



Components of the YWiLSLU programme:

- A series of foundational training sessions on the programme's core themes
- A workshop to further enhance participants' understanding, skills, and ability to engage in different forms of leadership through the sharing of good practices with other women leaders
- Simulated parliamentary debates in the House of Assembly and the Senate

#YWiLSLU



YOUNG WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP SAINT LUCIA

In May and June 2022, 35 young women leaders from across Saint Lucia took part in Young Women in Leadership – Saint Lucia (YWiLSLU), an in-depth training programme on transformational leadership, inclusive decision-making, and parliamentary procedure convened by [ParlAmericas](#), the [Caribbean Women in Leadership](#) (CIWiL) Regional Secretariat and Saint Lucia chapter, and the Parliament of Saint Lucia.

YWiLSLU was the third in a series of national-level initiatives implemented in the Caribbean through a [joint ParlAmericas and CIWiL project](#), funded by the Government of Canada, focused on strengthening women's political leadership. A flagship component of the project, the YWiL programme is designed to support these leaders in building knowledge, skills, and networks necessary for their work as current and future changemakers. The first YWiL was hosted in [Trinidad and Tobago](#) in February-March 2020 and the second in [Antigua and Barbuda](#) in October-November 2020 in partnership with the national legislatures in those countries. An additional YWiL was also hosted in [Trinidad and Tobago](#) in November 2021, led by the CIWiL Trinidad and Tobago chapter.

ONLINE TRAINING SESSION

Transformational leadership

The first virtual training session focused on transformational leadership, which is the leadership model that forms the basis of CIWiL's flagship training programme and underlies the YWiL programme. The session was led by Dr. Rosina Wiltshire, gender and development specialist, and was moderated by Ms. Cindy Andrews, youth leader and member of the YWiLTT 2020 cohort.

This session provided participants with an introduction to the principles of the transformational leadership approach, its importance in the context of women's leadership, and how this form of leadership helps to achieve positive change for, and in service of, all of society through its focus on restructuring harmful systems that create and uphold inequalities. Dr. Wiltshire emphasised that leadership is not a position you hold, but an everyday practice that begins with the self.



Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that contributes to change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change and enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms.

The model of transformational leadership starts at the level of individual transformation, before moving on to the group and institutional levels. It fosters a culture of accountability, justice, and transparency.

When applied to gender and leadership, this process leads to the redefinition of gender and power relations, and the strengthening of leadership that is bold and innovative and builds on the skills of women and men in society thereby enhancing gender equality.

Learn more on [CIWiL's website](#).

ONLINE TRAINING SESSION

Parliamentary procedure

The second YWiSLU virtual training session focused on parliamentary procedure in order to support participants in their preparations for the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting, and as part of the programme's overall objective of encouraging young women's interest in pursuing public leadership. The session was led by The Honourable Claudius Francis, Speaker of the House of Assembly, and Ms. Lyndell Gustave, Clerk of Parliament. The Honourable Emma Hippolyte, MP, offered closing remarks.

The session provided a comprehensive introduction to the work of the legislature, and the critical role of the parliament and parliamentarians in a democracy and in national development. Its content included an overview of the structure of the Parliament of Saint Lucia, an introduction to the role of parliament and parliamentarians, and a summary of key elements of parliamentary procedure and processes. The importance of women's participation in national legislatures for the institutions' effective functioning in its representative role was also emphasised.



See the following resources for information on parliaments:

- [Agora Portal for Parliamentary Development](#)
- [Glossary of Citizenship and Democracy Terms](#) (Caribbean Elections)



International frameworks related to gender equality and women's political participation:

- [The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) (1995)
- [The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#) (1979)
- [The Sustainable Development Goals](#) (2015)



ONLINE TRAINING SESSION

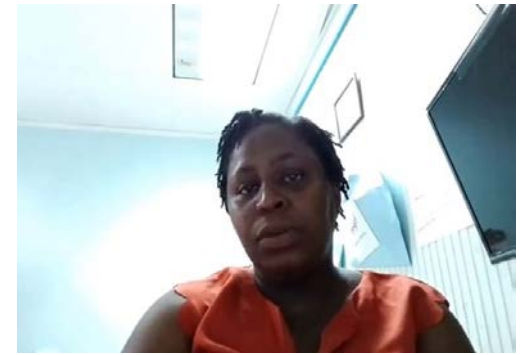
Applying a gender lens in decision-making

The third virtual session guided participants through discussions and exercises on applying a gender lens in decision-making, led by Sasha Sahadeo, Gender Officer at CIWiL, and Chelsea Foster, Founder and Executive Director of Girls of a Feather. Opening remarks were shared by Senator Kaygianna Toussaint Charlery.

The session covered key concepts related to gender and diversity, as well as critical discussions around norms and stereotypes, to serve as a foundation for identifying the gender dimensions of issues. Also emphasised in the session was the need to consider other identity factors and how these can interact with gender to impact an individuals' life experiences, stemming from long-standing systems of discrimination and inequality. Participants then took part in a power walk exercise to further think through these concepts at an individual level before applying such thinking to the examination of social issues on the population through a final section focused on gender-sensitive legislative and policy-making processes.

Adopting an inclusive approach to the consideration of legislative and policy issues – and the preparation of subsequent responses – is critical for decision-makers. Applying a gender perspective in developing solutions will help to ensure that these are responsive to the unique experiences of all individuals, avoiding “one-size-fits-all” thinking, and are particularly sensitive to the needs of under-represented or historically marginalized groups. When applied by legislators, this contributes to creating a legal framework that works in favour of as many people as possible and the implementation of actions that proactively respond to and redress inequalities.

Learn more in this handout on [gender sensitivity in legislation](#).



ONLINE TRAINING SESSION

Preparing and delivering your intervention in parliament

The final virtual session focused on supporting participants in preparing for their participation in the YWIL parliamentary sitting. The session opened with words of welcome by Senator Phera Polius, and then was followed by presentations by the Honorable Jeremiah Norbert, Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly and MP, and Eilish Elliott, Gender Equality Project Manager at ParlAmericas.

The presentations covered what an effective intervention in parliament looks like and recommendations for how to conduct research and deliver their contribution. Participants were then given further guidance on how to apply learning on applying a gender lens in decision-making to the drafting of their parliamentary presentation. Emphasis was also placed on dialogue between participants and presenters to ensure that any questions about the Sitting were covered, and to providing space for participants to work collaboratively in small groups for preparation purposes.



LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

On Friday, May 27, in-between the scheduled virtual sessions, an in-person leadership workshop provided an opportunity for further exploration of programme themes and exchange on effective strategies to adopt in leadership work.

The workshop was facilitated by Caron Tobiere, Chair of the CIWiL Saint Lucia Chapter. It opened with remarks by representatives from each of the organising partners: The Honourable Claudius Francis, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Saint Lucia and Member of the ParlAmericas Board; The Honourable Alincia Williams Grant, President of the Senate of Antigua and Barbuda and Member of the ParlAmericas Board; and Nana Oye Hesse-Bayne, Board Coordinator for CIWiL. Dr. June Soomer provided the keynote address.

The rest of the programme featured panels of women leaders from various sectors sharing their knowledge and guidance in areas of important skill development, as well as engaging in dialogue with participants in response to points of interest.



The Honourable Alincia Williams-Grant, President of the Senate of Antigua and Barbuda

"We women cannot achieve targets, we cannot develop, we cannot grow, we cannot move forward as a unit to affect the impactful changes we need in our communities without the support from each other and without supporting each other."



Nana Oye Hesse-Bayne, Board Coordinator for CIWiL

"As young people, I am certain you are used to hearing people say 'young people are the future,' but I say to you today - young people are leaders of today."



The Honourable Claudius Francis, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Saint Lucia

"Do not put any barriers on yourself, the only limits are those you set on yourself."



Dr. June Soomer

"Finally, it is your duty to prevent us from being invisible in plain sight. Raise the image of leadership in your profession. Lead with knowledge, emotional intelligence, work ethic, and integrity. Reshape and redesign leadership, you can do this. It will not be easy but do not forget to laugh."

Building Supportive Communities and Partnerships

A focus of the YWiL programme is on transformational leadership, inclusive decision-making, and leadership as service. As a reflection of that, the first panel, moderated by Maria Fontenelle of CIWiL Saint Lucia, focused on how to build meaningful relationships and partnerships to support participants in their leadership journeys, but also provide mechanisms for sustainable community engagement that can inform their work and projects.

The following panellists shared their knowledge and experiences with participants on these themes:

- Chelsea Foster, Founder and Executive Director of Girls of a Feather
- Dr. Rosemarie Husbands-Mathurin, former Speaker of the House and former President of the Senate of Saint Lucia
- Janey Joseph, Director of the Department of Gender Relations of Saint Lucia



Overcoming challenges on your leadership journey

The second panel, moderated by Senator Kaygianna Toussaint Charlery, focused on the unique barriers faced by women, particularly those in leadership positions. The panel provided participants with an opportunity to engage with women leaders on a discussion of these issues and gain knowledge that can be applied to their own leadership journeys.

The following panellists shared their knowledge and experiences with participants on these themes:

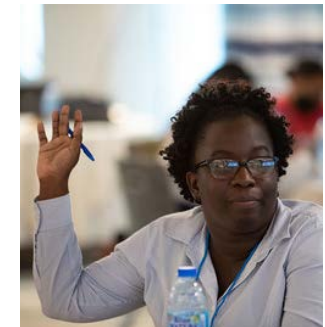
- Dr. Halimah DeShong, Senior Lecturer and Head of the Cave Hill Unit of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at The University of the West Indies
- Senator Lisa Jawahir
- Jessica St. Rose, human rights activist and organiser
- Paula Watson-Popo, Vice-Chairperson of CIWiL Saint Lucia, civil engineer, and small business owner



The leadership workshop concluded with a presentation and exercises on personal development led by Jacqueline Massiah, as well as final remarks via video by H.E. Lilian Chatterjee, High Commissioner of Canada to Barbados and the OECS.

The following are examples of key learning participants reported as having gained from the YWiL programme that they will apply in their ongoing leadership pursuits:

- Leadership is not just about leading from a distance but it involves teamworking with members contribution, enhancing their efforts, and making everyone feel a sense of belonging and importance.
- One approach towards leadership that stuck with me during YWiLSLU is that “not everybody that is of a different opinion is against you.” We can use other people’s opinions to refine ours.
- We should not shut out men when it comes to feminism, involve them so that they can better understand our plight and aid in demolishing the different gender-based biases in our communities.
- Not being afraid to use your womanhood to your own advantage – working on yourself is the best way to start your leadership journey.
- This program helped me learn the importance of transformational leadership, and this has influenced me to look into it more to try to become a transformational leader.
- To be more inclusive and listen as well as be open to alternative views.
- I understand that in today’s age, leadership means including everyone in the decision making process. I now pay more attention in meetings to those persons who want to contribute but have not yet found their voices, or those persons who cannot raise their voices loud enough to be heard.
- That as a leader you need to allow persons the opportunity to speak up and voice their opinions, before coming into a room and thinking you always have to speak first.



YWiL PRACTICE SITTING

On June 24, a practice session for the YWiL Parliamentary Sittings took place in Parliament and was a practical session focused entirely on supporting participants in their preparations for the official Sittings. Participants received briefings from legislative authorities on parliamentary procedure, and then took part in practice sittings for their respective chambers.



YWiL PRACTICE SITTING



YWiL SITTING

On June 27, the Parliament of Saint Lucia hosted debates in both the House of Assembly and the Senate as part of the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting, representing the first all-women sitting in the country's history. YWiL participants served as parliamentarians and officers of the parliament in both chambers for debates on a motion to be moved by the Minister for Finance, Economic Development, and the Youth Economy related to women and the changing economy.

The simulated motion proposed the development of an action plan that prioritises gender equality and women's empowerment within efforts to promote economic development and adapting to a changing economy, with focused attention on three key areas:

- *Creating an enabling environment* for women's economic empowerment, including pursuing measures to promote balance in care work and investing in infrastructure to foster the growth of new and emerging industries, sectors, and ways of work
- *Providing education*, including training women and girls in the skills necessary for high-demand and emerging fields, as well as implementing public awareness campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes in the world of work (for example, that women are only suited to specific jobs)
- *Increasing direct support* to women workers, by providing access to needed resources and providing incentives to employers in in-demand fields to hire women



Watch the [House of Assembly Sitting](#) and the [Senate Sitting](#) on the Saint Lucia Government YouTube page.



The OECD defines **economic empowerment** as “the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth.”

UN Women identifies the benefits of economic empowerment for women as the following:

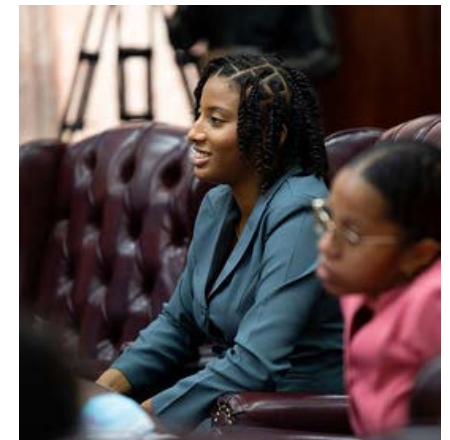
- “Women's economic empowerment is central to realizing women's rights and gender equality
- Empowering women in the economic and closing gender gaps in the world of work are key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- When more women work, economies grow
- Increasing women's and girls' educational attainment contributes to women's economic empowerment and more inclusive growth
- Women's economic equality is good for business”

Sources:

[Women's Economic Empowerment](#) (OECD Issues Paper 2011, pg. 6);
[Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment](#) (UN Women 2018).

YWIL parliamentarians' contributions offered their perspectives on the measures and priorities established in the motion in alignment with their assigned constituencies and portfolios. Interventions further took the COVID-19 context into consideration in their assessment; participants identified the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic as a driving force that can exacerbate key issues of gender inequality in the country. Participants made effective use of research and guidance from peers and other experts, resulting in an engaging, thought-provoking, and intelligent debate.

Following the votes in each chamber, congratulatory remarks were offered by Speaker Claudius Francis following the House of Assembly sitting and The Honourable Stanley Felix, President of the Senate, following the Senate sitting. Certificates were then presented to the participants of each sitting by the The Honorable Jeremiah Norbert and Senator Alvina Reynolds, respectively, in ceremonies facilitated by CIWiL Saint Lucia Chair Caron Tobiere.



PARTICIPANTS' NEXT STEPS

Inspired by their participation in YWiLSLU, the young women leaders planned next steps for taking positive action in their communities, sharing their learning, and continuing their leadership development. Some of the commitments adopted included:

- Collaborate on projects with likeminded individuals
- Participate in forums where my voice can be heard (take up space)
- Speak up when I have something meaningful to contribute
- Become a member of a national youth group
- Create an intervention for women who have been abused or have not healed from trauma
- Consult more organisations on how their policies may be more inclusive
- Follow up with the community government representative
- Participate in more programs to advance my political career
- Spark discussions with the wider community (online and in person) about gender stereotypes and gender expression



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CIWiL and ParlAmericas also wish to recognise and extend thanks to the members of the YWiL SLU Selection Committee, the peer mentors from past YWiL cohorts, the panellists and facilitators who shared their knowledge and time, and the numerous organisations and individuals who promoted the event and its recruitment process. Each of these contributions was essential to helping to make this historic event such a success.



YWiLSLU was hosted as part of the ParlAmericas-CIWiL joint project, “Strengthening Women’s Political Leadership in the Caribbean,” supported by the Parliament of Saint Lucia and the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

ABOUT CIWiL AND PARLAMERICAS



Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) is a non-political, multi-partisan, and independent NGO established to monitor, strengthen and increase women's political participation and leadership in the region through advocacy, networking, research and capacity building initiatives.

CIWiL aims to create a sustainable, effective, and efficient women's leadership base, and to achieve gender equality, through advocacy, networking, research and capacity building.

CIWiL is about creating a space of sharing, nurturing, and solidarity among women across the many gaps that divide us.

The mission of CIWiL is to be a flagship organization to support efforts to increase the number of women in politics, leadership and decision-making at all levels in the Caribbean through high-quality training, networking, research, analysis and advocacy.

CIWiL acts as a coordinating and implementing mechanism for a regional programme of work developed and delivered by a network of organizations and individuals, to advance women's transformational leadership.



ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system. Composed of the 35 national legislatures in North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, ParlAmericas promotes cooperative political dialogue, facilitates the exchange of good legislative practices, and produces tailored resources to support parliamentarians in their work. The International Secretariat of ParlAmericas is headquartered in Ottawa, Canada.

Through its gender equality programming, ParlAmericas promotes gender mainstreaming in parliamentary agendas and operations and, in close collaboration with civil society partners, advances women's political leadership, including that of the next generation of empowered women leaders.