-oriented jobs thus the need for more sensitisation of employers.

Other major obstacles are the limited funds (especially foreign currency) available for sponsoring tertiary level courses overseas and for expanding the variety of courses offered by the Adult learning and Distance education centre. Seychelles does not have a University and costs for overseas studies are inhibitive.

The country also lacks a new long term Human Resources Development Plan.

Women's Empowerment

A. Examples of Policies, Legislative Change and Programmes and Projects from 1999 onwards. Important strides have been made in transforming the conditions of women for fuller participation in development. The constitutional rights of women, among others, include the right to own property including land, the right to equal protection by law, the right to education without discrimination and equal opportunity to employment. Women have benefited immensely from the policies as they are now competing with men for high decision-making positions.

Table 3 shows the percentage of women holding posts in government and decision making positions. In 2002, women were well represented at local government level and made up 58% percent of the district administrators. They were fairly well represented at director general level with 30 percent of posts and in the next three public service positions below with 46 percent. The percentage of women in cabinet and parliament (27 percent and 24 percent) has remained constant 1997 to 2002 and compares favourably with regional and national norms. The number of women Ministers falls from 3 to 2 in 2004. However the number of women parliamentarians shows a slight increase. There are no women judges or magistrates and the number of women in top positions in the defence forces and the police remain small.

Table 3: Women in Politics and Decision-making

DECISION- MAKING POSITION	No: of Women			No: of Men			TOTAL			% WOMEN		
	1997	2002	2004	1997	2002	2004	1997	2002	2004	1997	2002	2004
3.2 Cabinet Ministers	3	3	2	8	8	9	11	11	11	27%	27%	18%
3.3 Parliament Members of Parliament	8	8	10	26	26	24	34	34	34	24%	24%	29%
Elected	6	6	8	19	19	18	25	25	26	24%	24%	31%
Nominated	2	2	2	7	7	6	9	9	8	22%	24%	25%
3.5 Local Government Nominated	15	15		11	11		26	26		58%	58%	
3.6 Public/Civil												

Service Principal / Permanent Secretary	5	4	5	9	13	14	14	17	19	36 %	24 %	20 %
Director General or	19	18	20	53	43	40	72	61	60	26 %	30 %	33 %
Next 3 in the hierarchy	174	99		302	11 8		47 6	21 7		37 %	46 %	
3.7 Ambassadors / High Commissioners	0	0		5	0		5	0		0%	0%	
3.8 Judiciary Judges	0	0		10	10		10	10		0%	0%	
Magistrates	0	0		4	4		4	4		0%	0%	
3.9 Army / Defence Force Top 6 positions	1	2		70	76		71	78		1%	3%	
3.10 Police Force Top 6 positions	1	1		32	32		33	33		3%	3%	

The NGO sector has been active in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Seychelles. At the initiation of the Liaison Unit of Non-Governmental Organizations (LUNGOS), twelve Women Organizations were formed into the Seychelles Women Commission (SWC) so as to *provide a forum to give women a voice and a platform, to ensure that due weight is given to women's informed opinions when formulating policies pertaining to women and women's issues.*

Since its inception, SWC has sensitised both its members and non-members by organizing local education programmes as well as participating in programmes organized by other organizations. Some examples of these are workshops on parenting skills, gender sensitisation, and AIDS and violence against women campaigns,

In 2002, the Seychelles Women's Commission organised a workshop for women parliamentarians from Seychelles and Mauritius. The aim of the workshop was to empower women parliamentarians so that they would become more effective in lobbying policy changes for the betterment of and development of women. Following the workshop a National Women's Parliamentarian Association was formed in October 2000. The aim of the association, which groups past and present women parliamentarians, is to encourage members to become role models and mentors for young women aspiring to become involved in politics and decision-making. The women's commission has also facilitated the participation of Seychellois women in regional workshops organized by SADC for the empowerment of women.

B. Obstacles, Gaps & Challenges

In spite of academic achievements, greater economic independence and the facilitative environment provided by government, the full participation of women in decision-making

processes at the political and administrative levels has not been achieved. However, the situation compares favourably with that of other countries in the region.

There is a need for more qualitative research to understand the underlying causes for the poor representation of women in politics. Many women admit having problems reconciling family responsibilities with the heavy demands of public life. There is insufficient data and research on how domestic responsibilities are shared between men and women in the home. Women parliamentarians themselves lack the lobbying and advocacy skills to promote greater gender equality. There is also a need for more positive portraying of women in politics by the media. The Seychelles Women's Commission has been recently quite inactive because of limited funding and heavy commitment of its members. It has no permanent secretariat or personnel due to the short duration of tenure of members. Financial constraints also limit activities of the Commission.

WOMEN AND HEALTH

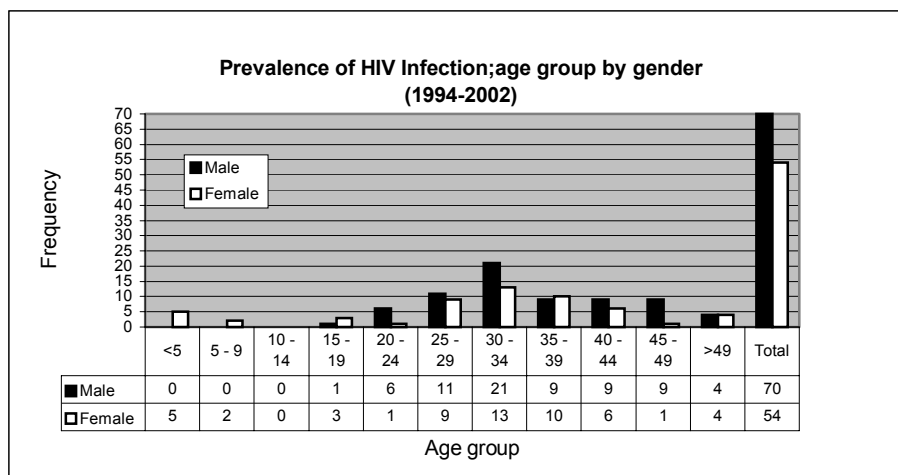
HIV/AIDS

A. Examples of Policies, Legislative Change and Programmes and Projects from 1999 onwards.

Serious efforts to tackle the AIDS epidemic started in 1999 with the appointment of an AIDS Programme Manager in the Ministry of Health. In 2002 a draft National Policy on HIV/AIDS/STIs was developed. Members of the public were invited to debate on the policy in a "Break the Silence" national campaign. The document was approved by cabinet in December 2000 and has been disseminated to all stakeholders, encouraging continuous dialogue of HIV/AIDS in the community. The policies adopted have promoted political commitment, a multi-sectoral approach, community mobilization, legislation, human rights, research and surveillance, and care and support. The government, NGOs, private sector, religious sector and the community at large have been mobilized and are thus involved in many activities to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS.

Table 4 shows the prevalence of HIV infection by gender from 1994-2002. There are slighter fewer women affected by the virus and the age group mostly affected in both sexes is the 30-45 year old bracket. There were no cases of death below the age of 15 but the number of newly infected in that age group was one for the year 2002, out of a total of 10 cases detected in Seychelles. So far, as of December 2002, 49 persons have died of AIDS in Seychelles.

Table 4: Prevalence of HIV infection; age group by gender (1994-2002)



Source: Ministry of Health, Statistics Unit

Some of the main achievements in the fight against HIV/AIDS are described below.

- A National AIDS Council (NAC), a high level multi-sectoral body, chaired by the Minister of health was formed in May 2002 and became the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) for Seychelles. A Strategic Plan has also been developed for implementation of the policy.
- There has been increased involvement by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), the private sector, people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), and multilateral and bilateral agencies. Focal persons have been appointed in all ministries and some other organizations with 44 persons trained in basic HIV/AIDS prevention and control. A workplace policy draft is being finalized as recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).. A directory mapping out all interventions by different organizations/agencies is being created to facilitate harmonization. The project is being funded by UNDP.
- There has been increased funding and support for HIV/AIDS. In 2003, a specific budget was allocated for AIDS Programme under the Ministry of health budget. Other ministries or organizations and private organizations have also allocated funds to HIV/AIDS. A National AIDS Trust Fund has been established for mobilization of funds for national projects e.g. Antiretroviral therapy. NGOs, FBOs and the private sector have all increased their contributions and human resources to HIV/AIDS activities.
- Condoms are distributed freely in all health centers in the Ministry of Health, which are usually open from 8am to 5pm. Antiretroviral therapy is presently available for prevention of mother-to-child transmission and post-exposure prophylaxis for health workers and since August 2002, all eligible patients have access to HAART therapy through government procurement.
- From 2000, onwards community efforts have evolved from strength to strength, making the fight against HIV/AIDS a more decentralised one. District leaders, particularly Members of the National Assembly, district administrators, teachers, health workers and the clergy, have all been sensitised to HIV/AIDS. Health workers have been recognized as a particular group who has maximum contact with the sexually active population and at least 30 nurses have received full training capacity in HIV/AIDS management from the Nurses Association of the Republic of Seychelles (NARS) and the SADC AIDS Network

of Nurses and Midwives (SANNAM). Peer educators have been trained in schools and provide support to their colleagues. The district community leaders represent a powerful force in manpower and have assisted in the education of the public on HIV/AIDS at grass-root level.

- Awareness-raising activities for the general public on PMTCT have been organized. Members of the National AIDS Council and doctors were also targeted. A road show in Victoria attracted crowds of people. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and condoms were distributed. Posters were displayed and a television spot aired. A religious group preached on abstinence and fidelity. The Ministry of Health was assisted by NGOs, namely Faith and Hope Association (FAHA), Alliance of Solidarity for the Family (ASFF) and the Round Table Association. The private sector was involved in the production of the TV spot and the funding of the programmes
- Psychosocial support has been provided to those affected by HIV. This includes counseling, spiritual support, support in disclosing one's seropositive status and for engaging in safe sex or abstinence, medication adherence, end-of-life and bereavement support, and practical economic assistance. Improved nutrition also forms part of the HIV/AIDS care package. Government provides Social Security benefits to the widowed, orphaned and terminally ill (approximately US \$ 88 000 for 2002-2003). Home Carers employed by the Ministry of Social Services collaborate with the domiciliary care nurses and nursing assistants in home based care, which is being established and integrated into all the 16 health centers of Primary Health Care. The churches are involved in counseling and spiritual care and the private sector provides financial assistance to NGO and PLWHA associations.

Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges

There are a large number of serious challenges and constraints in pursuing a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS response. Persistent risky sexual behaviour has been rife despite raised awareness on HIV/AIDS in the population. A survey on knowledge, attitudes and practices conducted in early 2003 will give a clearer picture of this area, and may possibly necessitate fundamental changes in current approaches.

There are serious limitations in both the surveillance of HIV/AIDS in Seychelles and research activities. Despite certain activities taking place in this area, there have been inadequate monitoring and evaluation, and an absence of impact projection studies for HIV/AIDS. The National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS/STIs remains incomplete. This perhaps explains the inadequate involvement of some sectors, for example, the private sector.

Resource Mobilisation has been scaled up but is still insufficient in terms of human and material capacity in several areas. There is a need for a larger and more effective unit for the AIDS Prevention and Control Programme. Laboratory equipment, reagents and test kits for HIV, AIDS, STIs and opportunistic infections need to be available at all times. Antiretroviral therapy, having been started, has to be continued for life, and therefore must be part of a sustainable programme. Outside the Ministry of Health, condoms have to be made available for wider

distribution and IEC messages have to be made accessible to grass-root communities through a mobile service.

Despite national effort a culture of stigma and discrimination persists and this needs to be addressed. The HIV/AIDS Support Organisation (HASO) registered in 1994 has gradually given prominence to the Faith And Hope Association (FAHA), the PLWHA-founded organization. However, FAHA has no permanent office and needs strengthening in certain areas, for example, with counselling skills and home-based care.

Information, Education, Communication (IEC). The inadequate sexual behaviour change in the population has been partially attributed to ineffective IEC (*Information, Education, Communication*) and the failure to address specific high risk groups.. One identified problem is insufficient training and capacity-building of health personnel, workers, teachers, faith-based organisations peer educators; media personnel and graphic artists. In particular, there are no training manuals for different target groups. For teachers and pupils the teaching of life skills based education has been largely inadequate despite a well-developed curriculum.

Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) needs to be sustained and HIV testing by antenatal attendees increased to above 90 percent.

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) has to be made available to rape victims and other workers exposed to HIV in the line of duty.

Blood Safety needs to be reinforced with appropriate policies and guidelines.

Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) needs to be more widely available to the general public and vulnerable groups on a number-based system to encourage more people to be tested.

Management of STIs requires major scaling-up with effective diagnosis of STIs, adequate reporting of cases and strengthening of the contact tracing system. The public has to be made more aware of those STI and IEC materials that have been developed.

Alcohol Abuse and Drug Use. Alcohol has been the silent partner to most ills in the Seychellois population. Heavy alcohol consumption has been reported in a significant proportion of the Seychellois people. Even with adequate IEC interventions on HIV/AIDS, alcohol and drug abuse can cloud judgment and favour high-risk sexual behaviour.

Above all, in all interventions on HIV/AIDS/STIs, the youth must be considered highly vulnerable, and requiring much support in the promotion of positive health seeking behaviour, including sexual and reproductive health.

The comprehensive care and support addressed in the National Policy for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS/STIs (December 2000) will require human and material resources in order to be sustained.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The Seychelles government's commitment to promoting the reproductive health of the population is clearly expressed in the 1998 national strategy for the implementation of the ICPD. The objectives are:

- To ensure that comprehensive and factual information and a full range of reproductive health care services, including family planning, are accessible, affordable, and acceptable to all those who need them.
- To promote responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour, especially among adolescents.
- To improve the quality of family planning advice, IEC, counseling and services.
- To increase the participation and sharing of responsibility of men in the actual practice of family planning.
- To increase awareness of the consequences of HIV infection and AIDS at individual, community and national levels.

Free primary health care is a Constitutional right in Seychelles. All health care services are provided free at the point of use to all Seychellois. Services provided through health facilities are integrated and comprehensive. All health centres offer maternal, child and family planning, as well as a full range of other services. In addition to these there is a specialised unit for the control of communicable diseases including sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. The right to health care and education is also extended to young people who have access to sexual health education in schools and a range of activities and services provided by the Youth health center.

Family Planning Information and Services

Seychellois women have control over their family planning rights and are the main sexual and reproductive health seekers. In fact, men have been taking little responsibility for their own and their partner's reproductive health. As a result most of the services and activities are directed at women. In recent years, the attitude of men is changing as emphasis is being placed on them playing a more active role in family planning. The Ministry of Health is working on strategies to provide better services, not only in reproductive health but also in all areas of health care for men.

Women have access to a broad range of reproductive health services in addition to birth control. The family planning programme contributes to the overall health and well being of women and addresses women's needs across the life cycle, that is, through prenatal, childbirth and post natum care. This includes nutritional and lactation programmes, safe contraception and safe non-compulsory abortion, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as HIV/AIDS, breast and cervical cancer and other gynaecological cancers and treatment of infertility. All these services are offered with the informed consent of women and delivered by trained personnel.

The crude birth rate (births per 1000 population at mid-year estimates) has continued to fall over the past 20 years. It stood at 21.1 in 1996 and 18.32 in 2002. The total fertility rate fell from 2.27 in 1995 to 2.01 in 2002 with an all time low of 1.98 in 2001. The percentage of all deliveries that were to women who had already had four more previous deliveries fell to 5.9 percent in 1996

and 4.7 percent in 2001. The percentage of unplanned pregnancies among women delivering babies in 1995 was 42, compared to the usual rate during recent years of around 52 percent.

Noticeable progress has been made in increasing life expectancy and reducing maternal mortality ratio. With almost all pregnancies and births handled by trained personnel, mortality rates are low. Compared to other developing countries, Seychelles has maintained a low maternal morbidity and mortality rate over the past ten years. Five maternal deaths were recorded between 1992 and 2002. All deaths were due to direct obstetric causes. The maternal mortality ratio for 2002 was 67.52 deaths per 100,000 live births.

B. Obstacles, gaps and challenges

While the legal situation is not prejudicial towards the reproductive health status of adolescents and youth, the practice and interpretation of certain laws means that adolescents and youth may not benefit as much as they could from access to services. Under existing legislation, a young person under 18 cannot be given counseling and or treatment without parental consent. This means that while girls aged 15-17 can consent to sex; they cannot access the means to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancy, STIs and HIV/AIDS without their parent's consent.

A committee set up for the harmonization of laws concerning children in Seychelles under the chairmanship of the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, is currently making recommendations to resolve these issues. It is also evident that there is a strong agreement among all parties to remove the inconsistency between the age of consent for sex, which is 15, and the age at which young people can access contraceptives. Pending a decision, health professionals are guided by the document Guidelines for Doctors and Nurses Managing Clients under 18. This document allows a doctor to prescribe contraceptives if he/she believes that it would be in the best interest of the young person.

While pregnancy is not a legal cause for school dropout, in practice because of societal norms, adolescent girls have seen their education terminated. The government has reviewed the procedures to counteract this tendency. The Ministry of Education now has a policy for student girls who fall pregnant to return to secondary school after the birth of her baby. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church through the Caritas programme, provides sewing classes for such school dropouts.

Existing IEC activities in the country have been effective in transmitting knowledge about anatomy, physiology, contraception and protection against HIV infection. The IEC training that has been given to teachers, nurses, social workers, school counselors, youth workers and other professionals has definitely helped to begin to improve the Reproductive Health related IEC services on offer, as has the peer counseling programme. The IEC Strategy for Adolescent Reproductive Health, once introduced, should guide the major stakeholders towards helping adolescents to make informed and responsible choices. Other activities and materials, produced and organized in liaison with the mass media are also indicators of progress in this field.

HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

A: Examples of policies, legislative change and programmes

Concerning the human rights of girls, Seychelles has prioritised the issue of protection of children, especially girls. A National Commission for Child Protection (NCCP) chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in 1997 was created with the aim of formulating child protection policies.

A Committee for the Harmonisation of Laws Concerning Children in Seychelles was formed in 2002 to study all laws in Seychelles pertaining to children. Two issues that considerable amendments were made to, were the age of consent and the taking and making of indecent photographs of children.

B: Obstacles, gaps and challenges

Although there are laws and legislations to protect and empower women, effort needs to be put in effectively implementing these laws and legislations, especially those pertaining to violence against women.

At present there are no women judges in Seychelles and their appointment would create a gender balance in law enforcement and composition of the judiciary to effectively advocate for women.

WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

A: Example of policies, legislative change and programmes

As the mirror of the society, the media has the role of informing and educating the general population. The electronic and print media personnel in Seychelles were trained and sensitised through a workshop in 2001 to “put on their gender lenses” in reporting all issues in the media. They were trained on the types of images, languages and headlines used in portraying women in the media and how they as educators and informers can help in promoting the empowerment of women through the programmes and news item they produce everyday.

The various newspapers are giving more importance to gender issues and the participation and involvement of women is being given more press coverage. The Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) through television and Radio is working in great collaboration with various organisations to empower women. This is being achieved through health, education, legal and other programmes directed at women.

As a way of monitoring the media, a gender and media association named GEM Plus has been formed with the aim of promoting gender in the media. The association has begun its plan of action by carrying out an in-depth study on the situation of gender in the media. Amongst its activities, the association is planning to sensitise fellow media practitioners and secondary school children.

The media outlets are making great effort in employing women in the various fields in the media. Women are in decision-making positions in the media and make most of the journalists in the

electronic media. However, there is a continuous effort to attract women in the technical fields in the media.

B: Obstacles, gaps and challenges

Research shows that men are still dominating the news. There is a need to further sensitise and educate media practitioners on gender inequalities and gender injustices in the society, so that the media can combat the problem.

There is a need for more investigative journalism to stir up ideas and debates on the various aspects of any given issue since they all have a gender perspective.

There is only one comprehensive research done on gender in the media. There is a need for more research, especially on the decision-making and other aspect of gender and the media.

WOMEN AND POVERTY

A: Examples of policies, legislative changes and programmes

A Social Development Strategy for Seychelles Beyond 2000, was drafted in 2002 to improve the quality of life of all the people of the Seychelles, in keeping with their individual and collective hopes and aspirations, and within the context of their prevailing cultural traditions and practices. Poverty alleviation is one of the main objectives of the national Social Development Strategy, however there is still a need to develop a poverty monitoring mechanism, which will start by defining what poverty, means and ascertain its extent in Seychelles.

The government under its social welfare system, provides special protection for those who may be vulnerable and disadvantaged because of their age, gender, and disability etc. Other measures to help women combat poverty are employment programmes such as Unemployment Relief Scheme (URS) where 730 persons out of 942 are women and Home Carer Programme where 2,314 persons mostly women are put into employment to work with the elderly and the disabled, other programmes where mostly women have been put into employment are the Youth Training Scheme and District Beautification Programme.

Any person being a citizen and resident in Seychelles can apply for welfare assistance. The range of benefits and services provided that directly or indirectly benefit all gender include old age pensions, sickness benefits and special assistance programmes for disadvantaged groups, such as the chronically ill, the physically and mentally disabled.

It is recognised that relative poverty as the result of a “set of social circumstances” rather than simply a lack of financial or material means does exist. Some individuals or groups in the Seychelles are living in social circumstances where they may be only marginally above the poverty line or a minimum level of subsistence. These social circumstances are breakdown in family relationships, choosing not to take up employment, proliferation of single parent households (mainly women), poor family budgeting in term of prioritising family expenditure.

B: Obstacles, gaps and challenges

To date no research has been conducted on women and poverty in Seychelles. Most of the research papers published are general poverty research and none has targeted a specific group of the population.

There is a need for the collection of disaggregated data to develop indicators and research.

There is also a need to define a poverty line to suit the Seychelles context.

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

A: Examples of policies, legislative changes and programmes

Policies regarding human resources have been reviewed and amended to encourage the maximum participation of women in employment. To date this is really not a major issue as both women and men have equal right under the Seychelles Constitution. In any case of discrimination against both men and women the Employment Laws makes provision for those who feel that they have been discriminated against to appeal to relevant authorities.

The total population who are economically active according to the provisional census result of 2002 are 38,483 female and 37,699 males. According to the Employment Figures for February 2004 839 female and 984 male are on the job seekers list. Resources are still being made available for both men and women to set up their own businesses, according to the provisional 2002 census result 805 women and 3,997 male are self-employed.

The Development Bank of Seychelles (DBS) and the Seychelles Credit Union are still the main two investors for small businesses. Small business finance facility provided by DBS provided 54% (11) loans to women as compared to 46% (13) loans to men in 2003. The DBS loan finance facility also provided loans for small businesses where 191 men and 43 women benefited. Women entrepreneurs are still dominant in sectors such as business tailoring, day care centres, services, agriculture and craft works.

At the moment it is a difficult moment for a lot of women to set up their own small businesses. There is a lack of resources available for women work with due to the newly established Macro Economic Reform Programme (MERP).

B: Obstacles, gaps and challenges

There is a lack of sensitisation programmes to encourage women entrepreneurs and to encourage women in having their own business.

There is a need for research on the economy especially, the impact of MERP on small businesses.

WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A: Examples of policies, legislative changes and programmes

The Environment Management Plan for Seychelles (EMPS) 2000-2010, addresses ten thematic areas of which one area is Population and Health including Gender. The plan seeks to develop approaches and mechanisms in determining the right balance between the population and its environment, as well as the equal distribution of resources and benefits.

Environment Policy does not distinguish between men and women as both sexes have equal rights under the Constitution of Seychelles. The Constitution Article 38 states “the State recognises the right of every person to live in and enjoy a clean, healthy and ecologically balanced environment and with a view to ensuring for effective realisation of this right the state undertakes...(b) to ensure a sustainable socio-economic development of Seychelles by a judicious use and management of the resources of Seychelles.”

B: Obstacles, gaps and challenges

No research so far has been conducted on women and the environment here in Seychelles. There is a need to identify priority areas on women and the environment to formulate policies. There is a need to conduct research on the social impact of the environment on people.

There is a need to have more sensitisation programmes, which target men, and women instead of the general population as the environment have different impact on men and different impact on women.

Part Three: Institutional Development

In the process of advancing women's agenda in Seychelles, the Gender Unit in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has been the main coordinator of gender activities at the national level since 2001. The unit is located in the Social Development Division, which is adopting an integrated approach to development in Seychelles. It is the focal point for gender in Seychelles and there is a continued effort in the sharing of information and resources with all stakeholders. The Gender Unit in collaboration with local and international organisations has accomplished sensitisation activities in the form of workshops, lectures, debates, presentations, research, radio and TV programmes. A local NGO named GEM Plus was launched in 2002, in collaboration with a South African NGO, Gender Links to address gender in the media. The Gender Unit is in the process of increasing its resources, however, at the moment the unit does not have its own budget.

To strengthen the Gender Unit's work and network with all organisations to mainstream gender, a National Gender Steering Committee has been established in March 2004 (Appendix 2 provides the TOR). The last National Gender Steering Committee phased out in 2000 and there has been the urgency since for its revival. The Terms of Reference of the new committee are identified in the appendix:

The committee is composed of persons from governmental, private and civil society and great effort has been made to have the active participation of men on the committee for support in the empowerment of women.

The Women Parliamentarians Action Group (WPAC) is an important mechanism created in 2003 from the Seychelles National Assembly. It includes present and past female members of the National Assembly. This action group has been formed with the view of debating on motions and policies regarding. The new action group has formulated a constitution, which will guide their activities. Other NGOs and governmental organisations stand to benefit from the WPAC, as it will become a channel to advocate for gender equality and empowerment of women.

Through the United Nations (Economic Commission of Africa), a monitoring mechanism was set up in 2001, to monitor and evaluate the African Plan of Action. The monitoring and evaluation officers are from six different sectors: The Ministry responsible for gender, i.e. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the NGO sector, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Finance. The monitoring and evaluation process is done through the submission of a quarterly report to the UN-ECA office. So far two reports have been submitted to the regional office in Addis Ababa. All these ministries through the monitoring and evaluation officers have been sensitised on the African Plan of Action and also the Beijing Platform of Action. As part of the monitoring process, The Ministry of Education has set up its Gender Committee and have produced a Plan of Action to guide gender mainstreaming in Education. The Ministry of Health also is in the process of setting up its own gender Committee.

At present the Monitoring and Evaluation Officers of the African Plan of Action (APA) are monitoring the implementation of the APA, however, the Gender Unit and the National Gender Steering Committee will prepare monitoring and evaluation guidelines for all sectors to ensure systematic and periodic monitoring and evaluation of gender activities at all levels.

Accountability mechanisms for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women has not been established across ministries, however, the Seychelles National Assembly is a mechanism, which will be used through its small committees to monitor and evaluate the National Gender Steering Committee.

Since 1999, there have been many sensitisation activities organised by government, NGOs and the civil societies to increase the capacity in terms of promoting gender mainstreaming. Such activities have been done through the Gender Unit in collaboration with local and international organisations and also through the active involvement of Women NGOs, such the Alliance Solidarity For the Family (ASFF), and Seychelles Association for Women Professional (SAWOP), the Soroptimist, the Seychelles Women's Commission and GEM Plus Association.

There are several remaining challenges in terms of capacity building. These are:

1. There is a lack of financial resources to implement activities in terms of gender mainstreaming from both the governmental and the NGO sector.
2. There is no specific budget for the Gender Unit; but all possible activities are covered by the Social Development Division's budget.
3. Another challenge is the increase in staff to effectively and efficiently assist the Gender Unit in carrying out its mandates. At present the Gender Unit has only one staff and the National Gender Steering Committee will assist the unit in carrying out its functions.
4. A Gender Audit Study was conducted in 2002, to situate gender in all ministries and organisations in Seychelles. However, no comprehensive and in depth research has been undertaken to formulate government policies and also to guide gender activities in Seychelles.

Seychelles has already met most of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. A core set of indicators has not been established for Seychelles. The Social Development Division, in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is working towards the collection of data and statistics to set indicators to suit the Seychelles context.

The collection of sex-disaggregated data remains a problem for all organisations. Apart from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the Management and Information Systems Division (MISD), which collect and produce gender disaggregated data, other organisations are yet to collect and produce gender-disaggregated data.

There is a lack of gender-disaggregated data in all areas of gender. This is due to the lack of proper system in collecting data and the overall lack of awareness of the importance of having gender-disaggregated data. The MISD is effective in providing gender-disaggregated data on a

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national level; however, it is unable to provide analytical data pertaining to specific issues in terms of gender in organisations.

The Ministry of Education is effectively using gender-disaggregated data to guide government policies in the education sector and also guide activities in other organisations across the board.

Part 4 : Main challenges and actions to address them

In conclusion, it is proposed that a National Plan of Action on Gender will be defined appropriate to Seychelles requirements. Time-framed strategies will also be developed in liaison with the main actors i.e. the Gender Unit and the NGSC.. This will be the guiding light to enable Seychelles to evaluate its progress vis-à-vis mainstreaming gender in our society.

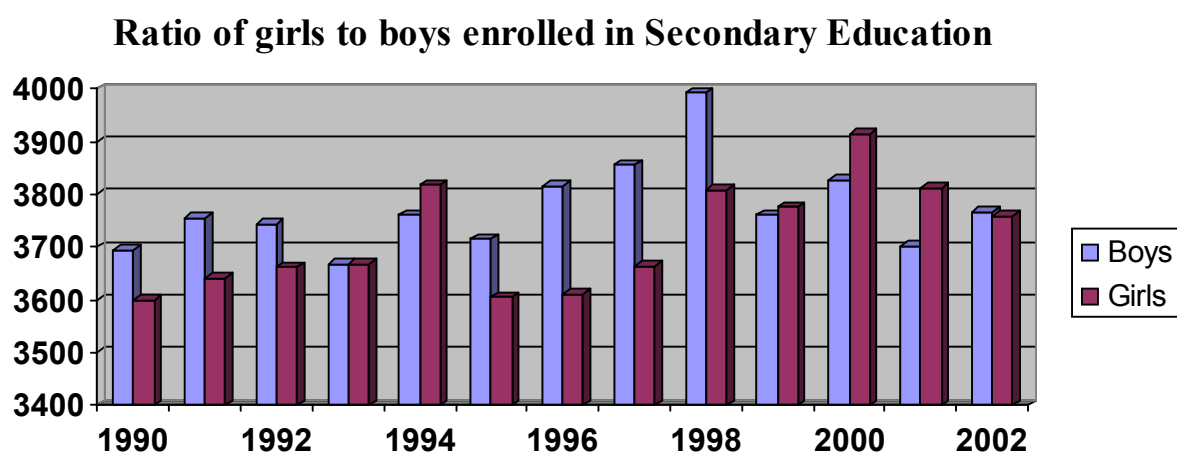
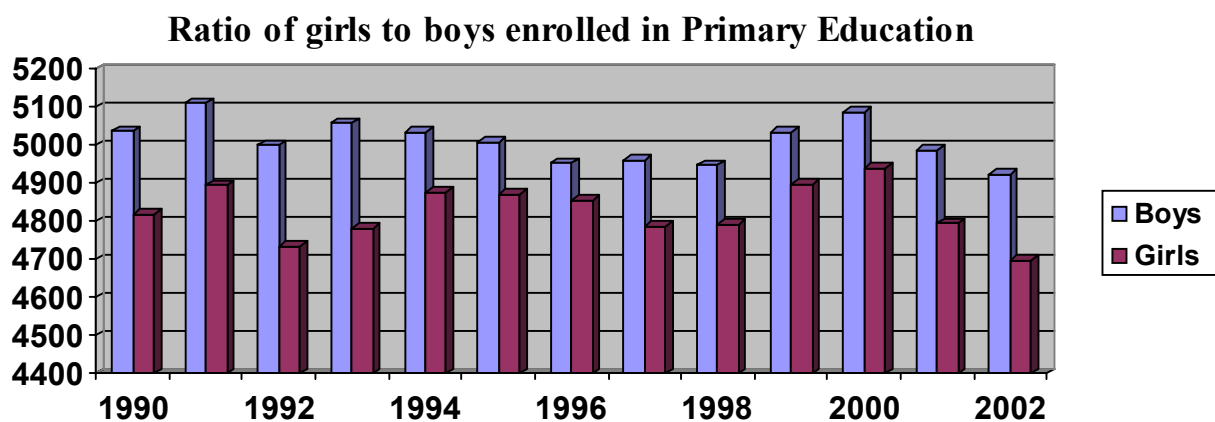
Specific areas of intervention have been identified, inter alia:

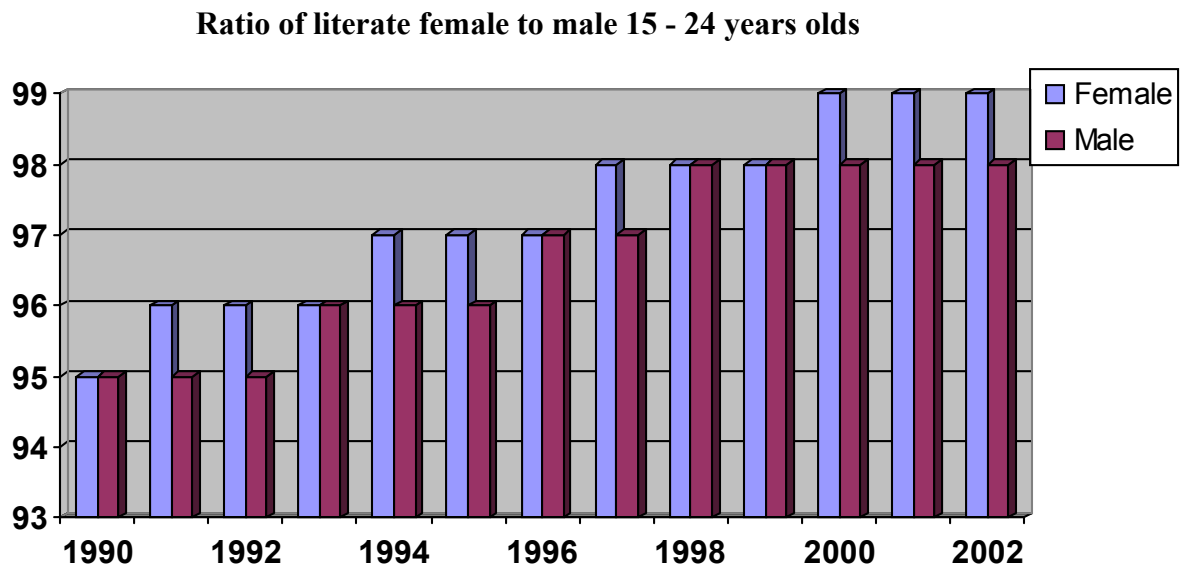
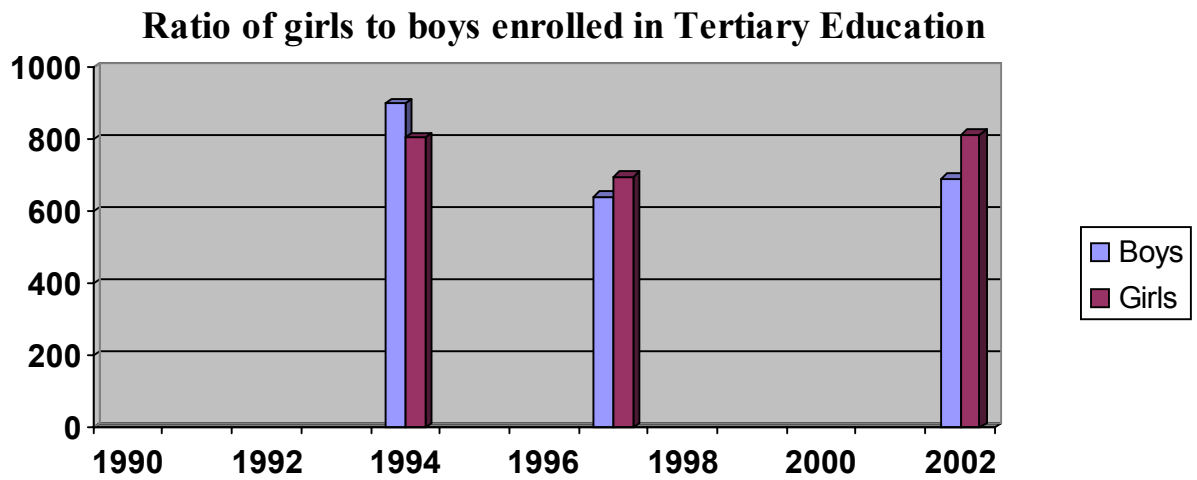
- Sensitisation of all parliamentarians in order to enlist their support
- Encourage female parliamentarians to become active role models and propose social laws that further facilitate the participation of women in public life
- Encourage the media to promote positive images of women in politics and challenge the stereotyping concept
- Extend training programmes organised for women at grass roots levels by NGOs and facilitate the setting up of small home businesses
- Review arrangements for increasing micro credit facilities for women and encourage women to set up their own small and medium size enterprises
- Review recruitment and retention policies in post-secondary and tertiary institutions to further encourage women to take up non-traditional jobs in construction and engineering
- Commission more qualitative and participatory research to understand social and cultural factors for persisting inequalities
- Ensure that government continues to act as the champion for women's rights
- Promote a zero-tolerance policy towards domestic violence and continue the sensitisation of all key players
- Set up a national gender monitoring committee with focal points in all ministries and organisations as a matter of urgency
- Encourage more structured consultations on an on-going basis with NGOs

In order to achieve the aim of implementing government policy effectively, efficiently and equitably.

APPENDIX 1

Indicators





Terms of Reference of National Gender Steering Committee 2004

- Identify lessons learned in the context of the gender mainstreaming strategy of the Human Resource Development Plan of 1994-2000.
- Sensitise the general public on the on-going gender mainstreaming programme.
- Develop conceptual and practical methodologies for the incorporation of gender perspectives in development planning, including the production of indicators.
- Formulate and strengthen policies and programmes to promote gender equity and equality.
- Develop and coordinate the implementation of a national gender policy.
- Ensure the collection, analysis, update and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data/information.
- Facilitate and encourage the effective sharing of information and resources with all stakeholders.
- Coordinate the implementation and follow-up of all gender instruments signed/ratified by Seychelles.
- Prepare monitoring and evaluation guidelines for all sectors to ensure systematic and periodic monitoring and evaluation of gender activities at all levels.
- Facilitate the mobilisation of funds for the implementation of the gender-mainstreaming programme, including capacity building in order to enhance skills development.