

by the absence of specific legislation to respond to their needs and to provide them with appropriate facilities; the fact that, despite efforts by the government, discrimination against women is still a major problem, as seen by the low wages paid, low status and little opportunity for developing themselves economically; the fact that obstacles remain for women at the tertiary education level, that occupational segregation in the labour market persists, in particular at the decision-making level and in the public sector, and that women have limited access to credit and land ownership; the incidence of domestic violence which, according to information received, seemed to be on the rise; the high official rate of unemployment; the fact that legislation in respect of occupational safety and health is significantly outdated; inefficiencies and irregularity of labour inspections and conditions in which employers do not always report accidents and occupational diseases as required; the fact that the current minimum wage is insufficient to provide a decent standard of living, and the Wages Council has not reviewed the minimum wage for more than seven years despite its legal obligation to do so every two years; the absence of a law to recognize the right of workers to form and join trade unions and to organize and strike; the fact that employers do not comply with their legal obligation to send information and contributions for their employees to the National Insurance Scheme (NIS); the high incidence of failure of employers to register domestic workers under the scheme; the absence of provision for registration of self-employed persons under the NIS; the lack of a provision for compensation in case of workplace accidents; the lack of social protection of working minors due to the discrepancy between the minimum age for employment (16) and the minimum age to receive a national insurance card (18) under the NIS; the absence of a comprehensive scheme for maternity leave, with the result that not all female workers benefit from such leave; the growth in the number of squatter households; the absence of a national housing policy and the halt of all public housing construction; occurrences of forced evictions; the sharp rise in the cost of food and rent; the absence of a scheme for unemployment benefits; the high incidence of pregnancies among females of school age; the absence of a legal requirement that children attend school; the lack of teachers and teaching materials, notably at the primary level; the significant increase in educational fees; the insufficiency of facilities at the post-secondary level of education; and, the lack of literacy programmes for adults.

The Committee reiterated its request that the government actively participate in a constructive dialogue with the Committee on how the obligations arising from the Covenant could be fulfilled in a more adequate manner. The Committee recommended that the government avail itself of the advisory services of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in terms of preparing and submitting as soon as possible a comprehensive report on the implementation of the Covenant. The Committee encouraged the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to make expert assistance available to the government for the purpose of formulating policies on economic, social and cultural rights and developing the implementation of coherent and comprehensive plans of action for the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as for developing adequate means of evaluating and monitoring their realization.

### Civil and Political Rights

Acceded: 9 November 1981.

The second and third periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were due 31 October 1991 and 8 February 1993 respectively.

**Optional Protocol:** Acceded: 9 November 1981.

### Racial Discrimination

Acceded: 9 November 1981.

The second through eighth periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (for the period 1984–1996) have not been submitted; the eighth periodic report was due 9 December 1996.

### Discrimination against Women

Acceded: 4 August 1981.

The fourth periodic report of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was due 3 September 1994.

At its January 1997 session the Committee considered the combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (CEDAW/C/STV/1-3; CEDAW/C/STV/1-3/Add.1) Taken together, the reports prepared by the government address the main areas set out in the Convention, including: elimination of discrimination; special measures; stereotyping; traffic in women and prostitution; women in public and political life; nationality, education, employment, health; rural women; and, equality before the law. The reports provide information on, *inter alia*: the Women's Affairs Department within the Ministry of Tourism, Information, Culture and Women's Affairs; violence against women and measures to address and eradicate it; the lack of legal redress in cases of discrimination against women; sexual abuse of children; statutory measures to address the wage gap in the earnings of women and men; persistence of sex role stereotyping in curricula; and, the functional illiteracy of women. The addendum to the report includes a number of tables providing statistic data in areas such as: the labour force and participation rates by sex; participation in statutory boards, public corporations and other government bodies; enrolment in pre-primary schools; teachers in primary and secondary schools; maternity benefits paid under national insurance; the number of births by age group of mothers; and, employees registered by industry.

The Committee's concluding comments (CEDAW/C/1997/L.1/Add.4) noted that under the legal system of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Convention is not self-executing and it is necessary to enact legislation to give it full effect. Pervasive traditional, social and cultural values, as well as generally accepted behaviour patterns were also seen as hindering the advancement of women. The Committee expressed appreciation, however, for the government's efforts to conform to the provisions of the Convention by introducing several legal reforms.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee were: the fact that the legal measures taken did not address all aspects of the Convention, some existing domestic laws contravened the Convention, and the absence in the Constitution of a specific reference to the equality of women; the fact that the Convention had never been cited in any legal proceedings; the failure to use affirmative action measures to accelerate the equal status of women, particularly in the areas