

The Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago
for the Advancement of Women

WOMEN'S MANIFESTO

10 DEMANDS OF WOMEN OF Trinidad and Tobago

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Prepared by : The Women's Political Platform

A non partisan collective of women interested in the transformation of politics in Trinidad and Tobago

A Women's Mandate for Action

CONTENTS

GENDER POLICY

- 01 . CODE OF ETHICS FOR PERSONS IN PUBLIC OFFICE
02. WOMEN, DEMOCRACY AND CONSTITUTION REFORM
03. WOMEN'S HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
04. WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS
05. WOMEN AND EDUCATION
06. WOMEN, EMPLOYMENT AND THE ECONOMY
07. WOMEN AND THE MEDIA
08. WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT
09. WOMEN AND THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE
0. WOMEN, CRIME AND THE DRUG ECONOMY

A WOMEN'S MANDATE FOR ACTION

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the 1976 constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The gender policy must reaffirm this commitment to gender equity and social justice and provide a framework to guide and inform the transformation of existing inequitable gender relations, based on this aspiration and vision. The gender policy must allow for a gender perspective and analysis to be integrated into the design,

implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all government policies and programmes.

The women of Trinidad and Tobago have come together to act in solidarity with one another, to make an intervention in the political process and to influence the direction which the society is taking.

The constituency of women came together to articulate their concerns and to present all political parties with a **Women's Mandate for Action**.

Women's participation in political decision-making continues to be an area of concern to women believing as we do that all issues are women's issues, and that women's issues are of national importance.

We are defining ourselves as a political constituency, as has labour, the private sector, and religious groups.

Our constituency is one to whom political parties can make commitments for action and to whom they can be held accountable.

Our goal is to transform the culture of politics in Trinidad and Tobago

- To ensure that all persons have equal opportunity to participate in public life
- To ensure there is no discrimination (either direct or indirect), on the basis of gender, ethnicity, class, age, or sexuality
- To ensure that all previously marginalized groups i.e. the poor, rural communities and the disabled, are included in the political process.

We call for the reorientation of the use of power. Power structures must be seen to be transparent and accountable and must meet the needs of ordinary people.

Women have been excluded from political decision-making at the highest level and we make this intervention confident of the positive impact our contribution will have on the development of our society.

We recognize differences and reject the politics of divide and rule which has shaped and deepened ethnic tensions among the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

We submit this Manifesto which includes ten (10) demands that have emerged from the work and actions of women's organizations over many years. Our manifesto also emerges from the commitments agreed to by national governments consistent as signatories to the Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women.

We see this effort as the dawn of a new political awakening among women in the country. Women, irrespective of class or ethnic background, religious denomination or partisan affiliation, call on all political parties, in particular, women candidates and politicians, to consider these demands and to publicly state their commitments.

A NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

The government of Trinidad and Tobago has ratified important international conventions and agreements such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies. These provide the basis for a comprehensive framework for the advancement of women and the enjoyment of basic rights to gender equity, the principles of which must further inform the national gender policy.

We have reviewed the New Draft Gender Policy laid in Parliament in July 2009. It is evident that stark changes have been made to the 2005 version. However the reasons for the changes made are not clear.

It was found that the current version does not update, enhance or provide explanations for inadequacies of the old document. It is rather a weak echo of the original document. Our investigation suggests that the omissions, deletions and changes are significant enough that substantial stakeholder consultation is required before finalising of the new draft.

Additionally with the five year gap between the first issuance of the policy and the second one, suggestions have also been made on areas that should be addressed in a 2010 Gender Policy reflecting the changes on the local, regional and international landscape.

WE DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

- To incorporate a gender perspective in all development planning as the strategy for promoting gender equity and 'fairness' so that development planning itself becomes fundamentally gendered

- To integrate women's and men's concerns and experiences into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all political, economic and social policies and programmes
- To establish a system of gender mainstreaming which incorporates all sectors of government, community based organizations, women's and men's organizations
- To provide policy makers and other key actors involved with human and social development, with reference guidelines for identifying and addressing gender concerns which will inform public policy
- To identify and establish an institutional framework with the mandate to initiate, coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate national gender responsive development plans
- To promote recognition and valuing of women's contributions as agents of change and beneficiaries of the development process
- To promote where necessary, evaluation of the sexual division of labour and women's and men's contributions as agents of change and beneficiaries of the development process
- To transform material conditions to achieve economic, social and physical security of men and women
- To facilitate legislative change and public awareness of relevant legislation and their implications
- To empower both women and men by ensuring new and equitable relations between the sexes and that women and men share equal responsibility for care of children..

The National Gender Policy and Action Plan will seek to transform inequitable gender relations in order to improve women's status relative to that of men; to influence state policy on all areas and to identify strategies to facilitate new and inequitable relations between women and men.

WE PUT FORWARD THE FOLLOWING PROPOSALS AS PART OF OUR EFFORT TO ADDRESS THE DEEP PROBLEMS FACING OUR NATION.

01 CODE OF ETHICS FOR PERSONS IN PUBLIC OFFICE

We believe that public authorities in Trinidad and Tobago

exercise authority and, therefore, power with a combination of the traditional and charismatic leadership styles. We recognize that this leadership in Trinidad and Tobago includes far less of women's knowledge, understanding and political wisdom than men's. Therefore we demand the application of the following code of ethics for persons in public office both to enable power and authority and to be exercised and to ensure citizens confidence through a consistent sense of equity and justice.

COURAGE

- When dealing with venality, outrage, inefficiency, laziness and corruption, act on behalf of all citizens in the interest of justice and fairness

FAIRNESS

- Serve the diverse population of Trinidad and Tobago by creating and sustaining policies and practices, which are inclusive and have regard for difference (in race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, religion, culture)
- Communicate at all times with an emphasis on listening and empathy.

INTEGRITY

- Act in a manner that neither is likely to compromise or impair professional, private and public integrity. Desist from making public statements denigrating women.

PURPOSE

- Have a vision, that is extensive and profound in pursuit of excellence for the national community
- Assess and value human, scientific, technical, social, cultural, religious, environmental, economic, as well as ethical implications as integral to the conduct of duties and responsibilities.

RESPECT FOR RIGHTS

- Respect and defend the human rights of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago recognize that women's rights are human rights.

- Maintain responsibility for implications and outcomes of policies and practices
- Relate to the rights of people of diverse heritage and class in an appropriate manner.

TRANSPARENCY

- Serve Trinidad and Tobago with openness that integrates accountability, reason and responsibility
- Show deep trust in others through trust in self.

02 WOMEN, DEMOCRACY AND CONSTITUTION REFORM

It is crucial for the development of democracy and the realization of women's human rights that women participate at all levels of decision-making in all spheres of society.

- This is not only a demand for simple justice. It is essential for the achievement of transparent and accountable governance – for a true and substantive democracy

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It is essential for the provision of a gender balanced sharing of power that more accurately reflects the composition of society

- We believe that local government, as the level of governance closest to citizens, is in a unique position to promote the attainment of gender equality.

TRANSFORMATION

- Constitution reform which embraces the principle of gender equity and provides for an appropriate definition of 'discrimination' which will remove all existing forms of gender discrimination in our laws and government policies
- Labour recruitment reform which allows women to have equal access with men in the full range of job and career appointments in all sectors and which facilitates balancing of work and family responsibilities.
- Local government reform, which grants constitutional, legal and financial

autonomy to local government bodies to enable them to meet their responsibilities

- Equal opportunity legislation that includes as grounds for discrimination – pregnancy, family responsibilities, age, HIV status and national extraction
- Equal opportunity legislation against sexual harassment and which includes provision for equal pay for equal work.

03 WOMEN, HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The Constitution (2000) of Trinidad and Tobago makes provision relating to health, to include the right of individuals to life. We emphasize that health equity is primary for citizens regardless of gender, class or economic status. We recognize there are differences in the effects of health problems on men and women. Therefore, our demands focus on the category “woman” to include female children and young people; adults and seniors, and those who experience disabilities.

The following are our guidelines for the improvement and enhancement of women’s health and reproductive rights...

AUTHORITY

To meet women’s needs for health support and services emerging from the rapid growth and complexity of women’s health issues in an industrialized and modernized economy, we strongly recommend:

- The establishment of a Department, entrusted with a mission to advance and promote excellent maternal and child health care
- Support and services targeted to enhance women’s health and reproductive rights to include issues of maternal and child mortality.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

- Support the development of policies that generate health initiatives for the purpose of solutions. There needs to be ongoing data collection for critical analysis in relation to women’s health in the area of
 - communicable and non-communicable diseases
 - maternal and child mortality

- Meet the challenges that a woman faces to maintain optimum health in her changing roles and responsibilities, provide adequate educational services on health and reproductive rights
- Prevent teenage girls and women's unwanted pregnancies, gender-based violence and infection with sexually transmitted diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, through education programmes which are to be targeted to women, girls, men and boys appropriately and regularly.

INFORMATION

- Develop an understanding of quality health care and its management
- Provide women with support services and access to proper information systems
- Provide modern technologies for regular updates through appropriate channels.

LEGISLATION

- Review and address the public health issues that arise from women having unsafe termination of pregnancies
- Enact laws which provide for the safety and well-being of women who wish or need to make the choice
- Provide legislation to create and establish a Department devoted to maternal health care and issues.

04 WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES – SPECIAL NEEDS

Women with disabilities encounter many obstacles of a physical and social nature They frequently experience

- Poor access to health care and housing
- Increased incidence of health complications as well as
- Marginalization and prevention from making contributions to society.

We insist that government takes all appropriate measures to ensure that the skills of these women are fully developed for the advancement of ALL women and therefore society.

We insist that measures be taken to enhance their standard of living:

LEGISLATION AND RIGHTS

- Take strict measures to prevent violence or victimization of women with disabilities
- Ensure that laws are available to bring their cases to justice without undue delay
- Legislate and promote as compulsory equal access to all private, public, business and commercial buildings and spaces in order to ensure that women with disabilities can exercise their rights
- Promote equal access for the full participation of women with disabilities in leadership and decision-making roles within the power structures in order to ensure equity for women with disabilities

HEALTH AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- Decentralize health services to reduce time lags in medical and nursing care and assistance to improve the quality of life for women with disabilities – particularly those in low income levels or poverty
- Design and establish hospitals and/or centers specific to women with disabilities to offer continuity of long term care.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Provide equal opportunities for schooling, professional or vocational education to ensure that women with disabilities have equal choices to employment and careers so as to be independent.

05 WOMEN AND EDUCATION: GENDER INTERGRATION

We recognize that government provides a curricula, from preschool through secondary school, which is not gender-sensitive.

We, therefore, recommend the development of appropriate aspects within the educational system aimed at increasing physical, emotional, aesthetic, moral and intellectual standards in society as a whole.

The following provisions will boost national consciousness for problem-solving regarding gender related issues in education.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Institute training in Early Childhood Centers transforming them into gender-sensitive exemplary spaces for children, teachers, parents and communities alike
- Provide a curriculum designed to stimulate critical thinking. And highlights women's historical contribution Such pedagogy for teaching and learning prepares learners to make reasoned choices when seeking and/or building career opportunities.
- Design and implement strategic and transformative training plans with goals (a) to reduce or eliminate gender segregation; (b) to implement methods of career guidance, and/or mentoring programmes; and (c) to induce citizens to reconcile a balance between work-family responsibilities
- Configure mentoring models in collectives for coaching women and men to improve gender distribution in technology, medical and physical sciences, education and service industries.

ADMINISTRATION

- Establish recruitment policies that will hire teachers and education administrators based on qualifications that include gender-sensitive training
- Give untrained recruits and incumbents opportunities for gender-sensitive training.

RESEARCH

- Institute research and monitoring units, which review and adjust all programmes regularly, and which measure the impact that gender-sensitive training has on female and male behaviours.

06 WOMEN, EMPLOYMENT AND THE ECONOMY

As new challenges emerge, the current constraints and lack of opportunities that women experience need to be eliminated. In particular the effects of globalization, economic restructuring and rapidly changing systems of production and work organization favour more flexible modes of employment. Thus, we offer the following to standardize decent work:

LEGISLATION

- Legislation must be enforced for a productive environment and to develop measures to deal with issues of health and safety, reproductive health and environmental security, and social protection which includes the absence of sexual harassment
 - Labour legislation is needed to provide greater transparency and consistency thereby promoting and sustaining equal representation of women voices in leadership positions in unions, and in negotiations.
- full employment and Job security
- Labour legislation should be extended to include provisions which ensure the protection of the rights of domestic workers , similar to those enjoyed by all workers, as well as regulations related to the job's unique circumstances such as living in.

- Commit to full employment, at all times, through the creation of quality jobs by joining forces with private, business and industrial sectors at the national, regional and international levels
 - Ensure that equitable access to education and training is made available to engender women's economic empowerment to seek job and livelihood opportunities on an equal basis with men.
- Provide support that addresses womens unequal responsibilities for care of the family.

PRODUCTIVITY

- Increase national productivity, urgently create policies or legislation to accelerate the provision of
- On-site facilities by employers of the public and private sectors, to enable employees' access to day care and homework centers, and women to breastfeeding spaces.

ECONOMY

- Ensure women's full participation in the formulation of economic policy and planning
- Increase selection of women for representation on all relevant boards and agencies
- Enable women's equal access to land, agriculture, credit, business and technical training.

WAGES AND SALARIES

- Ensure that women obtain decent work for decent pay towards decent living
- Standardize income policies to provide women with a living wage to achieve a best quality lifestyle, particularly showing concern for the

EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

- Harness the skills, expertise and knowledge of women, and men, for increased productivity and human well-being, there needs to be policies and practices to eliminate all barriers that stereotype identity, primarily according to gender, as well as race, class, ability and sexuality
- Endorse workers' ability to exercise their human rights, there needs to be a social commitment from Government
- Encourage women's understanding of their economic rights, all employers and unions must be transparent about rules and controls that often victimize women financially.

07 WOMEN AND INFORMATION AND 07 COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

From a gender perspective, there are negative aspects in broadcasting, radio and television as well as in electronic portrayals of women. Women's identities continue to be homogenized as sexual objects. On the other hand, women continue to have unequal access to communication and media technologies. We advance these guidelines for transparent, accurate, sensitive communication systems and technologies to transform media attitude and erase

stereotypical portrayals of women.

STANDARDS

- Ensure, through legislative channels, that the communication industry adheres to national and international standards, which advocate/guide the erasure of stereotypes of and discrimination against women
- Encourage within the media, (through national policies), the transformation from stereotypical images to women's own real images of themselves.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

- Treat information, communication and media technologies as acceptable public goods, thus investing media development in an appropriate/pertinent manner with a goal to increase availability and women's access to equipment and facilities
- Target women as specific learners/users of communication technologies, e.g., Internet Communication, in order to facilitate their involvement as managers of their own programmes for networking and connecting with knowledge globally
- Provide women with the necessary education, training and communication facilities to project their activism at a national level.

08 WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Environment management fosters an ethical, moral foundation for sustainable development in our interdependent world making the well-being of all humans our priority. Yet, women are marginalized in the formulation and implementation of policy on environmental issues. A necessary collaboration between environmental and public health authorities is needed to have a direct effect on people's health in Trinidad and Tobago. To a great extent, the ill effects of devastation or degradation are experienced by women of all ages, particularly those in agriculture, in rural communities and those who are at low income levels. Therefore we recommend...

STANDARDS

- Regard women's voices as substantive and material to sustainable development involving them at all levels of environmental decision making and in problem solving activities
- Provide policies that enable women to perform as active partners with government at all levels, and with non-governmental organizations to regulate anti-pollution strategies and environmentally destructive practices.

LEGISLATION

- Strengthen the EMA for enforcement of existing legislation including revision of the procedures for environmental clearance certificates.
- Enforce legislation to control the production and disposal of non-biodegradable containers and enforce legislation penalizing users for indiscriminate disposal of such containers in the environment. The money collected should assist in financing climate change improvements.

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- Encourage all educational institutions, the media and advertising industries to conduct formal and informal programmes on issues of climate change
- Conduct critical analyses to assess and measure the impact of environmental hazards and climate changes on women's and girl's health facilities
- Establish Trauma Centers in sufficient numbers to provide care and counselling services as needed for disaster victims in the national community taking into account the special needs of women and girls.
- Earmark agencies of government, offices of non-governmental organizations and similar places as areas to receive, give and highlight information about both environmental risks and disaster preparedness issues

- Establish a National Recycling Programme and accelerate the improvement of garbage collection and disposal, in order to minimize the adverse effects of waste disposal on health at the home and community levels.

09 WOMEN AND THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

We recognize that women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse with greater frequency and unacceptability than men and boys. We identify a culture of violence that cuts across lines of race, class, and income. We demand measures to stay the continuation of the use of violence to resolve conflict in people's lives. The following serve as standards to reduce violence.

LAW AND JUSTICE

- End the practice of corporal punishment, enact appropriate legislation to enforce policies and practices at all levels in the national community where this practice still obtains, in particular, the education system
- Extend the Family Court as a principal agent in addressing the instances of domestic violence.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

- Ensure that women and girls have access to information services in the field of violence, government must establish specific agencies and provide funding and other support to non-governmental organizations working to eradicate violence in the society
- To stem the tide of violence, the education system must include programmes, which teach conflict resolution and anger management skills from primary through secondary schools.

- Take action to address issues of boys and men in ways that do not stigmatise or blame women

POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

- Government budgets must provide funding to non-governmental organizations to encourage counseling and rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators of violence

- Collaborative and comprehensive policies for implementation should be put into effect by responsible ministries that will protect young people, especially the girl child
- Physical and psychological programmes adequately located and aimed at rehabilitation for victims of violence as well as incest victims and their families must be developed.

10 WOMEN, CRIME AND THE DRUG ECONOMY

The scourge of the illegal drug trade not only challenges the nation's stability but threatens the moral fabric of society. Women and men experience the hazardous effects of participating in the drug community disproportionately. The major effects are imprisonment, ill-health and death. Yet, the existence of a transnational drug economy places mostly poor and needy women at high risk and under control of men. We recognize that women experience victimization because gender plays a large role in societal responses to women who are alleged to have practiced criminal behaviour. We provide the following suggestions for transformative change in dealing with victims and survivors of illegal jobs...

LEGISLATION

- Make provisions in criminal law that can recognize that women's presence in a male domain is driven from the social situation of poverty, dependence, abuse or abandonment to the drug economy which further victimizes them
- Accelerate efforts in law enforcement, aimed at hampering the development of the drug economy through a transformed criminal justice system.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

- Mount a widespread public information programme to encourage the nation, women and men, to understand the risks to which the society is exposed through the drug economy
- Emphasize government's responsibility to push initiatives for the

reduction of poverty through aggressive social programmes that deal closely with people's basic needs.

SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- Offer safe spaces with counseling services for generating their empowerment as a protection for women survivors, who were victimized.

The Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women

Professional Centre, Wrightson Road Extension,
Woodbrook, Trinidad and Tobago

Tel: (868) 623-8861 • Email: network@wow.net

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