

**Spotlight
Initiative**

*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*

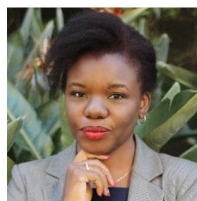
August 2021

In the Spotlight

Caribbean

Editor's Note

Meet the PMU Team



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Welcome to the 1st issue of **In the Spotlight – Caribbean!** This inaugural issue of the Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative Newsletter highlights foundational elements established so far to ensure the success of the regional programme.

With the Regional Programme well underway this issue will feature messages from our lead partners: the United Nations Resident Coordinator (RC); the Ambassador to the EU Delegation, Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, the OECS and CARICOM/CARIFORUM, the CARICOM Secretariat and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat. This issue will also share progress and lessons from three Spotlight Initiative national programmes – Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago.

Situated within the Resident Coordinator's Office, we shine a light on the Programme Management Unit (PMU) team **(left)**, which has been established to support the coordination and implementation of the Programme. In addition, the PMU supports all Recipient United Nations Organisations (RUNOs) and Implementing Partners that are working in the Programme.

The PMU, mandated by the RC and in collaboration with the RUNOs, holds overall responsibility for the Programme's operational guidance and coordination, strategic engagement with government counterparts, high-level programme oversight and monitoring, and smooth delivery of Programme components. This is done in coordination with the CS-RRG, government and the EUD. Furthermore, the PMU will support a unified communication approach as well as track results including sustainability of benefits provided through interventions.

The Spotlight Programme is a comprehensive approach to end Violence and against Women and Girls. The key actors – both internally and externally, with the support of the PMU are employing innovative solutions to ensure that the regional Programme successfully reaches its goals and objectives of women and girls living free of violence.

In future editions, In the Spotlight – the Caribbean will continue to highlight emerging results, examples of best practices, as well as give voice to civil society at the coalface of creating safer communities. In fact, the Civil Society Regional Reference Group has been installed and is ready to get to work. Read more about the CS-RRG members from Page 10.

We will also feature thought leadership on some of the pressing matters around VAWG. This issue reflects on how EVAWG could be the key to safer communities and societies. And more.... Did you know, a Sexual Reproductive and Health Rights Observatory for the Caribbean is in the works? Read more about the Observatory starting on Page 26.

Spotlight Initiative a key programme for UN System

I am delighted to be a part of this inaugural issue of the Regional Spotlight Programme e-newsletter, and specifically to introduce this key European Union (EU)-United Nations initiative that is expected to significantly change the lives of women and girls across the Caribbean region!

The Spotlight Initiative aims to end violence against women and girls by ensuring that both women and girls can live free from all forms of violence, including Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Domestic Violence (DV) and and, Family Violence (FV).

We are pleased to partner with the EU on this initiative and welcome its commitment to invest in gender equality as a precondition and driver for the achievement of the SDGs. The EU's investment of seed funding of €500 million to launch the Global Spotlight Initiative, signalled the world's largest targeted effort to end all forms of violence against women and girls, and has already begun to reap dividends here in the region.

The Caribbean Regional Programme, launched in September 2020, focuses on four programming pillars – strengthening regional institutions and women's movements, improving collection and use of data and prevention of family violence. Strengthening the women's movement is critical because while women's organisations are well networked across the Caribbean, barriers to the inclusion and participation of grassroots groups need to be addressed to ensure that marginalized populations can participate on equal terms, and access critical resources, such as grants and training.

This programme seeks to close this gap by providing capacity-building to enhance advocacy, strategic planning, and other integral operational skills to enhance the impact of these organizations that have been working tirelessly to support survivors.

I am happy that under the aegis of UN Reform, four Recipient United Nations Organisations (RUNOs), have joined forces with several partners including the EU Delegation to



Didier Trebucq – Resident Coordinator,
Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean.

Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, OECS and CARICOM/CARIFORUM. We also work with other UN associate agencies, the CARICOM Secretariat and its Regional Institutions, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, and Civil Society Organisations.

As RC with oversight of this regional programme, I look forward to building on this important coalition to deliver tangible results for the Caribbean people.

Central to the success of this initiative, however, is the enduring partnership between the UN and the EU, which is even more critical as we seek to signal the continued value that multilateralism and international cooperation plays in resilient growth.

I am happy to note that the Regional Programme is now fully operational with the Programme Management Unit having been fully staffed in May this year, the Civil Society Regional Reference Group confirmed, and Governance structures established to enhance coordination.

Our focus has now shifted to accelerating the Programme to ensure that the women and girls within the Caribbean can live with zero violence. Let us continue to work together to ensure that this becomes a reality.

This Regional Spotlight e-newsletter is a step in the right direction, and one that will bring you along on this exciting journey!

Importance of EU's Investment and Partnerships to end GBV

About two years ago, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) embarked on a global effort towards a more gender-responsive and less violent world: the Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls.

The EU allocated €50 million for the Caribbean region, out of a total of €500 million worldwide. This represents an unprecedented investment in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. However, this is not just a matter of equality; it is also about basic human rights and human dignity, and all those are values at the very core of the EU.

Guided by the principles on which it is founded, the EU is committed to a rules-based multilateral international order where global governance prevails. Likewise, building international partnerships for sustainable global change defines the purpose of our work. The UN, being at the heart of this multilateral framework, are a natural partner for every country and region in this endeavour. The sustainable development goals are a cross-cutting dimension of this international order that the EU stands for. Gender Equality represents a pre-condition and a driver to make any development inclusive and sustainable.

These values and principles are not only norms at the international level, well on the contrary. All Caribbean countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As reliable partners and building on their long-lasting relationship with the Caribbean countries, the EU and UN are supporting the region with the implementation and enforcement of their obligations under such regimes.

Gender-based violence and Domestic Violence (DV) are major flaws of our times; they know no borders and have prevailed over



Malgorzata Wasilewska - Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union to Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, OECS and CARICOM/CARIFORUM generations worldwide. There is no place in the world free from such horrendous human right violations, and so the global community cannot turn a blind eye on it. Nevertheless, harmful attitudes and mind-sets are not eternal; it is in our hands to build better societies together. The EU is convinced that such a pervasive problem can only be addressed through cooperation, building bridges and joining forces with all actors at all levels: national, regional and international; working hand-in-hand with world leaders, grassroots organisations, men and boys, women and girls.

DV and violence against women and children is probably the most brutal form of discrimination persisting in the world, including in the Caribbean, so the EU places a lot of importance to the Spotlight Regional Programme. This Programme will ensure that all women and children benefit from adequate legislation and policies, gender responsive institutions, improved essential services, comparable and reliable data, and stronger Women's Movements and Civil Society Organisations.

Let us continue working together, learning from each other and exchanging best practises. Only with joint forces we will be able to bring positive changes to the lives of the most vulnerable women and girls in each of our societies.

A Comprehensive Approach to ending Gender-based Violence

This significant and concerted investment by the European Union and the United Nations towards ending violence will make a transformative difference in the lives of women and girls in the Caribbean.

Significant strides towards gender equality in the countries covered by the UN Women Multi-Country Office have resulted in gains for women and girls in the Caribbean, relating primarily to high education rates and increases in employment rates. However critical gaps remain, especially related to Gender-based Violence (GBV).

The Caribbean has above the global average rates of intimate partner violence with rates ranging from 55% to 39% of ever-partnered women experiencing any kind of IPV.

In their 2017 study, **Restoring Paradise in the Caribbean: Combatting Violence with Numbers**, Sutton and Ruprah wrote that "an average of 40% of the Caribbean population identifies crime and security-related issues as the main problem facing their country, even above poverty, the economy, or inequality. The Bahamas, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago are afflicted with particularly high homicide rates (comparable to countries in armed conflict; more than 30 per 100,000 inhabitants)". In addressing Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), and Family Violence (FV) in particular, a comprehensive approach is



Tonni Brodber - Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean. UN Women is the Technical Coherence Lead, Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative.

required, especially given the critical position this form of violence plays in the lifecycle of violence and crime and security.

The Spotlight Initiative targets Laws and Policies, strengthens national and regional institutions, combats unequal social norms and attitudes, enhances essential services, improves the availability and quality of data, and promotes and empowers civil society and women's movements. Multi-sectoral strategic plans to address the protection, prevention and punishment of FV are being enhanced or developed in some cases, to ensure strengthened coordinated and cross-sectoral integrated responses. Substantive impact is dependent on a combination of coordinated responses such as protection policies, service provision, justice and prevention to combat all forms of violence.

To ensure sustainability, these efforts draw on a range of governmental and non-governmental agencies. While the ministries responsible for gender affairs play an essential role in coordinating gender transformative responses, a plethora of actors must be engaged to effectively manage cases of FV. The Spotlight Initiative's multi-sectoral approach engaging with many government ministries and civil society organisations across each

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CARICOM's efforts a timely response to preventing VAWG, FV

The ancient old virus called "Violence and Abuse Against Women and Girls" is a deeply-rooted "evil". It affects not only the individual victims but also families and societies. It affects the proper functioning of families and communities, whereby health and well-being are thrown out the window.

The Caribbean is extremely prone to this evil. The COVID pandemic has only worsened the situation. Statistics have shown that there is an increase in domestic violence and abuse in the Region. Although CARICOM has developed a draft Gender Policy, there is no regional policy against gender violence and abuse.

The Region has not been silent on these issues. The Report of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development (CCYD), presented to the CARICOM Heads of Government in January 2010, recognised the seriousness of crime and violence as the number one concern of youth. The Report also recognised the need for concerted action.

The CARICOM Strategic Plan 2014-2019, based on a resilience framework which focused on social, economic, environmental and technological resilience, laid out specific measures across a wide spectrum to ensure comprehensive treatment of crime and violence. The draft CARICOM Strategic Plan 2020-2030 follows the same method.

Violence eventually affects everyone, directly or indirectly. A safe environment is particularly crucial for the development of our children both in the community and at school. It is recognised, for example, that the escalation of violence in schools has a negative impact on students and teachers, the teaching and learning environment and learning itself. Violence in the home is two-pronged - it can be influenced by the community as well as it can influence the community at the same time - through negative definitions of social behaviour and a lack of non-violent conflict resolution skills. This cycle



Ambassador Manorma Soeknandan, Phd - Deputy Secretary-General, CARICOM Secretariat

becomes self-perpetuating and needs to be broken.

Addressing violence in any of its forms is not a simple task. It requires sound partnerships and approaches which are multi-sectoral in nature. Important actors include policy makers, youth, parents, educators, researchers, protective services, the justice sector, faith-based organisations, the private sector, regional institutions, and those members of civil society who give their time and efforts through various non-governmental organisations. Each and every individual has a role to play. An all-inclusive approach is crucial. We are yet to perfect the art of meaningful cooperation and coordinated action at the level of the Government, Ministries and departments and between and among Regional Institutions, to achieve effective solutions to challenges that confront us.

Comprehensive, coordinated and structured approaches against Violence Against Women and Girls and Family Violence are a necessity and should not be exceptional neither ad hoc.

1 IN 2 women killed worldwide were killed by their partners and/family members. *in 2012

#SpotlightEndViolence

Focus on the Family to end violence against women, girls

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) has embraced the Caribbean-wide Regional Spotlight Initiative "Strengthening Regional Cooperation to Prevent and Respond to Family Violence in the Caribbean" that places the focus on the family and seeks to end violence against women and girls.

The project coincides with the finalisation of the OECS Gender Policy and Manual, the OECS Social Inclusion and Social Protection regional implementation plan and the new OECS Strategic Plan. Pillar 5 of the strategic plan - Advance Equity and Inclusion - has a focus on family as well as reduction of violence in vulnerable and socially-excluded individuals. This is inclusive of gender-based violence, domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. Among various objectives, the Gender Policy seeks to promote values leading to a culture of gender justice, mutual care, peace, harmony, and freedom from violence in the home, communities, and institutions of the Member States.

While there have been some successes such as the development of model and family laws by the OECS, a key issue that has been identified in the Eastern Caribbean is the lack of holistic family-based approaches to ending family violence in its Member States.

Programmes often target one problem or individual without understanding the family dynamics. A family should have access to the multiple resources that may be needed. In addition, there is insufficient data to inform programmes and policies though

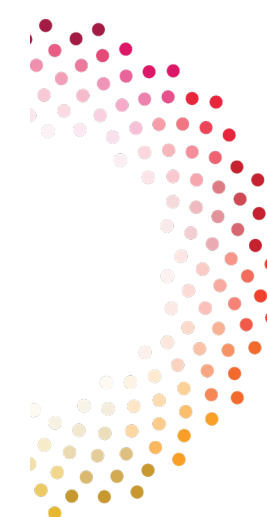


Dr. Carlene Radix, Head of the Human and Social Division at the OECS

this is beginning to change. The Regional Spotlight Initiative will aim to support the OECS Commission to strengthen regional approaches.

Through the Regional Spotlight Initiative, the OECS is committed to continue to work hand in hand with other regional institutions building on existing partnerships. This includes our ongoing work in child protection and social protection with UNICEF, as well as the collaboration with UNFPA in the delivery of training in Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. We also intend to engage relevant regional Civil Society Organisations.

The Regional Spotlight Initiative takes us closer to realising the vision of "A better quality of life for the people of the OECS" especially for our families.



Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations that aims to **eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.**



Why Ending VAWG could be the key to safer communities & societies

by Je’Nille Maraj and Sharon Carter-Burke

Latin America and the Caribbean currently hold the top spot on the leaderboard. The region remains the most violent in the world outside of war zones, with high rates of homicides, organized crime and violence against women and girls.

An average of 40% of the Caribbean population identifies crime and security-related issues as the main problem facing their country, even above poverty, the economy, or inequality. Sutton, Ruprah 2017, **Restoring Paradise in the Caribbean: Combatting Violence with Numbers** shows The Bahamas, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago are afflicted with particularly high homicide rates (comparable to countries in armed conflict; more than 30 per 100,000 inhabitants)¹.

¹ <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Restoring-Paradise-in-the-Caribbean-Combatting-Violence-with-Numbers-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Prevalence data across five Caribbean countries also show alarming levels of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and child sexual abuse. According to the data available on [Caribbean Women Count](#) on average 46% of women have experienced at least one form of violence in their lifetime. More specifically, across the five countries, on average, 1 out of 3 ever partnered women has experienced physical and/or sexual IPV in their lifetime.

Men are both the majority victims and perpetrators of most crimes, except in the case of gender-based crimes (sexual violence and IPV) for which women and girls are overwhelmingly the victims. For example, 90% and 89% of homicide victims in Trinidad and Tobago were men for 2016 and 2017 respectively.

Global research confirms that unequal power relations between women and men is fueling VAWG. The surveys conducted across the five Caribbean countries align with these global findings. That is, the unequal power relations between women and men leads to controlling

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**FIGHT LIKE
A MAN
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN**



“Peace, justice and sustainable development. None are possible without gender equality and women’s empowerment.”



ANTÓNIO GUTERRES
UN Secretary-General

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implementation area reflects this understanding. Community mobilisation interventions to change social norms; parenting programmes; and interventions that primarily target boys and men (with women and girls) through group education combined with community mobilisation are being implemented to successfully tackle the strong cultural, social and economic obstacles to the attainment by women of a life free from violence.

UN Women’s violence against women and girls online data hub, [Caribbean Women Count](#), provides data on the prevalence of different forms of VAWG in the Caribbean, key trends, and the barriers to accessing services in five CARICOM countries: Jamaica, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, and Guyana. On average, across the five countries, 46% of partnered women have experienced at least one form of IPV in their lifetime.

The Caribbean Women Count data echoes global research confirming that unequal power relations between women and men is fuelling violence against women and girls. The five survey reports data show that there are higher IPV rates among women who agree that women’s role is to take care of the home and among women who believe that the man is the natural head of the household.

The data further demonstrates that unequal power relations between women and men leads to controlling behaviours within intimate relationships where women who have/had partners that exhibit at least one of these

behaviours, 60% reported experiencing IPV compared to 30% of women who said their partners did not exhibit these behaviours.

Through the Spotlight Initiative, there is a focus on expanding prevention efforts through an emphasis on addressing culturally sanctioned behaviours – including the complex issue of masculinities – which contribute to the perpetuation of VAWG. This includes batterer intervention and psycho-social support services which, through our experience with the Partnership for Peace Programme and Foundations GBV youth prevention programme, have helped reduce recidivism and support at-risk youth.

Focussing on efficacy of institutions, the security of individuals, their protection and empowerment from an all-of-community approach is pivotal to efforts to end GBV. UN Women has designed and implemented programmes and provides technical support for preventing and responding to GBV from a comprehensive lens in the Caribbean for over 10 years and is pleased to work collaboratively with sister UN agencies in the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative as Technical Coherence Lead.

When we come together, we are that much more powerful. Our Haitian family is experiencing the aftereffects of the recent Earthquake and the Spotlight Initiative is a critical vehicle to use regional experience and solidarity to give Haitian women and men the space to manage VAWG cases throughout their recovery.

CS-RRG ready to get to work

Civil Society engagement is at the heart of the Spotlight Initiative, and is an important part of rolling out the Caribbean Regional Programme.

The Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CS-RRG) will facilitate and ensure the systematic and meaningful engagement of women's rights groups and relevant civil society organisations, including those representing young women and groups facing intersecting forms of discrimination.

The 16-member civil society group is an institutional mechanism established to harness civil society expertise. It holds a triple responsibility as advisor to the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme, an advocate and partner to ensure the objectives of the Initiative are achieved as well as hold the Initiative accountable.

Terry Ince, Chair – CS-RRG and a social entrepreneur and right activist said, “we believe that there is strength in diversity, and look forward to producing meaningful contributions towards sustainable change through the work of the Spotlight Initiative. “Through our remit as members of

the CS-RRG, we intend to utilise all available avenues of engagement: social media, print, performing and visual arts, to engage all stakeholders in a collaborative drive towards positive achievements.”

Quacy Grant, the first elected president of the Guyana National Youth Council is the Vice-chair. Kevin Liverpool, who is a development practitioner, a champion for gender equality and Administrator of the Caribbean Male Action Network is Third-Chair.

The CS-RRG is made up of CSOs from Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad & Tobago and adheres to the United Nation's principle of ‘Leaving No One Behind’.

The members are from diverse communities and serve diverse constituents, including survivors of Violence against Women Girls, Sexual and Reproductive Health and rights activists, leaders of indigenous groups, and LGBTQI leaders, grassroots organizations, community-based organisations, networks and movements, and women activists.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

30% of women over the age of 15 have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime



Six members of the CS-RRG share their views on working with the Spotlight Initiative



Terry Ince
Chair

It is an honor and privilege to be nominated to be a member of the CS-RRG, and I look forward to working with and learning from my peers across the region.

As a Behavioral activist and founder of an NGO that is grounded in human rights and the principles of the CEDAW convention, I hope to continue collaborating with all stakeholders to ensure these principles are represented through effective policies and sustainable programmes.

I think the CS-RRG is well positioned to leverage the capacities harbored within CSOs regionally, to bring about the changes articulated through the Spotlight Initiative.



Kevin Liverpool
Third Chair

It's an awesome feeling to be part of such a diverse group of practitioners with years of experience working on gender equality and social justice issues.

I look forward to learning from my colleagues and to the synergies that would emerge. I also consider the Reference Groups a commendable part of the Spotlight Initiative, which promotes meaningful input from civil society.

I take the responsibility seriously, and given that my work focuses on men and masculinities, to ensure that emphasis can be placed on men and boys as part of the solution and as accountable allies for gender equality and a more peaceful Caribbean.



Joy Crawford

I am excited and blessed to be a member of the CS-RRG. My excitement comes from the affirmation of my work and professional worth as recognized by my peers. Excitement driven by the potential and collaborative partnership and diversity of ideas that will be borne in the CS-RRG.

Blessed to be a NGO founder, a survivor, a service provider and advocate.

CS-RRG is an effective vehicle to influence regional agendas, policies, and memorandums, and to evoke meaningful change in Gender Based Violence Program Initiatives. Blessed to carry the messages of survivors of sexual violence.



Renata Chuck-A-Sang

I feel honoured to have been nominated to be part of the CS RRG. It gives me an opportunity to interact with colleagues who have also been working on these issues. I expect this will be a learning experience for me.

Moreover, it is my goal that we can collectively arrive at sustainable solutions.

I hope we can present some workable tools to be used in situations that would normally have triggered violence as part of the response.

Behavioral change is often difficult to achieve, but not impossible.



Martha Vanya David

It is an honour to be part of a momentum featuring the challenges that women and young girls face daily and, most importantly mainstreaming these with a view to finding realistic solutions, the major component of which entails the sensitization of the respective societal communities.

CS-RRG epitomizes labour of love for the rights and rightful place of women in shaping global agendas and a dedication to see that our part of the globe joins other like minds in promoting these endeavours among others. This entity is truly a meeting of the minds, minds with experience, knowledge and avid for action.

I am eager to see the principles of the work of CS-RRG into action.



Yasmina Samouh

I feel honored to be part of such a program and to represent the civil society of Guadeloupe, a French island with its own specificities, but also where we are grappling with problems in terms of gender violence and inequalities. The Spotlight initiative will further unite our action.

We have already spoken of the “Spotlight” program to the various players in the territory who are impatiently awaiting the actions of the Spotlight Initiative.

For us, this will be a way of pooling the different structures and carrying out actions together, which will allow better cohesion and develop collaborative work



Dr. Quacy Grant
Vice-Chair

Dr. Grant is the first elected president of the Guyana National Youth Council, which allowed him to successfully coordinate a civic and voter education project - INKITUP - funded by USAID). He also recently graduated from USAID/CFYR's AAA Online Advocacy course, where he gained additional skills to fulfil his passion for working with fellow youth advocates on issues related to GBV.

Dr. Grant has contributed to Guyana's advancement to achieving the SDGs, as one of several youth change-makers within GuyberNet, and as President of the Rotaract Club of Georgetown. He is co-chair of the PAHO/WHO Technical Working Group for Mental Health and Psycho-social Support, is currently engaged in a PAHO-funded behavioural change programme.



Yvonne Barrow

Barrow is a social development practitioner focused on gender development issues. She has designed and implemented mentorship programmes for women and girls in rural communities, pre-diversion programmes for boys ages 13-17 awaiting trial at Sophia Detention Centre, child sexual abuse prevention programmes and case management services for victims of domestic violence.

Barrow has also led several reproductive health campaigns., and in 2018, as a recipient of the Commonwealth Peace Awards, she co-founded 'Protect your Peace', a social programme offering educational, vocational and mentorship support for male adolescents in conflict with the law.



Angelique V. Nixon, Ph.D.

Dr. Nixon, (she/her) is a Bahamas-born, Trinidad-based queer writer, artist, community worker, and scholar-activist. Dr. Nixon is a lecturer and researcher at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) at the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine.

For over 20 years, Angelique has worked in social justice movements and civil society and community organisations regionally and internationally. She is active in Caribbean movements for social and environmental justice and has developed several community-based projects to facilitate social change, notably the healing collective Ayiti Resurrect, which organised programmes in Leogane, Haiti (2010-2017) through annual delegations focused on sustainability, health, and women's empowerment.



Renae Green

Renae Green is a LGBTQ youth and women's rights advocate who is committed and passionate about her work with the community. She has served as the LGBT representative on the Jamaica Country Coordinating Mechanism for the Global Fund and currently serves as the NGO alternate. Renae is the Jamaica representative for UCTRANS, which is the only regional Trans network, and she has also served as a restless development youth advocate. She is also an IPPF Youth Advocate in her capacity as a sexual and reproductive health rights advocate.

Renae brings with her regional and international exposure through participating in human rights workshops, conferences, and training, and currently serves as Executive Director for TransWave Jamaica, which is the only trans-led and focused organization operating in Jamaica

If exposure to, or a tendency to perpetrate DV is also a predictor that a man will engage in deviant behaviour, then interventions designed to prevent or reduce deviant behaviour in general may similarly prevent or reduce DV.

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behaviours within intimate relationships which in turn are predictors of violence. According to the data on Caribbean Women Count, a woman is more likely to experience intimate partner physical or sexual violence: if they were in relationships with partners who engaged in fights with other men; if the woman was the main source of income (men feeling threatened by this); if she could not freely speak to her family; and if the woman or her partner had been beaten during childhood.

On this latter point, supporting the social learning theory of violence, the studies also looked at the intergenerational transmission of DV, which suggests that exposure to DV in childhood, is an important predictor for IPV in adulthood. The studies revealed that where the woman or her partner experienced

FV in childhood that is, if they were beaten as children; their mothers were hit by her husband or where the woman was insulted or humiliated as a child; then the women were more likely to experience IPV as adults and the men were more likely to become batterers or perpetrators of DV in adulthood.

Internationally, research funded by the US Department of Justice noted that of men who had engaged in DV, 76% also reported engaging in one or more deviant acts concurrently. Alter (2017) discovered that a previous history of DV

and/or current domestic or family violence was involved in 54% of mass shootings examined over a seven-year period in the United States

What does this mean for the way FV is approached in the Caribbean? These acts of physical and sexual violence, emotional abuse and controlling behaviours are underreported and historically regarded as private matters. Therefore, if exposure to or a tendency to perpetrate DV is also a predictor that a man will engage in deviant behaviour, then interventions designed to prevent or reduce deviant behaviour in general may similarly prevent or reduce DV.

The social and economic costs of violence to the region, range from the extreme – loss of life to diminished quality of life for citizens. Furthermore extraordinary spending on crime prevention and response mechanisms by government and the private sector account for a significant percentage of GDP. Current strategies, policies and responses may be missing key opportunities to modify behaviour, reduce impunity and interrupt violence at early stages before it becomes socially acceptable. Establishing the linkages between types of violence, will enable the development of lifetime, evidence-based approaches.

The Spotlight Initiative as a multi-sectoral, coordinated approach to EVAWG, will work towards prevention and response at all levels within the region as we build forward equal, safer and stronger.



Belizean women are finding their POWA

by Stephanie Daniels Moody

“The first time my husband beat me, it caught me by surprise,” says Yolanda*, a 35-year-old mother of two.”

The second time he hit her, it happened in front of her five-year-old son. For Yolanda, this was a turning point. “My son was saying, ‘No, Daddy! No!’ That was when I said ‘I will not take this anymore.’”

Yolanda left home and took her children to stay with a friend for a couple of days. It was then that she learned about the Productive Organization for Women in Action (POWA), a Spotlight Initiative-supported community organization that assists survivors of gender-based violence.

With support from POWA, Yolanda moved into a house of her own and received food packages until she was able to get back on her feet. In addition to attending the entrepreneurial learning sessions run by POWA to help women become financially independent, Yolanda now volunteers with the organization. She says that assisting others gives her strength.

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“I am there for a lot of people even while I am going through my own thing,” she says

She’s especially passionate about helping women to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. “I have two young ladies that I help to get contraceptives,” she explains. “Their partners don’t want them to take pills. I have to help them do these things because their husbands don’t approve.”

Tackling such deeply-rooted issues requires a comprehensive approach, says Michele Irving, POWA Coordinator and Women’s Department Officer for the Stann Creek District. POWA-run initiatives include information sessions that teach women about their human and legal rights, parenting techniques, entrepreneurial skills, and sessions that raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence. For the women of Dangriga, POWA is a sisterhood – a safe space to learn, confide and feel empowered.

“One of our strong points is our ability to nurture women physically, psychologically and materially,” says Ms. Irving.

According to her, many former clients become volunteers, just like Yolanda.

“Sometimes that can



Michele Irving, POWA Coordinator and Women’s Department Officer for the Stann Creek District.
Photo: Perla Hinojosa/Spotlight Initiative.

be a source of healing – through helping others, women help themselves. These are some of the guiding principles and philosophies that we use.”

Violence was normal in the house where Margaret* grew up. Now 32, she can still remember how her father brutally beat her mother for years before they were able to leave.

“My mother would always tell me, if I experienced domestic violence, I should walk out of the relationship,” she says. Despite this warning, Margaret spent 12 years in an abusive relationship herself.

Irving says that this is a common story. When a woman experiences

violence, it has far-reaching repercussions for her and the immediate family, but also on society and on future generations. Exposure to family and domestic violence influences how children view and engage in their own relationships as adolescents and adults.

“Self-esteem is a big issue,” says Irving. “There is a reluctance to acknowledge women and girls as whole people and not just as props for their families. Women are people first [but] our current culture diminishes and erases women. So, this influences how they see and value themselves, and it opens the door to abuse.”

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Gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment are crucial to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

#Spotlightendviolence



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Margaret says that POWA training has helped her become more confident.

“POWA helped me get counselling and built my self-esteem,” she says. “I also did the parenting session and we learned a lot about communicating with your child and building a relationship. I told my mother she is my role model and she told me she was proud of me and that I am doing well for myself.”

Though Margaret and Yolanda have maintained contact with their former partners, they say that they’re now able to put their own needs and safety first. Violence is no longer a part of their relationships.

The work of groups like POWA is pivotal in supporting women and girls to end the cycle of abuse for good. It’s only through the work of front-line organizations and activists that a future without violence is possible.

■ Names have been changed to protect survivors’ privacy.

In the Spotlight Trinidad & Tobago



Dr. Jennifer Rouse presenting to workshop participants. Photo Credit: Sharon Ramsay Hazel

Tobago elderly caregivers get elder-care training

Roxborough Police Youth Club is doing everything it can to protect Tobago's most vulnerable citizens - not just from the virus, but from the "shadow pandemic" of gender-based violence.

The club recently hosted Project P.O.W.E.R. (Protecting Our Women and Elderly Residents), a two-day workshop funded by the Spotlight Initiative to better train those working in care-giving services. Project Manager Jonathan Mc Carter-White said that the programme was designed to address the isolation of older citizens during lockdowns and the violence that can flourish behind closed doors.

"In my experience, elderly women are more vulnerable to violence [than elderly men] because the social disparity between men and women remains, elderly or not," said Mc Carter-White.

UN data indicates that In 2017, one in six older persons was subjected to abuse. Elderly women in particular face an increased risk of physical and psychological abuse due to discriminatory societal attitudes. They are also more likely to live in poverty and are less likely to have access to legal protection.

In the Spotlight Trinidad & Tobago

A Roxborough Police Youth Club community survey found that while 74.3 per cent of respondents were the sole caregiver for an elderly family member, less than 13 per cent had formal training in geriatric care.

In order to address this gap, Gerontologist and former Head of Aging at the Ministry of Social Welfare and Family Services, Dr. Jennifer Rouse taught workshop participants about food preparation, first aid and shared techniques for better interpersonal communication.

The workshops also covered gerontology and geriatric care, exercising a compassionate approach to difficult elderly clients, how to identify different forms of elder abuse and ethical principles of care-giving. An exploration on the vagaries of Alzheimer's Disease and strange behaviours exhibited by some elderly people impacted by the pandemic equipped care-givers with a better understanding of their clients.

"While growing up, I always took care of the elderly," said participant Julianna Duke, 58. "Taking care of people is who I am." A caregiver for more than 20 years, she is now employed with the Aging Unit at the Ministry of Social Services, but never received any formal training.

Duke said that in addition to building her knowledge, the workshops helped to affirm her role as a caregiver as worthwhile. "Sometimes you feel in the job that people look down on you,

like you don't know anything," she said. "I felt very touched by the speaker and a lot of what she said resonated with me. I left there believing that I am somebody worthy of respect."

The training was well-timed, given the additional stress that COVID-19 has placed on both elderly people and their caregivers can create an environment where violence can thrive.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted both the elderly and the caregivers negatively," explained Dr. Rouse. "The isolation caused by mandatory social distancing has ushered in depression and loneliness in a significant number of the elderly, while the caregivers have the additional sanitization of their clothing, and constant washing and cleaning of items they use for assisting the elders with their daily activities."

Avril Duke Jerry, a caregiver of 15 years, also attended the workshops. "What I learned is to think critically about my job and how I interact with the people in my care," she said. "Now I regularly stop and ask myself, 'Am I doing this right?' It was a really edifying experience."

Dr. Rouse says that formal training empowers caregivers to operate more independently and competently, but it also allows them to mentor and share their knowledge with untrained co-workers. This has a direct impact on the comfort and experience of elderly clients, ensuring that elderly women receive the care that they deserve.

In the Spotlight Jamaica

Supporting FV Survivors

Leanna, a 49-year-old mother of three, has been volunteering with Woman Inc. since she was around 17 years old. Founded in Jamaica in 1984, Woman Inc. is a voluntary, non-profit, non-governmental organisation that draws upon the creative energies of women who are dedicated to providing assistance to victims of rape, incest, domestic crisis, sexual harassment at the workplace, human trafficking, and domestic violence (DV).

Woman Inc. manages a crisis center that offers a 24-hour crisis hotline that provides women and girls remote crisis counselling, information, and referral to a series of services, including the police, access to justice, health services, and sexual and reproductive health services. It also links survivors with actors that offer a series of other social services, such as material and financial aid and safe accommodation in case of imminent risks.

Leanna has witnessed the challenges faced by victims of gender-based violence (GBV).

Our conversation is a virtual, and there is no video, but the tentative and concerned nature of her tone is apparent as she speaks about her experience as a volunteer. She says she was introduced to the organisation by a friend who was affected by DV and explained that once she realised what the focus of the organisation was, then she was sold on getting involved because she wanted to help others.

“The more information I got, the more I realised that we have to do something about this, because it has so many far-reaching consequences.” Ultimately, she says she just wants to help. “I feel for people when they have situations, and I

... we have
to do
something
about this.

realise that a lot of people’s circumstances prevent them from achieving more and I fundamentally believe that everybody can be better,” she states.

In addition to volunteering at Woman Inc., Leanna works in Human Resources at another outreach organisation and has a creative side that allows her to do some writing and event planning. She notes, however, that working in human resources has allowed her to realise even more just how much need there is to empathise with people and provide support.

What she did not expect, is that she would eventually need the same support that she was providing to other women. She explained that her marriage had a number of challenges, specifically her husband hitting her, and her staying after that experiencing GBV with him.

“If I let it slide, it might happen again and we are not going to let that happen, so I just went to him and said we can’t do this, you need to go; so I think if I were not more aware, I might have allowed it to slide, and it would have happened more than one time”. She credits her time at Woman Inc. for helping her to navigate

In the Spotlight Jamaica



the situation. “Perhaps if I had not been more exposed, I would have made worse decisions.”

The Spotlight Initiative has been working with Woman Inc., the Bureau of Gender Affairs and other organizations to expand and support the services they offer to survivors of violence against women and girls through a partnership that began in July 2020. Its aim is to strengthen the existing capacities of the crisis centers and the hotline to respond to the increased demand of services by women and girls’ survivors of GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Marie, a 40-year-old mother of two has been a hairdresser for 15 years, however she says business has been slow since the onset of COVID-19. According to her, Woman Inc. has been there to provide support for her during the pandemic. “... I did not have a tablet for my daughter (who needs it for distance learning) and Joyce (Director for Woman Inc.) worked up some magic for me and got me a tablet because with COVID, work was slow and

nothing was going on.”

Through Woman Inc., she received a Spotlight Initiative bag that included hand sanitizer, masks, soaps, sanitary pads and other items that are useful for coping with the hard times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Marie is very open to talking about her experience as a GBV survivor. She met her ex-husband when she was 14 years old, and he was 18. She lived with her grand-aunt and her parents were not there to support her.

“I got to know him, we got close and then he started to give me lunch money for school” she explained. She went on to share that she got pregnant by him when she was 16, and they eventually got married when she was 18.

“And then all the abuse and everything came down on me,” Marie stated while explaining that she continued living with her grand-aunt when she got married, so whenever she visited her husband there would always be issues because he had other women and oftentimes he did not want her to be in his home.

She explained that even though she did not want to separate her family, things got so bad that she had to seek counselling and she eventually decided to move out. It was a difficult time because her husband was the provider, but since she moved, life has been better despite the financial hurdles.

According to the Women’s Health Survey (2016), in Jamaica more than one in four women between 15 to 64 years of age experience intimate physical and/or sexual violence, nevertheless 63% of abused women do not seek help from any of the critical services.

This is due to a series of factors that include lack of trust in the system, lack of knowledge about their rights, fear, and normalization of violence.

CSO champions fight against GBV towards LBT women

Let us rewind to 2020; March 2020 to be exact when the Government of Jamaica announced the partial shutdown of the country, and the economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With mounting anxiety around the pandemic and increased stress and pressure leading to an increase in the incidence of Family Violence, women were reaching out to WE-Change for counselling and psychological support services. However, without the necessary resources to handle the magnitude of the incoming calls, the WE-Change team was unable to adequately support victims/survivors of family violence and discrimination.

WE-Change is a community-based advocacy organisation founded in 2015. The organisation was established out of a need to strengthen the women's movement in Jamaica and advocate for all women, including lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women.

As one of the civil society organisations working under Pillar 6 of the Spotlight Initiative, WE-Change has been the beneficiary of a small grant aimed at capacity strengthening support in order to provide psychosocial services to LBT women who experienced gender-based violence (GBV), and to ultimately transform victims to survivors.

Additionally, they were able to acquire essential resources such as laptops and sound recorders to effectively document incidences of GBV.

“Currently, the team is not fully

equipped to handle the calls coming in from women seeking our support. Ending gender-based violence has been one of WE-Change's strategic objectives since inception in 2015 and WE have been able to contribute to this through various projects and activities. WE have always been aware of the importance of training and education in spreading awareness of and eradicating GBV but have not been able to invest in adequate training for all members of our executive team and volunteers,” said Shawna Stewart, Director of Programmes and Training at WE-Change.

In Jamaica, there are few safe spaces within which victims/survivors can access help and openly share their experiences of GBV. The Women's Health Survey 2016 - Jamaica revealed that almost one-fifth (18.4%) of women who experienced physical or sexual partner violence remained silent; while

over one-third (39.1 %) of the women who sought help indicated that they received no help. WE-Change exists to meet this pervasive need to support women who have experienced violence.

Stewart shared that: “In Jamaica, there are three shelters in operation for women who are victims/survivors of family violence. While this is a vast improvement to what we had 3 years ago, we still do not have enough support services that victims can access. The helplines in operation by the Bureau of Gender Affairs and a local non-governmental organization, are sometimes unreachable and inadequate for the population.

According to Stewart, the island-wide movement restrictions further exacerbated the challenges for GBV victims/survivors

18.4% of Jamaican women who experienced physical or sexual partner violence remained silent, while 39.1% who sought help say they received no help.

including reduced access to social services.

“We are aware that there are reports of a spike in intimate partner violence in various parts of the world, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures put in place by governments to contain it. The isolation has also shattered support networks, making it far more difficult for victims to get help or escape abusive homes,” she elaborated.

With the support of a small grant from the Spotlight Initiative, more than 15 WE-Change team members and volunteers successfully completed online training to efficiently conduct feminist research to collect, analyse and document data about instances of GBV within the LBT community; and facilitate GBV prevention workshops using the UN Women's Foundations Programme curriculum, which is designed for young people aged 13 to 24.

Participants also benefitted from capacity building to offer psychosocial support to all women, including LBT women who have experienced GBV and may be uniquely affected as a marginalized population in Jamaica.

“With training for all staff members, we would be in a better position to handle the number of calls coming in and could better lend ourselves to serving the needs of the population in virtual spaces for now and in physical spaces in the future,” concluded Stewart.

Addressing Domestic Violence in **COVID-19**



Under Pillar 2, Recipient United Nation Organizations (RUNOs) are working closely with CARICOM and its Organs.

All these activities go in line with the key interventions of the Pillar to maximize the capacities of regional and national institutions to plan, fund, deliver and monitor evidence-based programmes to prevent and respond to Family Violence.

Since the end of 2020 and during the first half of 2021, RUNOS have

held several consultations with the CARICOM Secretariat and its relevant Organs, and others aimed at aligning efforts and interventions under Pillar 2. Based on these consultations, the process of developing Concept Notes and Terms of References and agreements were finalized to start implementation during the second half of 2021.

The RUNOS plan to continue to have this close collaboration with CARICOM to ensure support from the counterpart in all stages of the implementation of the Programme and ensure CARICOM has an active voice in the Programme.

Upcoming activities to highlight:

- Assessments to identify knowledge gaps
- Training needs for sectors operating to support
- VAWG/FV services
- Scaling up of Community of Practice (CoP)
- Coordination Platforms for exchanging knowledge between stakeholders working on VAW and FV.

These will also will include training of key stakeholders such as Parliamentarians and Gender Bureaus on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and women economic empowerment programming.

Additionally, RUNOS are ensuring its interventions are relevant and responding to the current public health crisis as a result of COVID-19 prioritizing women's needs and gender-based violence.

Spotlight on Pillar 3

SRHR Observatory for the Caribbean

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) lies at the centre of development with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), 1994, establishing linkages between reproductive health, human rights and sustainable development. There is a great need to mainstream SRHR while promoting gender equality and non-discrimination, preventing and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and enhancing accountability. Improving the lives of adolescents, youth and women ensures the integration of human rights, gender equality and population dynamics.

GBV is both a cause and consequence of limited access to SRHR and is linked to negative SRHR outcomes for women and girls. SRH problems such as unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV are fuelled by GBV with inadequate policy and legislative frameworks to address access to SRHR and GBV services.

Women are also more vulnerable to HIV infection and other STIs where gender inequalities and high rates of physical and sexual violence exist. They are also more vulnerable where access to SRH services are denied or delivered with stigmatising and discriminating attitudes and behaviours due to age, sexual orientation, HIV status, disability and immigration status. Spotlight Initiative and the Observatory.

Family Violence in the Caribbean

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), through the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme, has sought to establish an Observatory on SRHR under Pillar 3, which contributes to “strengthening regional cooperation to prevent and respond to Family Violence (FV) in the Caribbean”. The Observatory is aimed at advocating for strengthened policy and programmatic linkages between FV and SRHR, which will improve coverage, access to, and uptake of both SRHR and GBV services for vulnerable populations.

The Observatory will perform social monitoring, acting as a platform to monitor various national/regional commitments to human rights obligations on SRHR while conducting analysis; and evaluating and assessing progress in order to advance SRHR-related issues and priorities. It will set out to examine the enabling environment around SRHR with linkages to GBV in order to determine what legislation, policies and programmes are in place.

In particular, it will conduct further analysis of the resources that exist to support the legislative and policy landscape. Subsequently, it will explore good practices in programme design and socialisation, promote these and make them available on its platform. It is anticipated that this Caribbean Observatory on SRHR will be a well-organised platform that is resourceful, transparent,

Spotlight on Pillar 3

impartial, independent, apolitical, secular, accurate, reliable, timely, accessible, and user-friendly. Working with people’s best interest in mind, the Observatory will be strategically positioned to address the scattered data in the region, conducting data analysis and promote areas for research where data gaps exist.

It will specifically:

- Address specific gaps and not duplicate efforts;
- Provide consistent analysis/reporting on SRHR situations in the region;
- Break stigma and taboo on topics that are controversial;
- Provide counter arguments and pushback on certain issues;
- Undertake shadow reporting;
- Make recommendations on what needs to be done for success around a range of issues including the need to contribute to strengthened laws and policies, conduct health advocacy and holding governments accountable;
- Promote the generation of evidence to inform programme development; and
- Foster knowledge management through an integrated SRHR/GBV knowledge platform and products as a perceived one-stop shop, while monitoring progress on various types of indicators.

Linkages with other Observatories, as well as other key Spotlight Initiative programmes like the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) programme, the In and Out of School programme, the Essential Service Package (ESP) and the Community of Practice. There will also be activities around legislative reform with parliamentarians. This Observatory will strengthen and feed civil society organisations (CSOs) so that they can do their work at the national level including lobbying decision-makers in government. Synergies and partnerships will also be established with other stakeholders to ensure SRHR advancement.

UNFPA has recently issued a call for Proposals to recruit the ideal CSO with a regional scope to house the Observatory in the short and long term with plans for sustainability. Once the CSO is recruited, and given its implementation agreement and work plan, it will be governed by a multi-stakeholder steering committee to ensure that it fulfils its mandate.

The Caribbean Observatory on SRHR through the Spotlight Regional Programme, represents a key platform in advancing development in the region. It is set to make inroads towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 3, 4, and 5 in: ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages are promoted; there is inclusive and quality education for all, and lifelong learning is promoted; while gender equality is achieved and all women and girls are empowered.



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