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## **National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21\***

**Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## Acronyms

### Implementation status

P	Pending
PI	Partially implemented
FI	Fully implemented
ACP-EU	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States -European Union
BOSVG	Bank of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPU	Child Protection Unit
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
GAD	Gender Affairs Division
GEC	Gender Equality Commission
GoSVG	Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MONM	Ministry of National Mobilisation, Social Development, Local Government, Gender Affairs, Family Affairs, Housing, and Informal Settlement
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NHRM	National Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (NHRM)
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
RSP	Recovery & Stimulus Package
RSVGPF	Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force
SET	Support for Education and Training
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VINCYSARC	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Support and Referral Centre
ZHTF	Zero Hunger Trust Fund

## Introduction

1. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is pleased to present its third Universal Periodic Review Report, with a focus on the implementation of the accepted recommendations and other human rights developments in the State.
2. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (GoSVG) retains its policy of promoting, protecting and respecting the fundamental human rights of all individuals, and continues to improve on its human rights commitments and obligations, towards the benefit of all Vincentians and visitors to the country.

## Methodology

3. This report was prepared using the Guidance Note by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights for the Third Cycle Universal Periodic Review National Report, which encompasses the guidelines contained in Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution 5/1, resolution 16/21, and decision 17/119.
4. The report was collated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, in its capacity as Chair of the National Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (NHRM), assisted by a drafting team comprising of representatives from the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Ministry of National Mobilisation, Social Development, Gender Affairs, Family, Youth, Housing, and Informal Human Settlement (MONM), and in consultation with the other members of the NHRM. Other government agencies and stakeholders, including members of Civil Society Organisations, were engaged in the process through consultations.
5. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and disruptions following the explosive eruption of the La Soufrière volcano on the island, questionnaires were the main tool used for data collection and supplemented with virtual consultations and meetings.

## Achievements in the implementation of accepted recommendations since 2015

### Constitutional and legislative advancements – *R 80.29, 80.35, 80.31, 80.33 (PI)*

6. The GoSVG is committed to implementing legislation that is congruent with the highest human rights standards and has been very successful in this regard. In drafting legislation, particular care is taken to ensure that the legislation conforms with the Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which, as the supreme law, has enshrined human rights protections in the form of fundamental rights and freedoms (bill of rights) guaranteed to all persons in the country.
7. The following human rights-related legislative enactments were made during the period under review:
  - (a) Domestic Violence Act (2015) was passed with all-embracing provisions including recognising women being abused in informal “common-law relationships” and providing another avenue for victims of domestic violence to seek redress.
  - (b) Children (Care and Adoption) Act (2010) provides for children who are in need of care and protection.
  - (c) Child Justice Act (2019) provides for children in conflict with the law including diversion programs to prevent institutionalisation.
  - (d) Cybercrime Act 2016 contains provisions that protect a person’s right to privacy as well as counters issues such as child pornography, data and system interference, and online harassment.

(e) Occupational Safety and Health Act 2017 provides for occupational safety for persons in the workplace and increases protections for women, pregnant and nursing, and for young persons. The Act is intended to be implemented in phases alongside necessary capacity building initiatives and activities for effective compliance.

(f) Consumer Protection Act 2020 was passed and is designed to protect consumer interests in the supply of goods and services for the protection of life, health and safety.

### **Legislative amendments/Reviews planned/Ongoing**

8. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is currently undergoing a review of its:

- (a) Sexual offences laws;
- (b) Employment laws.

9. A consultant is working with GoSVG officials and has submitted a report and proposed draft of the revised employment laws. These will be submitted to the Attorney General's Chambers for review. An Employment Relations (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) Bill has also been drafted.

10. A review of the Sexual Offences laws within the criminal code and family laws is being carried out with assistance from international agencies and organisations. The Marriage Act will be reviewed along with others. The sexual offences review proposes to update the law regarding sexual offenses and definitions of rape.

### **Improvements in national human rights policies, protocols, and standard operating procedures**

#### **National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF) – R80.54, 80.55, 80.56 (FI)**

11. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines established the National Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (NHRM) in May 2016, to complete the core United Nations human rights treaties reports and better implement its obligations under the said treaties. The NHRM is inter-ministerial and is endowed with the ability to consult with other stakeholders, including civil society organisations, in the implementation of its mandate.

12. The NHRM will focus on the training of committee members and will establish tools - such as an implementation matrix, biennial work plans, and policies - to better meet the entity's objectives.

13. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, through the NHRM, submitted written responses to the HRC's CCPR List of Issues which were considered as the second periodic report of the State, this third cycle UPR report, and is currently working on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ninth periodic report List of Issues. A schedule to clear the backlog of outstanding reports over the next eight (8) years is also in development.

#### **National human rights institution – R 80.46, 80.49, 80.51, 80.52, 80.53 (P), R 80.47, 80.48, 80.50 (PI)**

14. The GoSVG accepted the recommendation in its second cycle UPR for the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and remains committed to this goal. The NHRM has decided to conduct a study, with support from international partners, on the most feasible way to establish the NHRI, or whether or not an existing institution can be supported to perform the function of the NHRI.

#### **National Plans of Action on Human Rights – R 80.57 (P)**

15. The NHRM has recognized the need for a National Plan of Action for Human Rights that will assist in the State's efforts to further advance, promote and protect human rights.

Assistance will be sought from the OHCHR and the Commonwealth Secretariat to commence work on this document in the shortest possible time.

16. Notwithstanding, multiple action plans grounded in human rights were developed over the period under review, which includes the:

- (a) National Action Plan against Gender-Based Violence with technical support from UNWOMEN (2014-2016);
- (b) National Child Protection Policy Framework (2015-2020);
- (c) National Adolescent Health and Development Action Plan 2017;
- (d) Updated National Action Plan to combat human trafficking (2021-2025);
- (e) National Climate Strategy and Implementation Plan.

## **Coordination with the UN and other international mechanisms and institutions**

### **Acceptance of international norms – R 80.13, 80.18 (FI)**

17. The GoSVG human rights agenda continues to be informed and updated largely based on the various international treaties in existence. Concerns remain over the high level of reportage that will be required following the ratification of additional optional protocols and treaties, which can be challenging to fulfil given the state's capacity limitations.

18. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines ratified CEDAW on the 4th of August 1981.

19. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines ratified the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families on the 29th of October 2010.

### **Cooperation with special procedures (A24) – R 80.25, 80.26, 80.27 (PI)**

20. The GoSVG continues to welcome requests from Special procedures mandate holders. These requests will continue to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

21. Over the period under review, a request was received from the Special Rapporteur on issues of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, according to HRC resolution 46/7, to visit the state between October and November 2021. This request was accepted by the state and preparations are already being put in place to facilitate the visit.

### **Cooperation with other international mechanisms and institutions – R 80.28, 80.62 (FI)**

22. Partnerships and cooperation with various international mechanisms, institutions and organisations are imperative for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to meet its human rights commitments expeditiously.

23. Assistance continues to be obtained from the OHCHR, other UN bodies and agencies, and the Commonwealth Secretariat on treaty body reporting, human rights education and training, as well as general consultancy on human rights matters by the NHRM and other government entities in the state.

24. The MONM divisions of Gender Affairs and the Child Development have received technical assistance from various regional and international agencies towards training, data collection, and analysis to aid with achieving the various human rights commitments, such as United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWOMEN), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission and the CARICOM Secretariat. The Family Planning Unit has

indicated that a need still exists for data collection and analysis of the data, and human rights analysis of SRH technical assistance.

25. The Labour department received training from the International Labour Organisation in conducting labour inspections. However, more training is needed in labour inspection, conciliation/mediation, data collection and labour market analysis training, human trafficking awareness training, and occupational safety and health.

26. In April 2016, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), through the framework of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States -European Union (ACP-EU) Migration Action, approved an application from the GoSVG for Technical Assistance in *Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening to Combat Human Trafficking*. The RSVGPC was able to revise the National Action Plan to combat human trafficking, conduct public awareness and sensitization campaigns, and develop a survey tool to collect, monitor and process data on human trafficking at the end of the programme.

27. It was noted that there is a need for the various entities in the justice system to receive technical assistance to collect and analyse data in the system, as in many cases a paper-based system is still utilised.

## **Cross-cutting issues**

### **Human rights and climate change – R 80.128 (PI)**

28. In the absence of appropriate measures, including financial support pledged by major emitters for climate adaptation and mitigation, climate change threatens to increase people's vulnerability to poverty and social deprivation, and could ultimately impact their enjoyment of certain human rights. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has completed its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which advised of and proposed actions that the Government has taken, is taking, or will be taking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

29. There is a National Climate Change Policy, and its accompanying National Climate Strategy and Implementation Plan, which identified six (6) key priority areas for mitigation – energy, forests, and carbon sinks, maritime affairs, tourism, transport, and waste management – and five (5) cross-cutting priority areas – capacity building and engagement of stakeholders, information management, research and monitoring, inter-sectoral coordination, integration of DRM and national security, and investment and economic planning.

30. During the operationalisation of the policy and its strategy and implementation plan, wide public awareness and public education programs were planned.

31. The GoSVG ratified the Escazú Agreement on September 26, 2019. This is the first environmental human rights treaty in Latin America and the Caribbean and concerns rights of access to information, public participation, and environmental justice in environmental matters, as well as a healthy and sustainable environment for current and future generations.

## **Civil and political rights**

### **Police Conduct – R 80.86, 80.88 (PI)**

32. The Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF) continues to take steps to combat the commission of any police abuses through training and ensures that all allegations of police abuse by RSVGPF are investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.

33. Vincentians are encouraged through media campaigns to report allegations of police abuse to the Police Public Relations and Complaints Office. The Complaints Office in recent years has also allowed persons to interface with the unit through social media, to be more accessible by the public, and improve its reach.

34. Since 2015, the RSVGPF has included a component on human rights in the curriculum at the National Police Training School, to ensure as far as possible that officers do not violate,

but in fact, assist in the promotion and protection of human rights when carrying out their duties.

35. Moreover, police officers received yearly training on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations' Use of Force and Firearms Policies for Law Enforcement. Training in human rights and use of force and firearms for members of the RSVGPF was carried out in several instances during the period under review with the objective of reducing incidents and/or allegations of police abuse.

36. Allegations of police abuse are made at the Police Complaints Office. All reports are investigated fairly and diligently. If there is evidence to support the allegation, then the accused officer is dealt with internally, where disciplinary charges are brought against him/her; or the officer is charged criminally under the direction of the independent office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

37. The RSVGPF intends to further improve the human rights component in the training school curriculum, further training in de-escalating violent situations and improve its data collection and analysis.

#### **Conditions of detention – R 80.87 (FI), R 80.88 (P)**

38. Steps are being taken in accordance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. These steps include:

- The introduction of an Inmate Classification System whereby offenders are classified and separated based on offense, age, etc.;
- The facilitation of greater access to medical attention for inmates; The implementation of more programs geared towards inmate rehabilitation; and
- The training and sensitization of Prison staff in all aspects of the Mandela Rules.

39. The new Female Prison Facility is approximately ninety-five percent complete. The new prison is expected to provide a more rehabilitation-friendly atmosphere for female inmates.

40. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' Prison Department has received technical assistance and training from the British Government and the United States Government through the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to aid in achieving various human rights commitments to prisoners. This training was comprehensive, paying particular importance to the application of international human rights standards for the benefit of all inmates.

#### **Prohibition of slavery and all forms of human trafficking – R 80.90, 80.89 (FI)**

41. The GoSVG has adopted a victim-centered approach to combat human trafficking. This includes partnering with NGOs and CSOs to ensure that matters concerning human trafficking victims are appropriately dealt with. The Government collaborates with NGOs, on joint training programmes, at least twice per year, aimed at identifying and responding to the needs of victims of human trafficking. The training was also done with first contact agencies, such as immigration, on screening techniques to identify possible victims<sup>1</sup>.

42. Furthermore, the GoSVG employs a zero-tolerance approach towards human trafficking issues and has implemented various measures to achieve the eradication of human trafficking in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. These measures include:

- (a) Adding human trafficking as a curriculum subject at the RSVGPF Training School;
- (b) Developing and reviewing the National Action Plan to combat human trafficking (2021-2025);
- (c) Initiating the signing of an MOU between eight stakeholders to combat human trafficking;
- (d) Sensitization and training programmes, aimed at women, on matters, including the dangers, of human trafficking; and

(e) Establishing a referral system for the identification and referral of victims/potential victims of human trafficking.

#### **Domestic violence – R 80.116 (PI), 80.115 (FI)**

43. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' Domestic Violence Act was passed in 2015. The core agencies guided by this legislation in guaranteeing citizen security and gender equality are the RSVGPF, the Family Court, and the Gender Affairs Division (GAD).

44. This legislation is not only limited to spousal abuse within the home, but a complainant can be any child or adult. It is also extended to include stalking, intimidation and threats; and provides punishment for child abuse that is defined within the Child Care and Adoption Act of 2011. It identifies any act of child abuse as a criminal act and a recognized form of domestic violence.

45. The MONM has been collaborating with the Attorney General's Chambers since 2019 towards reforming the sexual offenses legislation in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, with technical support from international agencies and governments. To date, a comprehensive review of all the sexual offenses provisions has been conducted and the findings and recommendations were presented to stakeholders in December 2019. This report included findings and recommendations for reform to reflect good international practices, and which meet human rights standards on issues of rape and sexual assault, sexual offenses relating to people with disabilities, and age of consent laws.

46. The Ministries of National Mobilisation and Health and Wellness have sought technical guidance from PAHO towards the development of Health Standard Operating Procedures to strengthen the response for victims of gender-based violence.

47. Since 2015, the GAD developed a Victims Support Programme as a means to providing psychosocial, socio-economic, and empowerment services to victims of domestic violence. The GAD also provides social protection cash transfers to victims and survivors to aid in the effective reintegration with families and in communities. This support service complimented the Crisis Centre, which was established in 2007 by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to provide security and empowerment of victims of spousal and related acts of violence and misconduct against women and children. Its purpose is to provide emergency and short-term care to victims of domestic violence for up to ninety (90) days.

48. The GoSVG in 2020, expressed interest in the establishment of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Support and Referral Centre (VINCYSARC). This facility shall utilize the 'one-step center' model for attending to survivors of violence. It is envisioned that once established, the VINCYSARC shall seek to optimize a multi-sectoral approach and ensure consistency in the delivery of care and guiding principles in all service delivery efforts, and when responding to child abuse and gender-based violence. This coordinated and collaborative approach delivers survivor services that link sectoral responses within stand-alone programmes where healthcare, psychosocial counselling, law enforcement, and protection would be available in one location.

49. During the period 2015 and 2020, 985 cases of domestic violence were reported to the RSVGPF, whereby physical violence was the most prevalent type of abuse that accounted for over 90% of the reported cases.

50. To remove barriers to women's access to justice, the GAD with effect from 2017, facilitated annual capacity-building workshops for service providers and social workers, counselors, and civil society organisations. The awareness-raising campaign is galvanized during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which is commemorated during the period November 25 – December 10 annually.

51. The GAD implements an ongoing Anti-Violence Campaign in communities and educational institutions since 2015 and has reached over thirty (30) communities, which were selected based on the prevalence of domestic violence, as recorded by the police. The campaign is implemented by way of community surveys which measure the attitudes and social and cultural norms towards domestic violence. This is then followed by public consultation on topical issues relating to domestic violence for example the mechanism and



legislation used for crime and violence and also incorporating the roles and responsibilities of the Family Court.

52. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse effects on the country, in 2020, the campaign took a national focus, widening the scope of awareness by utilising online surveys, mass media campaigns, and community consultations in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the RSVGPF, Family Court, Attorney General's Chambers and Marion House. These initiatives were complemented by establishing a toll-free Crisis Hotline for the reporting of incidents of gender-based violence.

#### **Administration of justice and fair trial – R 80.91, 80.93, 80.92 (FI)**

53. Significant changes were made to the Criminal Justice System in 2020. The Judicial and Legal Services Commission appointed an additional High Court Judge of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and assigned her to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in an effort to reduce the backlog of cases before the court. The number of prosecutorial staff was also bolstered to include ten (10) appointments for Counsel to operate at the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). Additionally, six (6) Summary Prosecutors are on assignment from the Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force, who deal principally with the prosecution of summary matters (in the Magistrates' courts). Four Magistrates sit daily to hear and dispense justice in all matters. Another Magistrate sits as President of the Family Court to hear and dispense justice specifically in family proceedings.

54. In 2019 the National Prosecution Service (NPS) of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was officially launched, which has the following benefits:

- The housing of all prosecutors under a single roof which allows the DPP to be better able to guide and provide support to staff in the processes.
- Storage (compilation and availability) of all files within the criminal justice system in a single place enables better coordinated disclosure efforts.

55. A Witness and Victim Care Unit was introduced at the ODPP so that issues encountered by witnesses and victims can be addressed more readily.

56. The ODPP has also taken steps to ensure that the Summary Prosecutors, who are not trained lawyers, are assigned a team leader with legal training to oversee operations at his/her court. Steps have been put in place to ensure matters are dealt with effectively and efficiently, such as changes to the administrative staff structure. For instance, a Case Management Unit whose administrative focus lies solely with case handling was instituted, and continuous training of office staff and review of the operating procedures are completed as necessary.

57. The ODPP-NPS has increased its applications for the use of paper committals as opposed to preliminary inquiries to decrease the need to adjourn matters pending a witness' availability.

58. The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court has introduced Sentencing Guidelines for the most frequent offences across the Eastern Caribbean; work is ongoing in this area. This helps with ensuring uniformity and predictability in sentences that are to be passed upon conviction.

59. Sentencing Indication Hearings are available by virtue of Practice Direction 3 of 2014, re-issued as Practice Direction 1 of 2020 which enables Defendants to seek an indication from the Court, without first admitting any guilt, about the maximum penalty the court would be minded to pass if they plead guilty to the offences as charged. There's an additional up to one-third discount incentive available which courts can award to persons who plead guilty to charged offences at the earliest possibility, for 'not wasting the court's time'.

60. The ODPP conducts educational sessions with law enforcement and schools, with the view that the children will learn so that they can teach their parents, and pass on to the next generation.

61. Members of the Judiciary frequently attend workshops and conferences geared towards the continuous enhancement and improvement of the justice system. The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court undertakes training for Judges, Magistrates, and other judicial staff

annually. Presentations are made on a wide range of issues and topics including human rights and vulnerable groups. The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court is composed of the Chief Justice, who is the Head of the Judiciary, six Justices of Appeal, High Court Judges, and High Court Masters. This independent body is responsible for enacting measures to ensure the improvement of the competency and capacity of the sub-regions judicial sector. The GoSVG also provides part-funding the Crown Counsel and other lawyers throughout the public service who wish to pursue Master's degrees in Legislative Drafting.

### **Death penalty**

62. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has not carried out the death sentence for any convicted murderers since 1993. However, the death penalty remains the maximum punishment for murder and high treason within the Criminal Code. A moratorium on the imposition of this penalty exists given that it can only be imposed in cases which are the "worst of the worst" or the "rarest of the rarest" as laid down by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (the final Court of Appeal for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) in the *Vincentian case*, *Trimmingham v. R* [2009] UKPC 25.

## **Economic, social and cultural rights**

### **Socio-economic development – R 80.96 (FI)**

63. Over the years, the country has achieved measurable and significant socio-economic progress as demonstrated by the significant reduction in indigence and poverty, tangible quality-of-life improvements based on a growing economy, increasing job opportunities, targeted interventions, and a strengthened social safety net.

64. Through several line ministries, an array of social assistance programmes is being implemented to reduce poverty and address vulnerability in the population. These include the Basic Needs Trust Fund, a Social Welfare Programme, the National Insurance Services Non-contributory programme and a cash transfer programme, among others specified under the right to adequate standard of living section.

65. Increasing investments in government expenditure in the education sector has led to the expansion of early childhood instruction, hundreds of trained teachers and the use of cutting-edge technology in the classroom. Additionally, there has been an enhanced vocational and technical training with an array of education programmers accessible on the ground, increase in access to tertiary education regionally and overseas, and new or refurbishing of schools, libraries and learning resource centres, highlighted under the right to education section.

66. The GoSVG has placed emphasis on the diversification on the economy to ensure sustainable growth and job creation. Growths in sub-sectors are expected for the construction, hospitality, manufacturing, agriculture and fisheries sectors, due to various activities being undertaken. Programmes to spur job creation, build skills among the unemployed, encourage entrepreneurship, facilitate internships, and access overseas job markets were also undertaken and are expounded on in the section on the right to work.

67. According to FAO data, the percentage of the population considered to be undernourished has continued to decline, decreasing from 9.1% in 2004–2006 to 5.7% in 2016–2018. The Government has developed a National Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Development Plan (2017–2025); Strategic Plan for Agricultural Development 2012–2018 (draft); Strategic Plan for Rural Development; and Livestock Sector Investment Programme to provide guidance to the agricultural sector over the period. The section on the right to food highlights the number of activities carried out to reduce poverty and support the agricultural sector.

68. Under the World Bank Human Development Service Delivery Project (WB-NDSD Project), which was approved in 2017, SVG received (US) \$10.70 million to strengthen the quality-of-service delivery in education, to improve the efficiency of social protection systems, and to improve the effectiveness of labour market systems in the State. This project should be completed in 2022.

69. The main components of this project include:

- Strengthening Pedagogy for Basic Special Needs Education;
- Building Responsive Social Protection Service Delivery Systems;
- Strengthening Labour Market Systems and Improving Skills Training of Poor and Vulnerable Populations; and
- Project Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation.

#### **Right to work – R 80.97 (FI)**

70. The GoSVG has undertaken several initiatives as a part of its efforts to promote the right to work and combat unemployment. Furthermore, the completion of the Job Openings and Labour Turnover Survey<sup>2</sup> in 2020 offers the opportunity for more targeted activities. The results will also help to guide curriculum development nationally.

71. The Government had anticipated that growth in a number of economic sub-sectors would lead to an increase in employment – growth in sub-sectors were expected for the construction, hospitality, manufacturing, agriculture and fisheries sectors.

72. The GoSVG continues to offer programmes to enhance the skills and marketability of persons for the job market, as well as provide apprenticeship opportunities. These include:

(a) Support for Education and Training (SET) Programme provides recent college and university graduates with relevant a year work experience (internships) through assignments in the Public Service, with Statutory Corporations or Not-for-Profit organizations;

(b) Youth Empowerment Service (YES) programme provides apprenticeship training and citizenship molding to youth between 16 and 30 years of age; and

(c) Numerous technical and vocational education programmes, as well as secondary and college courses evening lessons are offered by the Adult and Continuing Education Unit so that adults can build literacy, skill sets, and education qualifications for work or further studies. TVET courses will award successful applicants NVQ or CVQ qualifications.

73. The Labour Department continues to advertise via online and print media a list of job vacancies, and offer a job search programme, implemented at the secondary school level, which guides students on preparing for the job market.

74. The GoSVG has facilitated numerous job opportunities abroad for Vincentians, including in fields where there is a surplus of specialists locally. These include categories of nurses, seasonal agricultural workers, and applicants to the Royal Navy and Royal Army.

75. The Skills for Youth Employment (Skye) Programme was launched in September 2020. This one-year training programme is designed to deliver certified TVET to over 6,000 youths between the age of 15–30 years old, in the area of hospitality, construction, and other emerging labour markets.

76. The Youth and Adults Training for Employment (YATE) Programme commenced in June 2021, funded by the Human Development Service Delivery (HDSD) World Bank Project, and will target and assist underprivileged and unemployed youths and adults within the age group 15–45 years, to develop the basic competencies needed to enter the job market or to further enhance their skills sets<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, components of the training will focus on entrepreneurship and provide support for participation and completion of the training.

77. Programmes such as the Promotion of Youth Microenterprises (PRYME)<sup>4</sup>, Invest SVG Angel Investor programme<sup>5</sup> and the Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Program (CARCIP)<sup>6</sup> have provided opportunities for entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs to access funds, including grant funding, to develop or improve their business operations. These businesses will in turn hire workers contributing to a reduction in unemployment.

**Right to an adequate standard of living – R 80.95, 80.59 (FI)**

78. The GoSVG remains committed to continuously evaluate and enhance its social programs and policies, and has over the period under review, allocated more revenue to these programmes in its budget.

79. A Social Protections Policy Framework and Graduation Strategy is being developed and consultancy is currently being carried out for the review and updating of the existing Public Assistance Act (1989), as a component of the World Bank Human Development Service Delivery (HDSD) Project.

80. All programmes referred in the second cycle UPR report persist, and the following listed are those that have been expanded or are new:

(a) Home Help for the Elderly Programme was expanded as more Home Care Providers were hired and more supplies were provided to their clients to ensure that proper care is provided;

(b) Low- and Mid-Income Homes Schemes are programmes for low to mid income families who cannot afford to own their own homes. Through the programme, persons are offered special payment schemes and/or subsidized prices that they are able to afford;

(c) The “Lives to Live” programme continue to provide housing to the indigent, elderly and persons with physical or mental challenges, who are unable to build houses for themselves. The programme also repairs dilapidated homes for qualified persons;

(d) The financial assistance for Public Assistance recipients was increased. Efforts are also being made to have reloadable cards used to transmit funds to persons, in an effort to promote a more convenient and efficient service. A pilot was launched to provide this service by the MONM in conjunction with UNICEF and the Bank of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (BOSVG); and

(e) Under the right to education and right to work, numerous opportunities for skill certification, TVET and further education, and training and employment opportunities were listed. Additionally, the Social Protection Division in the MONM has programmes for skills’ training and job placements to encourage the transition of persons from public assistance to meaningful employment or entrepreneurship.

81. The Government continues to provide avenues for indigent persons to obtain financial assistance to acquire medication, housing building materials, assistance with water and electricity utility bills payments and school supplies on a case-by-case basis.

**Right to Food – R 80.98 (FI)**

82. The activities envisioned under the Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative have more or less been subsumed under the work of the Zero Hunger Trust Fund (ZHTF). The GoSVG established the ZHTF in 2016, following ACT No. 2 of Parliament, for the purpose of eliminating hunger in the state.

83. The ZHTF has highlighted the most vulnerable population, in the areas of poverty and hunger, after considering the Country Poverty Assessment (CPA), after which the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has implemented various initiatives to alleviate the situation that affected Saint Vincent’s vulnerable groups, which include:

- The *“Adopt a Classroom” programme* is an annual school-based programme that is designed to alleviate poverty and improve the standard of living of primary school children, by covering several costs associated with the participation of students in school. There are currently twelve (12) schools on the programme;
- The *School Feeding programme* explained under the right to education;
- The *Tus-T Water School Breakfast Initiative* – The Government is assisted by stakeholders in the private sector, such as Tus-T water – a water bottling company, to provide breakfast to school children in some schools based on customer input; and

- The *Golden Years Nutrition Support programme* provides Food Gift Certificates valued at \$300 to elderly Vincentians, age 80 and over. The Food Gift Certificates are valued at \$300 and are given to beneficiaries quarterly. Beneficiaries must meet the criteria for food insecurity or be at risk for food insecurity to qualify for this programme.

84. Public assistance was also expanded to ensure that all needy, particularly those who are nutritionally at risk, are provided for.

85. The GoSVG continues its programmes to promote food security and nutrition, through promoting farming and targeted interventions to reduce dependence on food import. Programmes on farming technologies, farm management and agro-processing were introduced in schools, and through the Farmers Support Company, farmers and fishers can benefit from duty concessions, discounts on agriculture inputs, feed, tractor services etc, and are given access to low to zero percent interest rates.

86. The Government has also implemented a Producers' Care Programme which is a programme where the Government provides food boxes to needy families, and includes produce bought from local farmers in order to promote food security for all. The soon-to-be established 'Care Packages' plan will focus on backyard gardening. The Government is also encouraging the establishment of Producers Co-operatives, where producers combine strategies, technology and strengths.

#### **Sexual and reproductive health and services – R 80.100, 80.102 (FI), R 80.101 (PI)**

87. As a measure to empower girls and boys to make conscious decisions regarding their health and well-being, the GoSVG in 2018 launched its National Adolescent Health and Development Action Plan, using Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!) guidance, which focuses on adolescents' health and development. The plan focuses on providing psychosocial support to the vulnerable group between ages ten to nineteen and covers areas including SRH. A National Adolescent Steering Committee, whose membership includes NGOs and adolescents, was also formulated.

88. The Action Plan was developed as part of the National Adolescence Health and Development Policy of 2015 and was developed, in part, to combat the high rate of teenage girls' pregnancy. The GAD continues to offer a Teen Mothers programme that offers parenting and other support systems, and avenues for the reintegration of teen mothers into the education system to continue their education.

89. The GoSVG, in partnership with donor agencies and CSOs, provides access for women to be educated and informed of their SRHR, primarily through the Family Planning Department and the GAD. SRH education is also provided through;

- School education, and is included in the Health and Family Life curriculum for Primary Schools;
- As part of the Teen Mothers programme; and
- In district clinics' Adolescents programmes, which provides a safe space for adolescents to meet for life skill activities and to have discussions on health issues including SRH.

90. Educational campaigns were also bolstered since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the volcanic eruption on the island, where outreach was carried out among children and women to educate them in the area of SRH and to counter sexual exploitation and abuse.

91. Access to family planning services for the prevention and management of STIs are provided nationally and are integrated into primary health care making them free of cost to users. Access to modern contraceptives is not restricted by the state. Avenues for abortion remain accessible to persons who were victims of rape or incest; persons whose health is at risk because of the pregnancy; and if there is a substantial risk that, if the child were born, it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormality as to be seriously handicapped.

**Right to education – R 80.99 (FI)**

92. The GoSVG has drastically enhanced access to quality early childhood education by increasing the number of free preschool centers, which targets areas that were previously underserved.

93. All students transitioning from the primary cycle to the secondary are afforded space in the latter, and after-school remedial help is available to students who require it.

94. Efforts were made to provide greater access to tertiary-level institutions. Government scholarships and bursaries have increased over the years, and the economically disadvantaged student loan provides a below-average student loan rate, and the government acts as the guarantor for students who require such support.

95. Personnel from the Ministry of Education and the Child Development Division continue to monitor student attendance delinquency and dropout and facilitate intervention where needed.

96. The GoSVG continues several social and support programmes to assist students. This includes:

- School Feeding Programme, which provides nutritious meals at low cost, and in some cases no cost to students while in school;
- The Book Loan Programme, provides students with textbooks on loan for the school year, at a minimal cost;
- Student Counsellors were appointed at schools;
- The Diversion Units and Student Support Centers intervention programmes offer psychological and academic support to students with behavioural issues, learning disabilities and who require remedial help; and
- The Ministry of National Mobilisation provides uniform and textbook assistance, as well as social and financial support for needy pupils. This includes tuition payments and child allowances through social welfare.

97. The GoSVG has implemented a “One tablet per Child” initiative, where laptops and tablets were distributed to all students in primary and secondary schools to assist with school work and build ICT capacities. Partnerships with Telecommunication companies were also developed to provide low-cost, and in some cases, free internet to students' homes.

98. Access to TVET has increased exponentially over the period under review. The country currently has four TVET Skill Training Centres where secondary school students who are more inclined to learning such skills attend classes. The Adult and Continuing Education Office, SVGCC, and other government and CSO administered programmes intermittently provide TVET NVQ or CVQ certification courses in subject areas where there are labour demands.

99. The SVGCC, in partnership with several universities, now provides a number of associate degree programmes and a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing. The University of the West Indies Open-Campus facility in the state was upgraded and expanded, allowing it to cater to more students. Two additional Medical Universities began operating in SVG in 2015. These developments have improved the overall access to higher education available in the state.

100. Some training was done through the Child-Friendly Schools to make the educational institutions more amicable for pupils.

**Cultural rights – R 80.104 (PI), 80.105 (FI)**

101. The GoSVG agrees with the Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights on the importance of the isle of Balliceaux for the Garifuna people, and to ensure that their relation to this island as a site of remembrance is respected and maintained.

102. The Department of Culture facilitates pilgrimages to Balliceaux, for Vincentians and Garifunas living abroad, as part of the yearly “Garifuna Homecoming” held in Heroes and Heritage Month (March). Balliceaux remains a privately owned island, but the owners have

provided consent since 2004 for the erection of a monument to honour the Garifuna history along with a jetty to enable easier access to the island. The goal is to transform Balliceaux into a Heritage Park/Memorial to commemorate the thousands of Garinagu who lost their lives there.

103. The GoSVG has received funding through UNESCO to assist in the preservation of our tangible and intangible cultural heritage and will continue to apply for these funds for future programmes. The National Cultural Foundation also received funding from the Canadian Funds for Local Initiative (CFLI) for the programme titled “Boosting the capacity of the craft industry and promoting the indigenous culture of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines through workshops on the rebranding of the craft industry” and for workshops in the “Introduction to Film Technology with emphasis on the promotion of the indigenous culture of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines”.

## **Rights of specific persons or groups**

### **Women**

*Advancement of women – R 80.66, 80.70, 80.68 (FI)*

104. The GoSVG has developed and implemented programmes to promote and identify gender-related issues and human rights for the advancement of women and gender equality in accordance with the sustainable development goals 2030 (SDG 5). Most of these programmes are executed by the Gender-Affairs Division, which include:

- Anti-Violence Campaign;
- Victims Support Programme;
- Re-Entry of Teen Mothers Programme;
- Single Parents Empowerment Programme; and
- Positive Reinforcement for the Rehabitable

105. The Gender Affairs Division implements an ongoing sensitization and educational campaign that focuses on gender equality inclusive of gender discrimination in communities and educational institutions. In addition, the division facilitates educational sessions with teachers during the annual Professional Development week on topics such as human rights, and breaking stereotypes in education.

*Discrimination against women – R 80.42, 80.63 (PI), R 80.67, 80.61, (FI)*

106. The GoSVG has provided resources for the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence which was established in 2014 to address gender-based violence and its debilitating effects on women, children, and other vulnerable groups to achieve gender justice.

107. The Domestic Violence Act of 2015 is currently the guiding legislation for domestic violence. Existing laws protect women against acts of sexual and physical violence and other forms of abuse. The Government has collaborated with the international organizations and agencies to draft the Sexual Offences Bill.

108. The Government reports that the recruitment practice within the public sector promotes equal and non-discriminatory access to opportunities for upward mobility. Recruitment interview questions are structured in a standard format for both males and females, therefore, avoiding gender-coding, and further promoting gender equality.

109. Emphasis is placed on training key stakeholders responsible for the protection of women and girls during the Sixteen Days of Activism. Components of the training integrate the legal framework at all levels to ensure that the proper service referral system is being utilised and the acceptable protocols are executed.

*Violence against Women – R 80.106, 80.118, 80.113, 80.110 (PI) R 80.108, 80.41 (P) R 80.107, 80.111, 80.109, 80.114, 80.112 (FI)*

110. The Domestic Violence Act of 2015 is a piece of family legislation that is recognized within the Criminal Code, the breaches of which are punishable by imprisonment. It provides added protection through an Interim Protection Order, which is valid for twenty-eight (28) days, and a Permanent Protection Order to further protect the survivor once the investigations during the Interim Protection Order period, validate the need for permanency of protection against the respondent. On average, the family court issued 197 protection orders yearly between 2017–2020.

111. Under Section 7 of the Domestic Violence Act of 2015 subsection (a-i), the law details how the courts may prohibit the respondents through the protection order.

112. In addition, the Court may direct the respondent to:

- (a) Pay emergency or interim monetary payments to the applicant for spousal and/or child maintenance;
- (b) Immediately vacate the shared household for a specified period of time;
- (c) Make or continue to make payments in respect of rent or mortgage for the shared household; and
- (d) Receive professional counseling or therapy.

113. The National Action Plan to end Gender-Based Violence is implemented through the establishment of a Gender Equality Commission (GEC) in 2017, which is a multi-sectoral composition that functions as gender focal points to implement the activities and promote gender mainstreaming towards gender equality within their respective agencies. This commission is chaired by the MONM, and co-chaired by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Human Rights Association. The GAD is the Secretariat of the GEC, and membership comprises of stakeholders from government and civil society entities<sup>7</sup>.

114. The priorities of the GEC are:

- Dissemination and implementation of the CEDAW;
- Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, Goal 5: to promote further gender equality and empowerment of women and girls;
- To oversee the implementation of legislation and national policies with respect to gender equality;
- To consider relevant changes in legislation and national policy developments accordingly;
- Quota system for greater political participation for women;
- To monitor the rates of Gender-Based Violence nationally and provide technical assistance on how to prevent and reduce this gender inequality; and
- To guarantee the social, political, and economic advancement of women in all sectors.

115. Awareness-raising campaigns are undertaken to eliminate gender-oriented prejudices including Gender-Based Violence in society. Public awareness-raising campaigns towards Violence Against Women are continuous. However, it is galvanised during the commemoration of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence that commences on November 25 - International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and concludes on December 10 - International Human Rights Day. During this period, various media programmes and public service announcements are undertaken to sensitize the general public on the issue of Violence Against Women. In addition, training programmes are conducted with key stakeholders, especially the police on areas of:

- Family legislation (Domestic Violence Act/Child Care and Adoption Act);
- Duties of Police Officers and mandatory reporters;
- The laws of evidence;



- Support services to victims and perpetrators of violence;
- Application and enforcement of protection orders;
- Gender diversity and inclusion; and
- The psychology of victims of violence.

116. A Gender-Based Referral Pathway was developed in 2020 with technical assistance from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This document provides guidance that links survivors of gender-based violence to support and competent service providers in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In addition, a Domestic Violence Response Protocol was drafted to ensure a coordinated response mechanism to reports of gender-based violence.

117. As a means of providing security to and empowerment of victims of spousal abuse related to acts of violence and misconduct against women and children, the operationalisation of safe houses across the country was enacted. The coordination of service response is a multi-sectoral approach that can be accessed through the use of the referral pathway.

118. The Gender Affairs Division continues to provide safe spaces and support services for victims of gender-based violence, and plans are in place to rehabilitate and upgrade the Crisis Centre into a One-Stop Support and Referral Centre to provide support services for victims of Gender-Based Violence in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

119. The Sexual Offences Unit was established in 2018 to investigate incidents of a sexual nature, including those characterized as Sexual Offences, Domestic Violence and Gender Based Violence, using officers with the necessary training to deal with such cases.

120. Officers of the Unit also conduct training with various stakeholders to build their competence as well as ensure that a victim-centered approach is used by all first contact of sexual offenses. Unit officers received their specialized training by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' Regional and International partners<sup>8</sup>.

*Participation of women in political and public Life – R 80.64, 80.69, 80.65 (P)*

121. It should be highlighted that although women continue to be less involved in politics than their male counterparts, in the 2010 elections, 43% of candidates were women, in 2015 13.9%, and in 2020 15%. The year 2015 was a historic year for female candidates as one of the political parties; the Democratic Republican Party (DRP), which contested the elections had a female as its leader.

122. Currently, women's representation in Parliament constitutes 17.3%, which is an increase from 13% in the 2015-2020 Parliament composition.

123. Additionally, the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWIL) Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Chapter was established in November 2020. This organisation is a non-political, multi-partisan, and independent Non-Governmental Organisation, established with the objectives to monitor, strengthen, and increase women's political participation and leadership in the State.

124. The GEC has listed as a priority a "quota system for greater political participation for women", which envisions for the minimum representation of women to be at 40%. The GEC continues to work towards this goal.

125. Women continue to dominate employment in the public service. According to 2020 figures, approximately 50% of the public service workforce is women. Women have access to the necessary training and experience needed to occupy leadership positions in the public sector. Approximately 60.7% of female public servants are Grade B positions and above, which constitute the highest posts within the civil service. Of Grade C posts, which consist of directors, department heads, coordinators, and other upper management staff accounts, women account for approximately 57.1%.

## Children

### *Protection of children – R 80.121, 80.122 (P), R 80.58 (PI), R 80.121 (FI)*

126. In 2015, the GoSVG instituted a National Child Protection Policy Framework, which is a macro-based Legal and Social Protection Strategy aimed at strengthening national protection systems, supporting social change, promoting child protection in conflict and natural disasters, building evidence and knowledge management, and convening as well as catalyzing agents of change. The framework is grounded in international and regional conventions and universal systems of rules that govern and regulate decision-making, agreements, and laws concerning children.

127. The GoSVG established a National Child Rights Committee to provide oversight and guidance to the Child Protection Unit. In November 2016, the Committee became a regulatory commission with numerous subcommittees, one of which is the Management Committee responsible for “national oversight on selection and recruitment of Foster Parents, Output and Outcome effects of interventions for children in care and rehabilitation, and external or independent reporting and monitoring of cases.

128. The Child Development Division (CDD) is in the process of reviewing and reassessing the National Child Protection Policy Framework (2015-2020) to create a new strategy for the next five years.

129. The CDD has collaborated closely with UNICEF in a series of trainings to ensure that they are better equipped to meet their mandate, as stipulated in the Children (Care and Adoption) Act 2010 as well as strengthening the National Child Protection responses.

130. Interactive child protection training modules were developed to assist with the facilitation of training workshops for service providers. Child Protection Unit (CPU) facilitated training workshops with mandatory reporters such as police, educators, health professionals, social workers, counsellors, and non-governmental organizations on the Children Act, Child Justice Bill, and Child Abuse Protocol, reporting guidelines, and on all existing policies to ensure that mandated reporters are aware of their roles and responsibilities in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children.

131. The GoSVG over the years, has allocated more resources to the CDD to support its work. Since 2015, the child development and protection departments have seen an exponential increase in staff, including Social Workers, Duty Officers (Investigators), Teachers, Counsellors, House Masters, etc. The CDD in 2018 was also allocated its social assistance in cash and in-kind votes to cover costs associated with children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law interventions.

132. It should further be noted that the Children (Care and Protection) Act (2019) has widened the scope of protection for children in need of care and protection. The Child Justice Act (2019) creates diversion programs for children in conflict with the law. The Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act restricts children under 14 from being employed. Section 4 of the Status of Children Act (2011) abolishes any legal distinction between the status of children born within or outside marriage.

133. The sexual offences laws are currently being reviewed and a comprehensive review of family laws, including the Marriage Act, is on the legislative agenda.

### *Children: family environment and alternative care – R 80.60 (FI)*

134. Corporal punishment in schools, by virtue of the Education Act of 2006, is a measure of last resort to be administered only by the Principal, Deputy Principal, or a teacher specially designated for that purpose. The Child Justice Act (2019) removed the use of corporal punishment as a sentence in the courts.

135. Steps have been taken to reduce the use of corporal punishment nationally and to prosecute those who physically abuse children under the guise of corporal punishment. Parents who abuse children can be sanctioned through the laws relating to assault and battery and mechanisms are provided where children who are in need of care and protection are provided with such through family services under the Children (Care and Protection) Act.

136. Additionally, the CDD through parenting workshops continues to promote alternative forms of discipline. These techniques have also been publicized to the wider public through the media.

137. Training is conducted yearly with teachers during the Professional Development Week of Activities regarding the responsibilities and obligations of teachers under the Education Act. This includes information on the exercise of corporal punishment. The curriculum of the Division of Teacher Education of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Community College includes education in the exercise of corporal punishment, as well as right of the child.

*Children: protection against exploitation – R 80.120 (FI) R 80.123 (PI)*

138. In 2019 the government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines undertook a comprehensive review of the Protection of Employment Act. The proposed new Employment Relations Bill will include a clause to increase the statutory minimum age from 14 to age 16 years, which will conform with the ILO Convention C138 – Minimum Age Convention, 1978, and carries a fine for violation.

139. The Education Act set the compulsory age for school between 5 and 16. The Ministry of Education has appointed School Attendance Officers who monitor students' attendance, delinquency and dropouts across the state and recommend intervention where necessary, including in cases of exploitation.

140. The Sexual Offences Unit of the SVGPF has as one of its mandates, the fight against sexual crime, particularly committed against women and children. It joins the already established Anti Trafficking in Persons Unit formed in 2012, which together boosts the national capability to prevent, detect and investigate instances of sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

141. The Labour Commission conducts workplace inspections, during which Labour inspectors have the opportunity to make observations and detect any possible incidents of employment of persons below the statutory minimum age. For the period under review, no such incidences have been observed or reported to the Labour Department.

142. Additionally, the Labour Department has employed the following to bring greater awareness to the subject of child labour:

- Media campaigns.
- With assistance from the ILO, capacity-building training programmes for Labour Inspectors to able to detect instances of child labour.
- Ramped up workplace inspections.

*Children: juvenile justice – R 80.94 (PI)*

143. Through assistance from UNICEF and the OECS/USAID Juvenile Justice Reform Project, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been able to make substantial progress in Juvenile Justice Reform over the period under review. This includes:

(a) The passing of the Child Justice Act in December 2019, which establishes a criminal justice process for children accused of committing offenses, and is in keeping with international conventions/agreements. The Act advocates for the use of diversion strategies when dealing with children in conflict with the law as a means of providing alternative sentencing options. The bill further raises the age of criminality from 8 to 12.

(b) Major renovations to the Liberty Lodge Boys Training Centre in 2018, which saw its transformation to include a rehabilitation centre for male juveniles in conflict with the law.

(c) The adoption of a legacy model and framework to guide the use of diversion, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The Liberty Lodge Boys Training Centre offers juveniles various rehabilitation programmes while they are in detention, including counselling, formal school education, and vocational training. The Aggression Replacement Training and Family Empowerment Programme are two such programmes.

(d) Service providers in the juvenile justice system have been trained to design and deliver interventions that enable successful diversion, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children in conflict with the law, including mental health screening and risk and needs assessment to allow more tailored rehabilitation services.

**Persons with disabilities – R 80.125 (FI), R 80.127, 80.124(P)**

144. The GoSVG promotes social inclusion of PWD through a number of measures, including:

- Provision of duty-free concessions for the importation of motor vehicles to transport children and PWD to educational institutions and other recreational activities.
- Provision of monthly disability/social protection grants through the Public Assistance Programme and the National Assistance Fund of the MONM, which has the responsibility for Social Development and Persons with Disabilities. Under this programme, PWD can access assistance for: food and other basic amenities; meals and transportation to facilitate their participation in school; medical assistance; utility bill payments; and under the Home Help for the Elderly Programme (HHEP), persons with disabilities, who are shut-ins, are provided with day-time care and assistance.
- The Government, through the National Insurance Services (NIS), provides Invalidity Grants and Pensions to persons who are permanently incapable of undertaking further employment due to chronic illness/disease or bodily or mental disability.

145. The GoSVG has made progress in integrating differently abled children into mainstream education. A pilot programme was launched where the Fair Hall Government School was equipped with the necessary equipment and retrofitting to integrate differently abled children into the school. These students are able to participate fully in school activities up to grade 8, where they will then be assigned to other mainstream educational institutions. Children are also able to enter other schools based on their performance in national placement exams. Additional support is available to the differently abled students to ensure that they are well integrated. The programme has shown initial success, and the Ministry of Education hopes to equip more schools in the near future to also accept differently abled students.

146. The country continues to operate four schools for students with special needs and the Student Support Services provides remedial services that are accessed by some differently abled students.

147. In an effort to improve the capacity of the Persons with Disabilities Division in the MONM, the GoSVG has supported the training for the department's workers to better perform their function, and assigned a PWD community worker to the National Society of Persons with Disabilities. The YES internship programme also includes PWDs. Most modern buildings are constructed to facilitate persons with disabilities.

148. CSOs also provide support to the Student Support Services and well as differently abled persons as part of their collaboration with the government, or the various initiatives that they have. These include the National Society of PWD, Voice of the Disabled and National Society of and For the Blind.

149. The Pedestrian Access for Village Enhancement (PAVE) initiative has led to an improvement by providing access paths, walkways, steps, handrails, wheelchair ramps and inter-village connections to make communities more accessible and sustainable. Over the two-year life of PAVE, the project will build approximately 40 miles of access paths in villages across the country.

150. The GoSVG continues to tackle issues experienced by PWD as it relates to utilizing educational institutions, the enjoyment of public spaces, accessing goods and services, and addressing sexual offenses.

**LGBTQI**

151. The Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines protects against all forms of discrimination and secures the protection of the law, including to persons of various sexual orientation.

152. The Gender Affairs Division within MONM conducted training workshops, most recently in 2019, to build the capacity of stakeholders including law enforcement officers, educators, social workers, and health care providers on the importance of respecting the human rights of and providing non-discriminatory services to the LGBTQI community. This training was supported by the Human Dignity Trust and the Equality Justice Alliance.

153. Over the years, several CSOs have championed the promotion of LBGT rights, including Vincy Chaps. Debates and education campaigns on the issue have also been prevalent in recent years and some CSO believe that societal attitudes of tolerance and acceptance towards LGBTI+ persons are improving.

154. A challenge to the buggery laws was issued in the state and is expected to be heard in the High Court by 2022.

#### **Members of minorities – R 80.103 (FI)**

155. The Ministry of Culture has a longstanding relationship of support to the various cultural and religious groups in the country, including the facilitation of a series of workshops aimed at reviving the Garifuna Culture. There is also a representative of the Garifuna Heritage Foundation. The government has also given technical, financial, and moral support to the activities organized by minority groups; including Rastafarians, Indo-Vincentian, and Garifunas, as a form of support for the advancement and recognition of their culture. The staff of the Department also received sensitization training for addressing concerns of indigenous people.

156. The GoSVG continues to work closely with all religious and cultural groups toward the preservation and observation of their freedom of conscience, through the Religious Leaders Council and its religious and minority CSO group interactions. A review of the National Cultural Policy was conducted in 2016 with CSOs.

### **New and emerging issues with human rights implications**

157. The GoSVG recognizes the significant impact that two particular events continue to have on the full enjoyment of human rights by citizens and persons living in the State. As such, the GoSVG' response to these events, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the explosive eruption of the La Soufriere volcano, is highlighted in Annex 1.

### **Concluding remarks**

158. The GoSVG remains committed to the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Vincentians, residents and visitors to the state, and continues to welcome the opportunity given by the UPR mechanism to show its progress internationally.

159. The GoSVG is pleased to be able to report on accomplishing or making good progress on the recommendations presented to the state at its last review, including some that were noted. It will endeavour to continuously progress towards the full implementation of its human rights' agenda with the continued assistance of the UN System, its bilateral partners and the international community as a whole.

#### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> These NGOs include the National Council of Women, Soroptimist International (SVG), the Saint Vincent the Grenadines Human Rights Association, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Christian Council.

<sup>2</sup> This survey, which was funded under the Human Development Service Delivery (HDSD) World Bank Project, is intended to identify skills gaps in the labour market with a view to developing training programmes to reduce those gaps and meet employer demands.

<sup>3</sup> Youth and Adults Training for Employment (YATE) Programme will cover training in Electrical Installation, Plumbing, Data Operations, Food Preparation, Food and Beverage, Welding,

Housekeeping, Cosmetology, and General construction.

- <sup>4</sup> The Promotion of Youth Microenterprises (PRYME) programme provides grants and technical assistance to young businesspersons, most of whom would be considered too risky to obtain a bank loan. In 2020, PRYME will make available EC\$2 million in grant funds to young entrepreneurs. The purpose of this initiative is to facilitate empowerment and greater economic self-reliance among the youth.
- <sup>5</sup> The Invest SVG Angel Investor programme, was piloted in 2019, to provide local entrepreneurs with the opportunity to interact with interested investors, and to receive constructive analysis of their business plans. Also, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises that have been unable to secure loans from local banks can take advantage of the Eastern Caribbean Partial Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECPCGC), which becomes fully operational in 2020. The ECPCGC, which is funded by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and other OECS governments, helps these small businesses by partially guaranteeing their loans, thereby increasing banks' willingness to lend.
- <sup>6</sup> CARCIP provides grants to support technology-enabled businesses. At the end of 2019, 25 entrepreneurs had been awarded \$2.6 million in CARCIP grants to help fund their businesses, including a manufacturing/digital fabrication business using wood and metal and a range of ICT-related businesses. CARCIP also provides training to entrepreneurs to contribute to more successful businesses.
- <sup>7</sup> Other members from government entities and civil society on the Gender Equality Commission include:
  - Commissioner of Police;
  - Chief Education Officer;
  - Chief Medical Officer;
  - President, Family Court;
  - Attorney General;
  - Director of Public Prosecutions;
  - Director, National Commission on Crime Prevention;
  - Chief Statistician;
  - St. Vincent and the Grenadines Christian Council;
  - President, National Council of Women; and
  - Youth Representative.
- <sup>8</sup> Regional Training Centre in Barbados, Sexual Offences Unit in Trinidad and Tobago, the Training Academy in Jamaica and relevant training institutions from the United States of America.

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