



MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT  
& GENDER AFFAIRS  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

A cluster of white butterflies of various sizes, some in flight, positioned to the left of the main title.

**National  
Conference on  
Women:  
*Inspiring Change***

**Supplementary Report:  
Meeting on Women and  
Girls in the Sister Islands**

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Prepared by:  
Gender Affairs Unit



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## Background

Following the National Conference on Women that was held in Grand Cayman on Saturday, 29th March 2014, the Honourable Minister for Education, Employment & Gender Affairs and four Ministry staff members travelled to Cayman Brac to host the **Meeting on Women and Girls in the Sister Islands** at the Layman E. Scott Senior High School Hall on Saturday, 28th June 2014 from 9:00AM to 3:00PM.

There was no registration fee for the meeting, which included complimentary continental breakfast and lunch, and twenty persons attended part or all of the meeting. The session followed an agenda similar to the conference in Grand Cayman and included official remarks, short educational videos, a presentation on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (“CEDAW”), small focus group discussions and a broadcast of the spoken word performance by Lady Rabia and keynote address by Dr. Glenda Simms at the afternoon session of the National Conference on Women.



Many of the issues raised and solutions proposed to address discrimination and promote gender equality were reminiscent of those that came out of discussions at the conference in Grand Cayman. However, the meeting also sought to specifically address the situation of girls and women living outside of urban areas and uncovered a number of concerns unique to girls and women living in the Sister Islands.

Article 14 of CEDAW recognises the important role that rural women play worldwide and commits governments to take into account the particular problems faced by these girls and women, to guarantee broad application of CEDAW, and to ensure women participate in and benefit from development.

The Ministry was very pleased with the response to the meeting and active participation from attendees, who shared their personal experiences and opinions, the stories of their family members, friends and colleagues, and possible solutions to the issues facing girls and women living in the Sister Islands.

## Focus Group Discussions

During the morning session, participants worked in two focus groups to discuss issues relevant to particular Articles of CEDAW, local legislation, and a number of General Recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (“CEDAW Committee”).

The Senior Policy Officer (Gender Affairs) and Policy Officer (Gender Affairs) served as rapporteurs to lead the discussions and take detailed notes. Utilising related reference materials and information, one group discussed *human rights, legislation, stereotyping, education, employment and the economy* while the other tackled *sports, culture, politics, public life, health, family planning, marriage and family life*. Participants were asked to identify issues and challenges facing women and girls and, wherever possible, potential solutions.



This section of the report gives an overview of CEDAW by explaining some of the relevant Articles, General Recommendations and local legislation. It also lists the key issues that were raised by participants and the solutions they proposed, which are broken out by topic. This summarised recounting of focus group discussions reflects the perspectives of participants and, in some cases, individual experiences and opinions. Areas where there was disagreement between participants or a lack of consensus are noted.

The **scope of CEDAW** is broad and States parties (countries that have ratified the treaty) commit to implementing its principles. Following the preamble, **Article 1** defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying women’s recognition, enjoyment or exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. **Article 2** then condemns discrimination against women in all forms and obligates States parties to fully eliminate discrimination which exist as a result of legislation, policy, institutional set up, and practice, and **Article 3** obliges States parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women not just by the State, but by any person, organisation or enterprise.

**Article 14** also requires that CEDAW be applied to all residents, addressing in particular discrimination against rural women in relation to access to services, training and employment opportunities, etc. In the local context, women and girls living in the Sister Islands are geographically separated from the political and economic centre and their location outside of urban areas is a special consideration for the Ministry. Receiving data directly from women and girls living in Cayman Brac will therefore more fully inform the general status of girls and women as well as identify issues of particular concern for residents of the Sister Islands in order that a comprehensive implementation plan can be developed for CEDAW.

*De jure equality, or formal legal equality*, is addressed in **Article 15** of CEDAW, which guarantees women equality with men before the law, i.e. equal legal capacity in civil matters, right to enter into contracts, right to choose residence and domicile, etc. A recent review of local legislation found no direct discrimination in the Cayman Islands but highlighted a number of provisions as having the potential to be strengthened. Focusing on **Human Rights & Legislation**, participants discussed these issues.

- The ‘honest belief’ defence for defilement of a girl aged 12-15 years should be limited, requiring consideration of factors such as difference in ages and previous accusations. In a small community like Cayman Brac, predators cannot give the excuse that they did not know a girl was under 16.

The two groups disagreed on a recommendation to raise the legal age of consent for sexual relations from 16 to 18; while one believed this would align with the age for other major decisions and rights such as voting and consuming alcohol, the other did not consider it an effective way to delay sexual initiation.

- Young people should be encouraged to make good decisions and understand the consequences of engaging in sexual activity, including with under-aged persons. Education and empowerment may better address early sexual initiation and related social issues than changing the law.
- Girls are perceived as more sexually aggressive than boys, pressuring boys to be active early on.
- Many parents block their children from receiving information about sex and sexuality, especially before high school when it may be too late for students that are already sexually active.
- Children may be discouraged from asking questions because they believe everyone will think they’re having sex, and parents may similarly be discouraged from calling for sex education because others will think they’re allowing or encouraging their children to have sex.

**Article 6** of CEDAW requires suppression of all forms of traffic in women and girls and exploitation of prostitution. Participants highlighted a troubling trend in Cayman Brac where bars are alleged to hire attractive, young expatriate women on temporary work permits and intentionally have large turnover rates to prevent staff from getting into romantic relationships and appearing “unavailable”. The reason given for this practice was to entice male customers, and participants believed this was reinforced through the use of social media to promote businesses with photos of scantily clad women.

Participants noted it is much easier to have a temporary work permit approved and that these workers are not required to have pension accounts for the first nine months and often do not have the required health insurance coverage either because the employer is unlikely to be ‘caught’ if the woman works for only a brief period of time. All of these alleged practices were seen as exploitative and also leaving those expatriate women particularly vulnerable to further exploitation by employers and/or customers, as they often come to the Cayman Islands to work because they need the money and will fear reporting their employer for illegal or discriminatory practices because they will lose their job and residency.

Issues surrounding **Stereotyping & Discrimination** were some of the most concerning to Cayman Brac participants. Women and girls regularly suffer discrimination due to societal attitudes that create expectations and stereotypes about femininity and masculinity and value men and women differently. **Article 5** of CEDAW encourages States parties to take appropriate measures to strive to eliminate cultural and traditional practices that perpetuate discrimination and gender stereotyping. It also calls for family education to include a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children.

In Cayman Brac, the initial discussion on stereotypes and the way women are viewed centred on our maritime past when men went to sea and women took care of everything back at home. As a result of this unique history, some participants believed there were no misconceptions that women can't earn or manage money or take care of the household and women are viewed as strong and important to society. However, other participants believed this different view of women as compared with other Western societies is only true up to a point, as when men came home they were back in leadership roles. Rather than being a true matriarchal society, women may do the work but men are still in charge.

- Many people still adhere to “traditional” gender roles and believe related stereotypes.
- Women are valued mainly for their physical appearance/attractiveness, are assumed to be responsible for unpaid childcare and domestic work in the home, are held to a different standard regarding promiscuity, and are seen as inferior to men in certain ways.
- A seeming misapplication of biblical teaching about “headship” and/or history of the physically strongest person being the head of the tribe are often used to justify these positions by some.
- In churches and also in other aspects of life, women have taken the lead for many years but their roles are seen as “soft” and men may not participate as much but still want to make the decisions and have formal leadership titles/roles, i.e. “taking credit for women’s work”.
- Women are not taken as seriously, e.g. residents are hesitant to listen to female guest speakers.
- Deference is often shown to expatriates as well; structural issues cannot be viewed solely from a gender perspective, as the perceived hierarchy also includes skin colour and nation of origin.
- Women are often “catty” toward other women, e.g. commenting on their physical appearance, clothing, etc., and negatively critique other women when there is a need to support each other.

On a positive note, one young participant felt that gender stereotypes and roles were not pervasive in schools and that many girls believe if they are ambitious and do well they can get what they want in life. In going abroad and becoming more educated, people tend to be exposed to different ideas and become more tolerant, less likely to stereotype people based on sex and other characteristics. When discussing solutions to break stereotypes and discrimination, participants believed the younger generation would lead this change but were keen to stress that women should always have the freedom to choose whatever role they want, and if that is a “traditional” role they should not be judged for that choice.

**Article 4** of CEDAW allows States parties to institute special measures aimed at accelerating equality between women and men. These would not be considered discriminatory, as the measures are required to be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity are met. Temporary special measures could include quotas, for example, instituting a policy that all government boards, committees, tribunals and councils require qualified females to be appointed to make up at least 30% of their membership.

Participants noted that members of government boards in Cayman Brac are almost entirely men, as:

- there is a small pool of people in the private sector that are able to serve on these boards;
- a large number of women in Cayman Brac are employed in the civil service; and
- it may also be difficult for women to travel to Grand Cayman and/or attend meetings during working hours due to responsibility for childcare and domestic work and rigid work schedules.

Quotas for female representation could help to decrease these gender gaps, but technology and other creative solutions should also be explored and developed to facilitate access, e.g. video conferencing.

States parties are encouraged to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in education in **Article 10** of CEDAW. This includes giving males and females equal access to education and vocational guidance; the same curricula, examinations, standards for teaching and equipment; and equal access to scholarships and grants. Participants agreed that girls and women do not suffer discrimination in **Education**.

In Cayman Brac, girls generally outperform boys in secondary school and achieve highly academically, and the lack of vocational options is problematic for both boys and girls. As women become more educated, participants believed some men struggle with feeling “emasculated” and that, as a consequence, some marriages break up and men turn to bars for women that are seen as “below them” to control. As men are seen as gravitating more towards vocational professions that are lower paid, relationship and family dynamics are changing and people find it difficult to navigate this “uncharted territory”.

**Employment**, however, was seen as an area where women regularly experienced multiple forms of discrimination, as was the case reported by participants at the conference in Grand Cayman. **Article 11** of CEDAW encourages States parties to eliminate discrimination against women in the workplace. The right to work is recognised as a human right and women must have the same employment rights as men as well as provisions for maternity leave and special protection against harmful work during pregnancy.

- Sexual harassment is pervasive, particularly in male-dominated contexts; women are expected to ‘deal with it’ as part of the job and reports/complaints are often ignored by management.
- Sometimes people assume the person who will take over a vacated job must be the same sex as the previous post-holder, so women will not be considered for a job previously held by a man.
- Women in senior positions are often perceived and treated differently than men.
- Cayman Brac suffers from a lack of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities as well as a disconnect between available skills and available work that lead to brain-drain and migration.
- Technology and other accommodations could open up jobs with companies in Grand Cayman.
- Some women choose to exit the labour force to take care of their young children, but once the children are in school they find it difficult to re-enter the job market.
- Young women don’t know how to stand up for themselves when they enter the workforce and would benefit from assertiveness training/other empowerment programmes and mentorship.

Middle management positions in Cayman Brac were seen as having a strong representation of women, with discrimination largely occurring in the ill-treatment of domestic helpers and service industry workers. Domestic helpers, overwhelmingly female, are particularly vulnerable to harmful employment practices and reported to often work many hours without adequate compensation. Some helpers were reported to work nine hours per day, seven days per week, living with their employers and even being the ones to get up at night to be with the children. Due to their vulnerable status and lack of socio-economic power, they are unwilling to advocate for legal working conditions for fear of losing their jobs.

In raising questions about the *Gender Equality Law, 2011* and Gender Equality Tribunal in one group, most participants were not aware that the Law had been enacted and none of the participants had heard of the Tribunal and its remit to hear and determine discrimination complaints. More public education and awareness on the Brac about the protective measures currently in place – including, but not limited to,

the Law and Tribunal – was suggested as a possible solution, but participants also noted that people might not be willing to make complaints because they would be seen as ‘trouble-makers’.

Participants discussed maternity/paternity/family leave and other family-friendly social benefits and business practices at length. While noting current allowances leave many women and men unable to take sufficient time to deal with a newborn because they cannot afford to take the unpaid leave portion, concern was also expressed for small business owners if benefits increase under the current system. There was a fear that if the amount of paid leave in particular is increased businesses would be financially ruined in the current economic climate. Participants also discussed the possibility of insurance schemes or reform of social services systems, but noted many employees wouldn’t want to pay into insurance schemes if they feel they “won’t get anything out of it” and government-funded benefits would entail a different political philosophy regarding collective responsibility. As a result, either proposal would require fundamental shifts in how we view parenthood and the role of government in order to be successful.

States parties are encouraged to eliminate discrimination against women in **the Economy** in **Article 13** of CEDAW, including by ensuring that women have equal access to family benefits, loans and credit. While discrimination in economic arenas was not seen as pervasive, one woman reported her personal difficulty in obtaining a mortgage because she was an unmarried woman. Her bank allegedly told her that she qualified in her own right but needed a husband to get the mortgage, even if he didn’t have a job.

**Article 13** of CEDAW also encourages States parties to eliminate discrimination against women in social arenas, including **Sports & Culture**. This means ensuring women have equal rights to participate in recreational activities, sports and cultural life, including the arts, religious practices and cultural rituals. With regard to participation in cultural life, participants did not believe there were barriers for females and that “the arts” are in fact areas in which girls are encouraged to participate and avenues for them to shine because they are perceived as “soft”. That being said, opportunities in Cayman Brac were also seen as generally limited for any person wishing to participate in cultural life and the arts.

Participants believed there are no *formal* barriers for women and girls to participate in recreational activities and sports on an equal basis with boys, but girls and boys are not equally encouraged and supported in this social arena, causing female participation to drop off steeply after primary school.

- There is a lower level of interest in female sports teams from both athletes and spectators.
- Girls don’t receive support to continue on playing on sports teams as they get older and are discouraged from playing certain sports for fear that they will get hurt, particularly after puberty.
- In multi-child families, parents may be unable to accommodate all of their children’s participation in sports/recreational activity considering costs and transportation needs.
- The strong link between academics and sports and high value of education in Cayman Brac can disadvantage girls who are less academically inclined, as adults may be less minded to coach and encourage them if they don’t perform as well as other students academically.
- Parents should consider the messages that they send to their daughters like “you’re delicate” or “you could damage something” and how that can affect their level of interest to participate in sports.
- Local women in sports could serve as role models to inspire girls.
- A variety of sports should be offered, as girls and boys may be interested in different options.

**Politics & Public Life Article 7** of CEDAW encourages States parties to work towards eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life and to ensure women have the right to vote, to hold office, and to actively participate in political parties, lobby groups and NGOs.

Cayman Brac participants did not believe there were barriers concerning the right of women to vote. It was reported that “family politics” can lead people to vote in a collective manner but it varies from family to family who decides the candidate(s) of choice and that person may be a man or a woman. However, approximately 11% of currently elected representatives are female, and when it came to holding office participants believed there were barriers to achieving gender equality.

However, there was a perception that politics is an “old boys club” and that men are groomed and encouraged to enter politics more than women because of a traditional view that men are leaders.

- Some people believe politicians and other leaders, particularly at the national level, should be men and find it more difficult to view females, especially those who are seen as very “feminine”, as capable of leadership. The older generation in particular is less supportive of female leaders.
- Women running for politics must be “thick skinned” due to the public exposure and criticism that politicians face, even before they are elected.
- Younger women may be viewed as sassy or bossy and not included in political participation.
- Politicians need to connect with and address young people and their needs more often.
- The high proportion of female civil servants in Cayman Brac is an indirect barrier to women running for office and also to participating in political parties and lobby groups.
- The majority of participants believed that there are no barriers for women to hold leadership positions within the civil service. However, some believed that gender discrimination was “alive and well” in regards to appointing women to leadership positions within the civil service.

**Article 8** of CEDAW encourages States parties to ensure women have the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level and participate in international organisations. Participants did not believe there are barriers or discriminatory practices that affect this right, e.g. Hon. Julianna O’Connor-Conolly regularly represents the Government at regional and international levels in various capacities.

Though women do not experience direct discrimination accessing health care, there are pressing issues that affect their rights in terms of **Health & Family Planning. Article 12** of CEDAW encourages States parties to eliminate discrimination against women in health care and provide girls and women with equal access to health care services, including those services that are related to family planning.

- It is difficult to fill prescriptions because the pharmacy is only open during weekday business hours; leaving medication at the nurses’ station for after-hours collection breaches patient confidentiality.
- Lack of access to certain health services and medications, e.g. a women’s health clinic, parenting and Lamaze classes, support for post-partum depression, over-the-counter medications.
- Young women and girls are uncomfortable purchasing condoms in the small community.
- One doctor is rumoured to treat patients differently, showing more empathy for males.
- Parents in particular resist sex education and reproductive health care being accessed by young people, including information about HIV/AIDS and other STIs.

Participants agreed that the most pressing matter is the lack of confidentiality in delivery of health care services, which constitutes a systematic failure and often inhibits girls and women from accessing services. During their discussions, participants stated stronger policies and training (including cultural sensitivity training) are required for health care professionals. Examples of serious breaches of confidentiality included: (1) a woman received medical information and before she could discuss this with her spouse other family members were aware, and it appeared the information was conveyed without her consent within a very short time period; (2) a medical professional relayed information about another person's medical history to a woman, and when she questioned why she was being given this information the medical professional stated that since the two persons were friends it was assumed she already knew.

Concerns about confidentiality and limited speciality services often inhibit access to healthcare, require persons travel to Grand Cayman, and/or drive residents to seek care elsewhere or purchase alternative family planning methods (e.g. condoms), paying out-of-pocket for services covered by their insurance.

The majority of participants supported age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health being taught in schools to children and adolescents. However, there was no consensus on the age this should begin (ages between 12 and 14 years were proposed) but there was clear agreement that there would be resistance from many in the Cayman Brac community, which may be satisfied if parents had the option to withdraw their children from the teaching of certain topics in schools.

A legislative or policy intervention that guaranteed the right to free, confidential and informed choice family planning and access to affordable, effective and wide-ranging family planning methods was also supported by the majority, but this was also identified as a sensitive matter that would meet resistance and the age at which this should occur was again a matter of disagreement. Some participants believed children should have their parents' written permission while others believed girls should have access without their parents' consent at ages 14-16 years.

Addressing **Marriage & Family Life, Article 16** of CEDAW encourages States parties to ensure that women and men have equal rights to choose a spouse and to marry; the same rights and responsibilities within marriage and on divorce; and equal rights in all matters relating to the birth, adoption and raising of children. States parties must also ensure that children are not betrothed or married and that a minimum age for marriage is established by law. Relatedly, **Article 9** encourages States parties to ensure women equal rights to change or retain their nationality and that of their children.

- Women have the same rights as men to choose a spouse and freely enter into marriage, though some are pressured to not marry into certain families based on skin colour or district of origin.
- Marrying a non-Caymanian can increase social standing; often men believe they have to go off-island to find a wife because none are available in Cayman Brac, and some expatriate women are seen as seeking out Caymanian men to marry to get a better job, family life, more stability, etc.
- Mothers have more responsibility for children, including when a marriage is dissolved.
- Due to the time required to complete a formal adoption, informal adoptions are more common and often take place when parents move to Grand Cayman from the Sister Islands for work. Older females take care of the children that continue to live in Cayman Brac because the school system and other factors for raising a family are considered to be better than in Grand Cayman.

- Women and men usually have equal access to inherit land and property, but cultural practices and perceptions can give preference in land inheritance to unmarried children who are seen as “not taken care of”, children closest to the parents, first-born children, or youngest children.
- Paternity tests are required for a child to have the right to be Caymanian in all instances if the child is born to a non-Caymanian mother and Caymanian father who are unmarried.
- Experiences were shared of immigration challenges/unequal rights in conferring nationality on children with respect to some children having to apply for Caymanian Status when they were born in the Cayman Islands to a Caymanian woman and expatriate man who were married.
- Divorce is a recent phenomenon in Cayman Brac but is becoming more common as women become financially independent and no longer have to stay in violent or unhappy marriages. (However, people are also entering relationships with more knowledge and information, and when spouses know each other better it is more likely that the marriage will be successful.)

Participants were supportive of raising the age of marriage to 18 in all instances rather than allowing parental permission to marry at ages 16-17, aligning with the age of majority for other major decisions.

The Committee that oversees implementation of CEDAW has also put forward a number of “General Recommendations”, which highlight issues affecting women to which States parties should devote more attention. **General Recommendation 19** explicitly states that the definition of discrimination in Article 1 extends to **Gender-Based Violence**, including domestic violence, rape and other forms of sexual assault that are overwhelmingly perpetrated against girls and women. It recommends the introduction of sanctions, penalties and compensation to send a firm message that violence against women will not be tolerated and recognise that girls and women are in need of special legal protection.

Participants agreed domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence occur in Cayman Brac and highlighted a number of barriers to improving responses and decreasing the incidence of violence.

- A lot of abuse is blamed on alcohol use, with the perpetrator apologising the next day.
- Mandatory prosecution of domestic violence is achievable in Cayman Brac, but the police must take responsibility to press charges on behalf of the Crown, as women may be pressured by police officers, their families and/or the families of their abusers to “drop the charges”.
- Women may refuse to make a statement/testify or even plead on behalf of their abuser out of fear (it will get worse/children will be taken away) or because they are under their abuser’s control.
- When men are arrested/prosecuted, people view the woman as “pressing charges” against him.
- Women are often not supported in seeking justice when they are victims of violence and/or blamed for the violence, e.g. “if she would behave herself”, including by other women.
- Domestic violence is often not viewed the same way or taken as seriously as violence outside of intimate relationships; some even joke about it, e.g. “some women just need a good [beating]”.
- Male victims of domestic violence suffer from stereotypes that women can be physically violent with men and also with other women, but men should never become violent with women.
- Police officers often tell couples to “go and work it out” when responding to calls for service.
- Some children grow up believing a male has the authority to beat his wife and children.
- Perpetrators may be protected from prosecution due to community standing or connections to powerful persons or organisations (or persons/organisations that are perceived to be powerful).

- Confidentiality in the provision of health care services was again seen as a barrier to women receiving assistance and intervention when they suffer abuse, whether physical or otherwise.
- Lack of counselling services for victims and perpetrators, many of whom also cannot pay.
- Pastoral counselling may not address violence in domestic relationships and be more concerned with a couple that is “unequally yoked”, i.e. one is a Christian and the other is not.
- Relatively recent loss of a police officer that specialised in domestic violence reports and a social worker that also worked with police on family violence and child protection issues.
- Compensation for victims of gender-based violence (from either a government-funded scheme or the perpetrator) could be a solution but may be exploited by people making false claims.

Some participants were unaware of the *Protection from Domestic Violence Law, 2010*, which modernised and expanded provisions regarding protection and civil remedies for persons in domestic relationships. However, those who were familiar with the Law reported excellent promotion in Cayman Brac when it was enacted, and that many people – including men – realised they were being abused for the first time during that public education campaign. The new powers that police officers have to intervene helped to save some women from violent relationships, but some participants were concerned about the perverse effect of making victims feel even less empowered when other people intervene on their behalf.

Additional training and awareness and expanded services were recommended as possible solutions.

- Simple public education and awareness/public relations tools to educate people on what abuse is, that it is illegal, and how victims can get help, i.e. civil remedies and services.
- Increased training for front-line workers, i.e. police officers, social workers, counsellors, etc.
- Professional counselling services, including anger management courses, etc. to be made available on a regular basis (the one Counsellor from Department of Counselling Services stationed in Cayman Brac who retired several years ago has not been replaced). Increased synergies between the police, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Counselling Services, Family Resource Centre, Department of Community Rehabilitation, etc.

Participants believed the relationship between the community and police has also changed with fewer public meetings and a redeployment of officers and that deploying current resources differently and joining up responses from law enforcement and social services would lead to more effective responses.

The **Role of Men & Boys** was seen as critical to ending discrimination against girls and women, as participants agreed that everyone must be involved in necessary changes and consider our perceptions and actions in order to break stereotypes and change behaviour.

- Males don’t want to “break the guy code”, so they often don’t speak out in support of females.
- Boys may not be pushed as hard as girls in regards to parents enforcing rules.
- Boys are not taught to respect women and often view them as property or devalue them; the media is a huge influence and boys learn to call girls and women hurtful and demeaning names.
- Men are supposed to “keep women in line” and there is tension between the idea that a man should not be violent toward women and the idea that he is “not a man unless he throws licks”.
- Women are often viewed as men’s “property”, which is perpetuated by the behaviour between women and men in public spaces, e.g. men will not offer to buy a woman a drink or talk to her

at a bar if she is known to be in a relationship with another man because it would cause problems for both persons if the man is perceived as encroaching on another man's "property".

Participants expressed that boys and men need to be taught by parents and also by the formal education system to respect women, how to treat each other, about healthy relationships and other positive messages. More positive role models are needed for boy children in Cayman Brac so it is not seen as acceptable to follow in the negative footsteps of others, but also for girl children to learn to value themselves and hold themselves to high standards in their own conduct. The 'Proud of Them' initiative was highlighted as a great programme which had not been extended to the Brac due to issues with erecting the billboards.

## Common Themes

The meeting in Cayman Brac highlighted many of the same issues and solutions as the conference in Grand Cayman. Similar common themes developing during focus group discussions, including:

- Gender roles and **stereotypes** continue to be problematic, though there has been progress;
- Girls and women are not adequately **empowered**;
- A number of societal institutions **structurally discriminate** against women;
- Existing legislation and policies that promote equality may not be **well-known** or **effective**;
- There is a need for more **public education and awareness** on many issues; and
- Many **services and programmes** need to be improved and/or expanded.

In addition, though participants were focused on the situation of girls and women in particular, the gender issues that they highlighted clearly **intersect** with issues of race, class, age and national origin in many ways and appropriate responses must recognise this reality. Gender issues cannot be viewed in isolation and **mainstreaming** a gender perspective throughout society will ensure these issues remain visible.

Participants called for more national-level dialogue to help reframe how we view these important issues and show how gender equality benefits everyone. Participants felt that as a society we have allowed discrimination to continue, thereby holding back increased productivity in the workforce, preventing social benefits and increased human development, and burdening government unnecessarily. **Full participation of women on an equal basis with men in all areas of society** will bring about positive change for the benefit of girls and women and also their families, employers, communities and society as a whole.

## Conclusion

The Meeting on Women & Girls in the Sister Islands provided a much needed opportunity to engage with residents of Cayman Brac on issues of national importance and receive additional qualitative data that will inform Government's implementation plan for CEDAW and other initiatives. These data are relevant to general strategies to promote gender equality and uphold women's rights as well as specific strategies for unique concerns of the Sister Islands and action plans will be developed accordingly.

This report supplements the National Conference on Women Report dated May 2014.