



## Background

Brunei Darussalam fully recognizes the importance of women's role in the socio-economic development of the country. The nation also acknowledges that gender equality and women's empowerment, besides being basic human rights, are important ends in themselves and crucial for the advancement of women. Our continuous commitment to the development of all sectors is provided in our nation's "Vision 2035" which aims towards an educated, highly skilled and accomplished people, an increase in the quality of life and towards a dynamic and sustainable economy.

The positive development and continued progress of women in Brunei Darussalam can be attributed to the nation's pro-active

is divided into four districts, namely Brunei-Muara, Tutong, Belait and Temburong. The capital city is called Bandar Seri Begawan.

## **Population**

The population estimate for Brunei Darussalam in 2008 is 398,000. Women make up 47% or 187,000 of the population. The multi-ethnic population is predominantly made up of Malays (66.6%). A majority of the population live in extended family system with an average household size of 6 persons per household. The positive development and continued progress of women in Brunei Darussalam can be attributed

issues and achieved in highlighting gender issues which have resulted in policy amendments towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Preparation of budgets are generally gender-free as all budgets take into account both gender. There is no gender-responsive budgeting.

On the Millennium Development Goals, Brunei Darussalam issued its 1<sup>st</sup> MDG report in 2005 entitled "Brunei Darussalam: Millennium Goals and Beyond" and is considering the 2<sup>nd</sup> report. The extract of the report on MDG Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, which is annexed, is favourable on the overall status of women in Brunei Darussalam.

### **Legislation on Women**

Despite the fact that there is no specific stated policy on women, the Brunei Constitution is gender free and several domestic legislations are in place specifically for the protection and rights of women in Brunei Darussalam.

- Ø Protection of women and girls against sexual exploitation is covered under the Unlawful Carnal Knowledge Act 1938 and the Women and Girls

- Ø The Old Age and Disability Pensions Act 1954 provides old age pensions to all women once they attain the age of 60 years, regardless of financial status.
- Ø Equal protection of women is also enforced through general legal provisions such as the Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons Order enforced in 2004 and the Offenders (Probation and Community Service) Order enforced in 2006.
- Ø In term of violence against women, the law governing the protection of women and girls can be found in other legislation namely the Penal Code Chapter 22 (Section 322, 324, 334, 375). Provision for illegalizing domestic violence is currently in process through strengthening existing family legislation to ensure that women and children are protected from violence.

The Community Development Department is also the custodian of two welfare homes especially established for the safety, protection and rehabilitation of women and girls. "Taman Nor Hidayah" Welfare Home is gazetted under the Women and Girls Protection Act while "Darussakinah" Welfare Home is gazetted under the Children's Order. A juvenile home for rehabilitation of girls will soon be operational. Temporary shelter centres are also available to house citizens including women and their children who are displaced from their homes because of natural disasters or other social problems.

**Part 2 : PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND THE FURTHER INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE TWENTY THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL**

men and women in the country. The positive

Infant and child mortality rates have declined as women become better informed and more empowered, achieving higher standards of living, and have access to improved maternal and child services. Today the maternal mortality rate is at the low rate of 0.4 per thousand live births while Infant and child mortality rates was significantly reduced from over 30 deaths per thousand live births in the 1970s to the current rates of 7.6 per thousand live births.

## **Women and Employment**

The changes in women's socio-economic characteristics and their corresponding role in the Brunei society have been due to several factors since the 1970's and more especially in the last decade. The first and fundamental one is the improvement in the general level of education among females. This has led to a dramatic increase in the participation rate of women in the labour force, working in professional, technical, managerial and administrative jobs, from a rate of only 20% in 1971 to 59% today. Bruneian women now constitute about 49% of the civil service force where they occupy 28% of Division I posts.

Women serve in a wide variety of capacities ranging from entrepreneurs, lawyers, pilots and fire fighters to notable ranks in the Civil service. Ample employment opportunities

Government encourages the people to have their own houses through the provision of interest-free housing loans to its male or female employees. The Government also provides accommodation to its employees for a low monthly rental. In addition, interest-free loans are given to Government employees to build their own houses or buy ready-built ones.

For the landless, all citizens regardless of gender are eligible for the National Housing





The Department of Community Development under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports is the focal agency for women affairs in Brunei Darussalam. The department's objectives in relation to women affairs are:-

The aims and objectives of the Women's Council of Brunei Darussalam are:

1. Preserving the aspirations of the concept Malay Muslim Monarchy in all activities carried out by the Council;
2. Unifying and strengthening all groups of women through correspondence, women associations, welfare bodies and individuals;
3. Acting as a national body representing the women in Brunei Darussalam' improving and upgrading the position of women in all areas especially education, economy, social and welfare, culture and community development;
4. Improving and upgrading the position of women in all areas especially education, economy, social and welfare, culture and community development;
5. Encouraging women to realize and bear their responsibilities towards the community and the nation;
6. Acting as the centre for collecting and disseminating information concerning women and families;
7. Providing a forum for the exchange of views, experiences and discussions especially relating to issues affecting women, children and family;
8. Strengthening the relationship among women without taking into account race, religion and status; and
9. Cooperating with the Government in all areas especially in the development of Brunei Darussalam.

The establishment of the Special Committee on Women and Family Issues headed by the Minister responsible for women issues which will report to the Ministerial level National Council on Social Issues reflects the Government's commitment to addressing issues on gender equality and strengthens the existing national mechanism for the promotion of gender equality.

#### **Part 4 : REMAINING CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THEM**

In general, as reflected in the Brunei Darussalam MDG Report and through our indicators, women have equal access to basic necessities such as daily sustenance, shelter, education, health, clean water, sanitation and clothing. In some areas, such as education, the indicators for women's achievement are higher than their male counterparts. Having achieved the base line requirements, the issue facing us now is to ensure the continuance of services to sustain the ongoing development of women and to aim towards improving the environment for development of women beyond the basic level by increasing the quality of the nature of development for women. Tus,



women, violence issues and reproductive rights, while Governments ensure access to resources and services.

- **Increasing the participation of women in national development planning and governance**
  
- **Increasing the participation of women in executive positions**

At present the participation of women in executive positions is 20% (MDG Report) which is below the international requirement of 30%.

Other areas which need improvement include the following:-

- the need for more women/mother-friendly environment for working women
- increase in maternity leave
- the introduction of paternity leave
- working conditions for women to be on par with their male counterparts
- tackling the problem of domestic violence of which women represent the majority of victims, and
- strengthening the family institution.

In the context of regional cooperation, Brunei Darussalam welcomes and supports any regional program and effort that will promote the advancement of women through the strategy of gender mainstreaming, such as:

- Capacity building in gender mainstreaming and gender planning, monitoring and evaluation;
- Capacity building in gender-responsive budgeting
- Conduct training for social workers and counselors in dealing with victims and offenders of violence;
- Training for trainers for women in entrepreneurship;
- Greater cooperation in research, exchange of information and data and best practices on matters pertaining to gender mainstreaming.