

PROFILE – HAZEL BROWN

Hazel Brown has spent most of her adult life as a consumer and women's affairs advocate because of her strong belief that citizens should speak-up on decisions, which affect their lives. She is also motivated by the conviction that democracy is strengthened in a society where citizens participate actively in the decision-making process.

Over the years Ms. Brown has been involved in several voluntary social action groups. She is a member of the Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HATT). HATT was established in 1971 to generate public interest and awareness of the power of consumer action and to provide reliable consumer information, investigate consumer complaints, ensure consumer protection and educate consumers about their rights.

An outspoken advocate of women's rights, Ms. Brown was a founding member of the Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women, a comprehensive national umbrella organization formed in 1985 to present the position of women in Trinidad and Tobago at the End of Decade Conference in Nairobi. The Network is an advocate and support for women's organisations in Trinidad and Tobago and is part of many regional and international networks of women, and enjoys special consultative status with the UN ECOSOC in New York and is accredited as a civil society organisation with the Organisation of American States (OAS) in Washington

She is the main driver of the Network's 'put a woman' project. This non partisan project, funded in part by the Commonwealth Foundation and UN Democracy Fund, aims to prepare women and young persons to participate in the local government and national elections processes, and at the same time prepare the environment, of a predominantly male governmental process, for their acceptance in greater numbers. This in keeping with the mandate of the Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs Meeting who in Trinidad and Tobago in November 1996 agreed to work towards the acceleration of gender integration in politics at national, and local levels. In this context they also recommended a target of 30% of women in decision-making in the political public and private sectors by 2005.

The 'put a woman' project also aims to strengthen the networking and build capacity of Caribbean women working towards this goal. In this connection she is also a founding member of the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWIL)

She is the former Secretary General of the Commonwealth Women's Network, linking women in 52 commonwealth countries. She has been actively involved in the planning and organizing of participated in every Commonwealth Civil Society People's Forum, which is held parallel to CHOGM from 1991 to 2009.

In her drive to make a contribution to the Trinidad and Tobago society, Ms. Brown has continued to initiate and be active in a number of community oriented projects. She serves as Board member and is a former Chair of the Diego Martin Consumer Co-operative Society, the only surviving consumer cooperative of those started in the seventies.

Ms. Brown was also a founder of the Telephone Users Group which was formed to generate public interest, collate information and represent consumers at the telephone rate hearings in 1971. In subsequent utility hearings for electricity and telephone rate increases Ms. Brown was able to mobilize and motivate a significant number of subscribers to participate in the hearings. Ms. Brown's contention was that these increased rates would place an unfair burden on poor and low-income groups, especially, in the case of electricity. As a result there were changes in the electricity and water rate structures and fair rate increases.

Since 1992 Ms. Brown has been involved in experimentation and promotion of Solar Box Cooking in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana as a practical convenient way for people of all ages to use a safe, non-polluting renewable energy source which is widely available. The project which teaches how to build and use solar box cookers was presented as a success story at the 1994 SIDS Conferences in Barbados. This project was recently awarded a grant by BP Trinidad to develop a model solar cooker for commercial production and job creation in Trinidad and Tobago.

She was also responsible for coordinating the Trinidad and Tobago NGO participation in several UN Conferences. In 1994 Ms. Brown was appointed Coordinator for Caribbean Region Preparatory Process Project for the World Summit for Social Development. This project was designed to increase awareness among NGOs about the core issue of the Summit ensuring adequate responsible and informed Caribbean NGO representation and participation at the Prep Coms and the Summit itself. It successfully promoted NGO representation as part of Government delegates and building consensus among Caribbean delegates on the priorities for action on the Core Issues.

She was also responsible for Trinidad and Tobago NGO participation in the 1995 Beijing UN Women's Conference as well as the follow up Beijing+5 in New York in 2000, where she was part of a vibrant Caribbean Women caucus and the 1996 Habitat Conference in Istanbul, Turkey. She also participated in the Beijing+10 Meeting in New York.

This Caribbean work was recognised by the UNDP system by an award in 2000. She is also Vice Chair of the UNDP National Steering Committee for the GEF Small Grants Programme.

Ms Brown is also;

- Chair of the Diego Martin Network of Community Organisations
- Council Member of the Trinidad and Tobago Group of Professional Associations(TTGPA)
- Member of the IDB Civil Society Advisory Committee
- Member of the Chief Justice New Rules Monitoring Committee

She is a former member of the National Minimum Wages Board which introduced a National Minimum wage for Trinidad and Tobago, replacing sectoral minimum wages and the Prices Commission

Ms Brown received her secondary education at Bishop Anstey High School and St Joseph's Convent, on a 1953 Port of Spain City Council scholarship and is one of the first graduates of the Cipriani Labour College in 1969

Ms Brown worked for 17 years in various department of the public service from 1959 to 1976. She worked as an Administrative Officer in The CARICOM Secretariat in Georgetown from 1992-1994. She has for the past 35 years been engaged as a Consultant/ Adviser on Consumer and Women's Affairs. She has also from time to time hosted radio programmes on matters of public interest especially relating to affairs of women and consumers.

She has also been privileged to address many regional and international fora on matters relating to women, consumers and governance.

Ms. Brown is at present the Coordinator (*a voluntary elected position*) of the Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women.

A twenty-year cancer survivor she is also an advocate and support for many cancer patients. She was honoured by the Guyana Cancer Society for her work in support of Guyanese cancer patients, mainly women, who come to Trinidad for treatment .

She is the mother of four grown children and a grandmother of eight..

Step mother of 6