



# **SAINT LUCIA**

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**53<sup>RD</sup> SESSION**

**STATEMENT BY**

**SARAH FLOOD-BEAUBRUN**

**(Minister Counsellor)**

**(New York, Monday March 9, 2009)**

**Check against delivery**

Mr. Chairman

Saint Lucia is pleased to add her voice to those who went before us to acknowledge the importance of the theme of this 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The issue of HIV/AIDS is particularly relevant to us in the Caribbean region where this scourge is all too prevalent. Whilst Saint Lucia's effort has been focused more on preventing the spread of the epidemic, it is understandable that given our size and the close-knit nature of our families - the care of those affected has been and is a major concern within our communities.

For those of us whose relationship to care giving may be limited to our personal experience it is important to know for our national programmes that there is a plethora of academic work with practical application dealing with this important area. One study breaks down the care giving experience to four (4) distinct stages of early, moderate, late, and bereavement, with each level carrying its own degree of emotional and physical challenges. Different caregivers enter and exit the care giving experience for their family members at different times in the experience and it is now vital that we identify how roles are played out in the context of this disease. Care giving if made more equitable and efficient also contributes to the maximizing of household income which can be devastated by an AIDS infection to a family member.

Like many nations with similar socio-economic issues there is a dearth of information with regard to the sharing of care giving activities between men and women in the context of HIV/AIDS. St. Lucia therefore welcomes any relevant research that focuses on this important area not only in terms of men and women but also in terms of the role played by the elderly within the family.

We take heart as we embark on this journey in knowing that for 2008, all infants born to HIV-positive mothers in St. Lucia received an HIV test within 12 months of birth and that no infants born to HIV-positive mothers were HIV-positive, due to our vigorous efforts in preventing the transmission of the disease from mother to child during pregnancy. If we can so successfully implement such a programme we look forward to tackling the issue of the equitable sharing of responsibilities between men and women, as well as ensuring healthy outcomes for both mothers and children.

Women have traditionally borne the bulk of the burden of caring for sick members of the family and so it is in this case. Hence we welcome this esteemed body's consideration of the sharing of responsibilities ...including care giving. Fortunately for us in St. Lucia we have seen over the years a

practical attitudinal shift with more men willing to take on care giving roles within families, especially with regard to children. Additionally the implementation in St. Lucia of a vibrant and effective behavioral change strategy has had the positive impact of helping to de stigmatize this disease,

thereby making the process of care giving more acceptable to the family as a whole.

The Saint Lucia National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan is the guiding framework for our country's response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Four broad strategies define the Strategic Plan. They are also closely aligned with the Priority Areas of the Pan-Caribbean's Regional HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework. These strategies comprise:

1. Advocacy, policy and development;
2. Comprehensive HIV/AIDS care for all persons living with HIV/AIDS;
3. Preventing further transmission of HIV;
4. Strengthening national capacity to deliver an effective, coordinated and multi-sect oral response to the epidemic.

The main sources of funding for implementation of the Plan is the Government of Saint Lucia, the World Bank (through the Saint Lucia HIV/AIDS Prevention Project) and the Global Fund (through the OECS HIV/AIDS Project) Saint Lucia has engaged UNAIDS and the World Bank to assess the current plan and develop new HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan for 2010 - 2014, including an action plan for the first year.

Saint Lucia's hands on analysis of the care giving role within the context of HIV/AIDS points to the need, as with care giving in general, for there to be a

movement towards a more equitable sharing of the burdens - and sometimes joys - associated with this activity. We have to take a practical look at the role of the different members of the family who can contribute to this work and this would involve awareness of the increasing presence of women in the workplace, combined with the more traditional role that the male plays within the community.

This forum has therefore been assigned the positive function of increasing awareness of the sharing of responsibilities between men and women, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS. Our presence here in large numbers is indicative that we are off to an excellent start and St. Lucia looks forward to using the results of our deliberations in the future to strengthen the 2010-2014 program in our island state.

I thank you.