

Your Role as community member or agency: .....

- Be aware of the Gender issues, Support, add your Voice, Join the campaign
  - Take advantage of available opportunities
  - Help to change/influence the thinking of younger ones to remove traditional practices that Discriminate
  - Obtain available information on gender
  - Encourage children to study issues of gender
  - Lend Support to Women in Leadership
- .....

For more information please contact the Bureau of Gender Affairs. You can also contact the Bureau to examine the detailed document.

Information is also available on a wide range of issues related to Gender and Development.

The Bureau of Gender Affairs  
Ministry of Social Services, Community Development,  
and Gender Affairs  
Government Headquarters  
Roseau  
Commonwealth of Dominica  
Tel 1 767 266-3023 or 3344

## *National Policy on Gender Equity & Equality Made Simple*



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## Introduction

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Dominica now has a National Policy in place to guide gender and development. This was adopted by the Government in 2006. The full name of the Policy is "National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity".

## Goals and objectives

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- Improve the equality of life at all levels of society
- Improve relations between the sexes
- Seek to change existing disadvantaged situation/status of women in relation to men and that of men in relation to women
- Facilitate social and domestic peace and reduce the levels of violence in the society
- Support efforts to improve gender awareness among all stakeholders.
- Strengthen capacity/collaboration and coordinated effort among agencies for effect change guarantee gender equality in development and plans and programme

## Immediate action

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- Widespread awareness and public education of Gender Policy
- Name Change of the Bureau
- Institutional/Capacity Strengthening
- Put System (GMS) in place: Gender Focal points & intersectoral Committee
- Research, Data collection and gender analysis
- Communication of information on gender across sectors
- Initiate Male Outreach Programme



**Educating the public through the media**

## 5) Gender Stereotypes, Cultural Beliefs and Practices

**In recognition of the key role of the media to change:**

The policy recommends gender sensitivity training for management and staff of media institutions

Partnership building/programming between gender and the media, to work towards change in cultural attitudes in relation to male and female gender stereotypes

## 6) Gender & Political Decision Making

There is little representation of women in politics and the highest levels of decision making

The policy advocates for example:

- That Government set number targets to incrementally increase the number of women in decision-making in keeping with its global commitments.
- For critical need for more female representation at the level of foreign and international service, Engagement of more women in dialogue on global issues
- The policy promotes the

encouragement of more women to lobby for public office & greater consideration of qualified females for key positions

## What is gender?

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Gender is sometimes confused with the word sex which means male or female, that we were born boy or girl, and grew up to be men and women with physical differences determined by biology. Society's expectations cannot influence these.

- Boys have penis and girls vagina.
- As we grow up, the voices of the male deepens.
- At the stage of puberty, young girls see menstrual period.
- Mothers can breastfeed their young.

Gender refers to the social roles, responsibilities, behaviours, attitudes and identities as men and women determined by society. We may be born male and female with certain biological characteristics, but we learn how to become men and women through the social expectations of what it means to be a boy/man (Masculine) or woman/girl (Feminine). For example, the following indicates gender:

- Domestic roles and responsibility for child care usually the domain of the woman.

- Mainly men are involved in specific areas of work like construction.
- Society looks down on a woman with multiple partners but willing to accept this same behaviour from men.

For instance health programmes must consider that women give birth and plan accordingly. A poverty alleviation programme with focus of construction without ensuring that women benefit can result in few job opportunities for women as they are usually not trained in the area, get involved or are considered for such jobs.

Dominica has about 37% single women households, many of whom struggle for survival. Increasingly many young men are at risk, find themselves in prison and unable to contribute to their own development, and that of family and society. This means that to create balance in society there must be special targeting of these under privileged groups.

## What is gender Equality?

Gender Equality does not mean that men and women or boys and girls are physically the same. It refers to human rights and social justice to both women and men. As human beings both males and females have the same status, the same rights under the constitution of Dominica. For example:

- The rights to food, clothes and shelter
- The rights to freedom of worship
- The right to live free of violence
- Equal rights to a job whether man or women once you are qualified.

## What is gender equity?

Gender equity has to do with the distribution or allocation of resources, opportunities and benefits to ensure balance in our society. It does not mean same amount of anything but fairness in consideration of the situation of males and females.

## 3) Health and Medicine

The gender policy underscores the need for attention to male health issues and supports the goals of the Strategic Health Plan to achieve the following:

- Strengthening of screening for cancer/reproductive health problems
- Comprehensive parenting programmes within communities.
- Development and implementation male reproductive health programmes
- Gender sensitive care to female to female adolescent health concerns
- Supportive plan for females in abusive sexual health situations
- Appropriate mechanisms to meet the special needs of disadvantaged older persons

#### **4) Family, Sexuality & Gender based Violence**

Major areas of concern continue to be gender based violence, child maintenance issues and rights of persons in common law relationships. Therefore policies include:

- Strengthening the Family Unit through Changes in the law
- An integrated approach with involvement of key agencies to better address the problem of gender based violence
- Review of laws relating to the recognition by the courts of unions other than marriage such as visiting relationships or common law unions in circumstances other than death or gender based violence.
- Review of existing laws in support for the well being of children and their entitlement to maintenance and inheritance rights from their parents irrespective of the family structure and, ensuring access to overseas maintenance.

#### **Recommended Policies (Some Examples)**

##### **1) Gender and the Economy**

- Specific attention to ensure women's access to credit and to assist with their ownership of land

- Concerns of gender to inform structure of Extension Services
- Unions to educate the public and lobby government to include this provision in law for paternity leave as a basic entitlement.
- New laws and enforcement of existing laws to address levels of violation exist at present e.g. Sexual Harassment Legislation.
- In-depth study on impact of migration on economy & society

##### **2) Education and Human Resource Development**

- Greater public discourse and debates, through the media on the question of masculinity and the performance of manhood in Dominican society
- Strategies to increase the number of trained men teachers at primary and then onto secondary level school teaching.
- Removal of sex-stereotyping in traditionally male /female dominated subject areas
- Establishment of an institution for teen mothers- such an institution should take into consideration the special needs of these young women, their safety and other gender constraints or possibilities.

## How the Gender Policy came about?

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The Gender Policy was informed by:

- Consultations at the community and national level and with all stakeholders
- Research in key areas affecting women and gender
- Review of how much we comply with international agreements
- International thrust towards gender and development
- Local Interest groups lobbying/ advocating for changes, for example to address men issues and better address women issues
- Education, sensitization and training

## What are some major Gender Concerns that the policy addresses?

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1. Women and Poverty
2. Sexual division of labour (break the tradition of men's/women's job)
3. Women and Health
4. Male health seeking behaviours
5. Violence against Women
6. Level of Participation of men and women in the Economy
7. Fewer women in Power and Decision making processes
8. Issues affecting the Girl Child
9. Apparent male academic under achievement

## Why a gender Policy in Dominica?

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Our constitution promotes equal rights and justice for all citizens. This means that men and women of Dominica should enjoy equal rights, freedoms, benefits, & opportunities. A policy confirms Government's Commitment to attaining these goals.

We have signed many international agreements to ensure that we uphold these principles in our constitution.

For many years we have focused on women but have come to realize that for true development both men and women need to be on board. The effort should be directed at the relationship between the two. For instance if the goal is to have stable families where children grow up in a non-threatening environment, both men and women must understand the issue, take up their roles, and remain committed to ensuring peace.

Evidence from research and experience indicate a number of issues, which we can better address through focus on gender: inequalities and/or inequities between the sexes

A need to focus on issues related to men, masculinities, and impact on family and society

It promotes the involvement of all stakeholders as gender issues goes across all sectors in and affects all strata of society. Gender issues can be found at the level of the family, in the area of health, education, agriculture, labour and employment to name a few.



It will allow for gender analysis so that all agencies, government, and non-government will better understand the differences between the sexes in order to plan and deliver their programmes more effectively.

### Strategies in implementation of the policy

- Public Awareness and Gender Sensitization
- Advocacy & Lobbying for necessary change in policies, legalization and policies
- Education & Training
- Research & Gender Analysis
- Gender Disaggregated data to inform all economic and social policy action
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Networking, Collaboration & Partnership
- Empowerment women of women and men



**Women's Bureau Director meets with men**