

In the *Spotlight*



**Spotlight
Initiative**

*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*



**Spotlight Team
visits St. Lucia**

**ESP CoP
launched**

**UNICEF SBCC
#PlayYourPart**

Editor's Note

It has been a very busy time for the Spotlight Initiative Caribbean Regional Programme continuing into the second quarter. Activities under the four pillars have been progressing at a fair pace.

The Regional Programme works in partnership with leading regional institutions to increase policy coordination and functional cooperation across the region to address Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and more specifically family violence (FV). The programme aims to set regional standards for essential services delivery and for monitoring the implementation of regional and national FV laws and policies, advance best practice models for prevention, and ensure the engagement of women's organisations in regional accountability frameworks.

In particular, the Regional Programme supports CARICOM and the OECS as the two inter-governmental organisations leading functional cooperation in the region, and as such are two important partners for the Regional Programme.

In May, a team from the Programme paid a courtesy visit to the OECS Commission to take stock of the Commission's involvement with Spotlight and held a Roundtable Discussion focused on Pillar 5 - Data. That

article starts on Page 3.

UNICEF as lead on Pillar 3 will soon be launching its social behavioural change campaign #PlayYourPart and shares what the campaign hopes to achieve starting on Page 7. The campaign is shaping up to be exciting and innovative, so be sure to look out for elements of the campaign soon.

In early March the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) launched its Formative Assessment Report on Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Read about the methodology and process followed to conduct the assessment on Page 8, while you can learn more on this on Page 12.

UNFPA in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat also launched another very important activity in May - the Essential Services Package Community of Practice (ESP CoP). Starting on Page 14, UNFPA Caribbean outgoing Director, Alison Drayton shares why the ESP CoP is a significant milestone for the Regional Spotlight.

Meet Wemyss de Florimonte, the GBV Coordinator for the UNFPA in Guyana who has a passion for helping others, which is a driving force behind her work.

PILLAR 5 - DATA



FACE-TO-FACE PARTICIPANTS FROM LEFT: Isiuwa Iyehen, Deputy Representative - UN Women MCO Caribbean; Lisa Legall Belgrave - Spotlight Regional Communications Officer; Terry Dale Ince, Chair - Civil Society Regional Reference Group; Loveness Nyakujarah - Regional Spotlight Coordinator and Technical Coherence; Carol Watson - Principal Consultant, ReThink, and Patrice Bosso, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist - UNICEF - Eastern Caribbean Area.

VAWG/FV data in spotlight at Roundtable

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Family Violence (FV) Data Collection and Management came into sharp focus during a Roundtable Discussion under the theme, **Status of VAWG and FV Data Collection and Management in the OECS**. The Discussion was held at the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission during a visit from a team from the Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative. VAWG data is a priority for the OECS, and there is concern that there is no comprehensive VAWG data to be able to understand the full extent of violence, and specifically VAWG and FV.

Assessments conducted in recent times have shown that data collection, management and analysis is an important component to advancing the elimination of VAWG in the Caribbean. Yet, data on the prevalence of

different forms of IPV and non-sexual violence is only available for five CARICOM Member States – Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, and Suriname. Presently, in the Caribbean, VAWG data has been captured from modules in broader surveys such as demographic health surveys of family health in Guyana, Haiti and Jamaica, while the MICS population-based survey provides some indicators on FV such as attitudes towards Gender-based Violence (GBV) and child discipline.

The event highlighted that the OECS has done tremendous work in some sectors, primarily around health and education and now would like to capitalise on the Spotlight Initiative to set a strong foundation to collect data around VAWG and FV in more Member States. The technical corporation under Pillar 5 (Data) - led by UN women - is focused on ensuring

harmonised data collection methods and strengthening the capacity of the pool of experts in the region.

Notable progress has been made towards strengthening standardised data collection and improved analysis for evidence-based policy development and programmes. There are several upcoming training workshops that will aid with this. There are also a number of cross-cutting themes and opportunities for collaboration with the OECS through another body of work that is being undertaken with support from the Caribbean Development Bank and the CARICOM Secretariat.

The Discussion, held on 11 May 2022, was a hybrid event with online participants joining face-to-face participants. Among them were Isiuwa Iyehen, UN Women Deputy Representative; Loveness Nyakujarah, Spotlight Caribbean Regional Coordinator and Technical Coherence; Carol Watson, a Data and Research expert with ReThink, and Dr. Carlene Radix, OECS Head of the Human and Social Division, as well as Terry Ince the Chair of the Civil Society Regional Reference Group.

Spotlight Coordinators from United Nations Recipient agencies: Noha Saad, UNDP; Dr. Nicolette Henry, UNFPA; Debbie Gray, UNICEF; and Tracy Phillips, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, Regional Spotlight Initiative and Sherma Beroo, an OECS Statistical Development Officer joined the robust discussion.

The Roundtable aimed to develop a better understanding of VAWG and FV and how to manage and collect related data, but also have a grasp of the research expertise available in the region and how it can be expanded, and map available opportunities to conduct more prevalence studies in a consistent manner.

The European Union-funded Spotlight Initiative has provided a valuable platform to address this by working in partnership with leading regional institutions to increase policy coordination and functional cooperation to address VAWG and more specifically FV. Apart from improving data availability,



DR. CARLENE RADIX, Head of the Human and Social Division, OECS Commission

the Programme also aims to set regional standards for essential services delivery and for monitoring the implementation of regional and national FV laws and policies, address negative social norms and stereotypes and advance best practice models.

Nyakujarah updated participants on the Programme's progress, highlighting the various activities of the Programme's four Pillars: Institutions; Prevention; Data and Women's Movements.

Iyehen also presented an update and overview of Pillar 5, which anchored on building the capacity of data collection in the region and harnessing that data to inform policy, laws and programmes to improve the lives of women and girls who experience the various forms of GBV. It is expected that Pillar 5 will deliver the following outcomes:

- Engagement with regional institutions on minimum standards for the management of VAWG administrative data.
- Capacity building on anonymisation of VAWG Survey Data.
- Economic Costs of VAWG Studies (Grenada and Guyana). Study in Jamaica (funded through Jamaica Spotlight Programme).
- Child Marriage and Early Unions: Competitive process concluded by UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA.
- Definitive qualitative study that will

investigate existing public policies and legislative frameworks on FV impact on the lives of LGBTIQ+ youth.

In addition to the Regional Programme, there are six National Programmes in the Caribbean – Belize, Haiti, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago that are conducting studies under Pillar 5.

The Jamaica Spotlight Initiative is currently conducting a study on **Building an Administrative Data System on VAWG in CARICOM**, led by Watson. She presented on the **Progress on Initiatives on Administrative Data on VAWG, Spotlight Initiatives in the Caribbean: Entry points for OECS & Technical**. The hope is that the study will be a pilot and therefore can be a guide for the same study under the Regional Spotlight.

Some of the early findings of the Jamaica study with respect to data collection include:

- a confirmation that basic/rudimentary data collection systems exist at the parish/community level and there is limited aggregation and analysis of the data that exists;
- limited number of entities collecting VAWG administrative data and even fewer with standardised data collection forms/instruments, and limited data collection being done by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Data collection is more robust among government agencies, but primarily by those having legal mandates related directly to VAWG such as the police or the courts.

Watson also shared that COVID-19 was a real example of how administrative data can be collected and used to our advantage because an administrative data system was used to track and respond to the pandemic.

Work being conducted under the Regional Spotlight includes Capacity Assessment of National Statistics Systems, User Producer Dialogues, a Workshop Series on Developing Guidelines and Ethical Standards, which should build the type of foundation that is needed for regional institutions to have the

capacity to continue this work.

Dr. Radix presented an overview of the Division she heads, which covers education, health, social inclusion and social protection. As per the OECS' strategic plan, the Division has a primary focus on social inclusion and social protection and a key outcome around violence reduction policies and programmes, inclusive of GBV and child violence and elder abuse. However, the Commission wants to uncover what is happening with FV and to identify the gaps that exist so, as a region, there can be better understanding of the issues and develop programming and policies to address them.

She noted that the OECS has started to capture data on health facilities, schools etc. However, having a data sharing framework at the regional level is something that is needed. Dr. Radix believes part of the solution to the data sharing problem is to encourage sharing "between sectors and between countries."

Participants agreed that various sectors in both CARICOM and the OECS collect data. Iyehen, however, pointed out that the main issue remains getting countries to the point of producing, analysing and using this data for evidence-based policy and programmes. Some of the problems lie in the bureaucracy that exists around data collection and sharing in some Member States. Another challenge and the reality in many jurisdictions in the region is that many statistical offices or departments are not adequately staffed to focus on data collection and management in the way that is transformative. It is also critical to find ways in which CSOs, many of which are a first line contact for survivors of or those at risk of FV or GBV, to systematically capture data as they provide essential services.

In concluding the meeting, Dr. Radix expressed that a regional approach to data collection and management, and on a frequent and consistent basis is necessary to solve the data sharing problem. The Roundtable Discussion has provided a way forward for the OECS to improve on its data collection and management.

#PlayYourPart

A campaign for a Caribbean *free of VAWG*

We know that violence against women and girls (VAWG) unfortunately has a culture of silence. We know that violence remains largely underreported due to impunity, stigma and shame surrounding it. We also know that there is a spectrum of attitudes and behaviours that can lead to violence. Small acts, many of which can be claimed as “normal”, while the cumulative effect is entrenched harassment, and abuse. It can curtail the lives of women in girls in their homes, schools, and public life.

The pervasive culture of VAWG means that it affects all of us. VAWG is never “just cultural” and therefore unacceptable. The reality is that we shouldn’t talk about VAWG without questioning the cultural factors that cause and then sustain it, and we can’t understand it without shedding light on why it disproportionately impacts women and girls.

Cultural acceptance and the normalisation of VAWG is rooted in the inequality between men and women that women and girls face throughout their lives. In order to help address the root causes of family violence (FV) and gender inequality, UNICEF, in partnership with PCI Media, an international communications organisation, is leading the design, development and implementation of a Social Behaviour Change Strategy and Campaign for the Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative.

The strategy aims to encourage people across the Caribbean region to play their part in changing entrenched, negative social norms, attitudes, and behaviours that lead to VAWG.

To achieve this aim, a regional-level campaign will be launched through targeted media channels across the region to disseminate messages aligned with the Spotlight Initiative’s regional priorities. The regional-level campaign will be adapted and integrated with country-level initiatives in order to create a cohesive and relevant movement across Caribbean communities.

Three focus areas frame the strategy, reflecting the core domains requiring change in order to help prevent and ultimately end VAWG:

- Advocating for increased gender equity by countering stereotypes and addressing gender norms which position men above women in society.
- Ensuring that violence is never perceived as a normal or acceptable part of relationships, discipline or authority, in public or in the home.
- Breaking the cycle of violence by reaching adolescents and youth, particularly girls, who have experienced FV before they become survivors or perpetrators of violence in adulthood.

A regional branding and visual identity has been designed and pretested with partners, to use across the campaign efforts, whether at the regional, national or local level, so that the campaign is strong, consistent and recognisable.

The campaign has a clear call to action

■ *Continued on Page 9*

Cross-section of SE players contribute to CSE Survey

The right to sexuality education (SE), though globally recognised, is controversial, and the consequences of not providing adequate SE, results in unintended and early pregnancy, gender-based violence and higher risks for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. These risks, and their negative outcomes, significantly impede young people's ability to fulfill their potential. After more than four decades of implementing SE in the Caribbean, the growth and development of young people living in the region continues to be challenged by the negative impacts of sexual risk-taking behaviours.

Method

The formative assessment integrated review of literature on best practices in school-based SE and on how SE is delivered in the Caribbean; key stakeholder focus groups; surveys of key stakeholders; and, review and assessment of available teaching materials and/or content standards from 14 countries in the region during 2021. The literature review examined existing regional reports on SE in the Caribbean, as well as peer-reviewed literature about SE in the Caribbean, using articles only available in English and published from 2015.

Three focus groups with interagency stakeholders included: Country-level administrators and regional colleagues; teachers currently providing SE in schools, Ministry of Education staff; and youth advocates, regional partners and Civil Society Organisations. The in-depth survey was done using a structured instrument with key stakeholders including policy makers, curriculum development specialists, SE focal points, planning officers, teachers and youth advocates. Focus group participants and additional country partners were asked to share curricula, lesson plans and/or resources they have been using to teach SE to facilitate the review of available materials.

Results

SE delivered in the Caribbean is not comprehensive and youth are at high risk for sexual violence; inconsistent contraceptive use; teenage pregnancy and unsafe abortion, which remain challenges throughout the region. Also, gender roles and gender inequality are significantly impacted by young people's lack of access to appropriate sexuality-related information and services.

Impact of Findings

Findings will be used to strengthen regional capacities to advocate for and deliver quality, evidenced based SE in the Caribbean and for the design of a regional SE strategy for the formal education sector in the Caribbean.

■ Continued from Page 7

with the hashtag #PlayYourPart, and the accompanying tagline "for a Caribbean free of violence against women and girls".

The visual identity uses vibrant colours to reflect the hopeful nature of the campaign and the great diversity which exists among the islands of the Caribbean.

While Spotlight focuses on women and girls, the improved capacities of regional and national institutions to engage in prevention programming and campaigns will benefit men and boys, who are all affected by harmful stereotypes around masculinity.

In this way, the campaign materials will take into account different audience groups and contexts, and are designed to create a

dynamic, high-production value, multi-media campaign that allows space for each country's implementers to conduct customised complementary activities to engage their communities and process the campaign's messages in the most meaningful ways.

The campaign will feature local-level champions whose personal stories speak to the campaign messages in a way that is relatable and compelling to Caribbean audiences, while modelling desired attitudes and behaviours. The materials include videos, radio mini-drama episodes, an animation, social media assets and advocacy briefs, and will be developed in close collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

The campaign is expected to launch the third quarter of 2022.

**VAWG is never
'just cultural' and therefore
is unacceptable.**



Spotlight team amplifies EVAWG message in OECS



LOVENESS NYAKUJARAH continuing the conversation after the HTV interview with HTV cameraman.



ON AIR: Loveness Nyakujarah (**right**) and Bennett Charles (**centre**) were guests on Radio Caribbean International - Lunch Room with Calixte George Jr. (**left**).



LOVENESS NYAKUJARAH, Regional Spotlight Coordinator & Technical Coherence

“**St. Lucia was all I hoped it could be and more, as Team Regional Spotlight brought the message of the Programme to the people of this beautiful island. The Spotlight Initiative is here to change lives by working to eliminate VAWG and IPV.**”

A Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative team visited St. Lucia in May and had the distinct pleasure of being hosted by PCI Media Caribbean Communications Specialist, Bennett Charles for its media tour.

Loveness Nyakujarah, Regional Spotlight Coordinator & Technical Coherence and Lisa Legall Belgrave, Regional Communications Officer were in St. Lucia to participate in the Data Roundtable Discussion held at the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) on 11 May 2022, and used the opportunity to also spread the word about the European Union-funded Programme, and the upcoming Social Behavioural Change Campaign headed by UNICEF, with execution by PCI Media and led UNICEF, with several visits to media outlets.

The trio hit the ground running on Day 1 with an interview with Helen TV, followed by HOT 7 TV. Both stations carried the interviews in that evening's primetime news broadcast. Later that day, Nyakujarah and Charles were guests on Radio Caribbean International's Lunch Room with Calixte George Jr., which airs on Facebook. Nyakujarah took the opportunity to talk about the Regional Programme and how it is working with the regional institutions like the OECS, which is based in St. Lucia.

“Regional institutions create normative standards across the region so we have a common approach to address some of these social issues. The Initiative is designed in such a way that Member States of organisations like the OECS and CARICOM, as well as other institutions such as the Caribbean Development Bank and the Caribbean Examination Council can learn from each other, as they all have a roll to play in this fight,” noted the Regional Spotlight Coordinator.



CHAIR of the Spotlight Civil Society Regional Reference Group, Terrydale during the Keena C Podcast.

The conversation also looked at St. Lucia's recently passed domestic violence legislation and how important it is to have legal frameworks and laws in place at the national level to ensure GBV cases are handled according to the appropriate law.

The team also visited MBC Real TV with Charles' interview being conducted in Creole for the station's Creole-speaking audience. It was fantastic having Charles on board to help bring the message of Spotlight to those who speak the language.



BENNETT CHARLES, and Loveness Nyakujarah continuing the discussion around violence against women and girls in the Caribbean while at Hot 7 TV.

Finally, to cap the week Nyakujarah and the Chair of the Spotlight Civil Society Regional Reference Group, Terrydale Ince, were guests on the Keena C Podcast hosted by Negilla Cenac and broadcast on KNC Radio.

2021 RESULTS

Pillar 2

Integration of VAWG/FV in DRR/M

Guidelines on the integration of VAWG/FV in DRR/M including COVID-19 response developed. The guidelines are expected to support the Comprehensive Disaster Management strategy (CDM) and promote awareness of definitions, tools, databases, key publications and reports available on GBV in the Caribbean.



A GRB Manual

A manual on gender responsive budgeting has been drafted. Data collection is in progress from key government and regional institutions in Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, CARICOM Secretariat, OECS Commission and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Pillar 2

Community of Practice

An ESP CoP will promote exchange, cooperation and learning among health, social services, justice and policing, and education. There is also focus on the Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming to ensure a humanitarian-development approach. The Caribbean is on the way to becoming the first region to integrate education within the ESP for women and girls subject to violence.



2021 RESULTS

Pillar 3

A SRHR Observatory



The Caribbean Observatory on SRHR was launched in collaboration with the CFPA. The Observatory is a platform designed to support the improvement of quality analysis, disaggregated and comparable data on SRHR in the region, an avenue to better inform laws, policies and programmes, and thereby supporting more enabling environments for SRHR for all communities, and the underserved in particular.

A Formative Assessment of CSE

A Formative Assessment of CSE was completed, which has provided a better understanding and data to formulate policies and programmes on CSE within the HFLE curriculum in schools.



Guidance on OOS CSE

International guidance on out-of-school CSE was adapted to the Caribbean context and a Caribbean Toolkit for CSOs developed to implement out-of-school CSE reaching the most vulnerable and marginalised youth. 35 representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, and Suriname can now train others, following an online Training of Trainers (ToT) of the Caribbean toolkit.



Launch of CSE Formative Research

Regional partners have agreed that Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in the Caribbean needs to be better. The conclusion is based on findings of a recent Formative Assessment Report that provides recommendations and identifies gaps in the Caribbean CSE through the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) Curriculum.

The Report was launched in Barbados on 7 March 2022, virtually and at the Courtyard Marriott. It found that no Caribbean country is offering what could be considered truly comprehensive sexuality education. This, even though some countries have been doing extensive work to integrate CSE much more into the HFLE curriculum.

Further, even those countries that are offering CSE in some way are often using out-of-date materials, language and content, or leaving the selection or development of this content up to individual teachers.

The assessment was conducted under the European Union- (EU) funded Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative, which aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. It was conducted by UNFPA Caribbean in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat, Academia and other UN agencies.

Speaking at the launch, UNFPA Caribbean Director, Alison Drayton said the assessment was timely as the environment for advancing

HFLE has become less conducive due to pushback by conservative groups against sexuality education. She highlighted that evidence has shown that sexuality education that is age-appropriate, rights-based, gender-sensitive and life skills-based, will provide young people with the knowledge, skills and efficacy to make informed decisions about their sexuality and lifestyle, and reduce unsafe sexual activity.

“It is my hope that the findings of the assessment will be used to strengthen regional and national capacities to advocate for and deliver quality, evidenced based CSE for in and out-of- school youth in the Caribbean,” Drayton said.

Other speakers at the event included CARICOM Assistant Secretary-General Dr. Douglas Slater who spoke on behalf of CARICOM Secretary-General, Dr. Carla Barnett, Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union to Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, OECS and CARICOM/ CARIFORUM, Ambassador Malgorzata Wasilewska and Representative of the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean,



UNFPA Caribbean Director, Alison Drayton delivered remarks at the launch of the Formative Assessment Report. Photo: Belle Imaging

Tonni-Ann Brodber.

An overview of HFLE in the Caribbean and the identified gaps and recommendations were provided by Programme Manager - Human Resource Development CARICOM Secretariat, Dr. Laurette Bristol and Dr. Nicolette Henry from UNFPA.

The speakers shared similar sentiments on the value of CSE in contributing to human development and building society. According to Dr. Slater, “strengthening the enabling environment and cultural reeducation, should be among the list of options on the menu, from which we can select to build culturally relevant responses and programmes”.

Brodber expressed that “comprehensive sexuality education and young people receiving accurate information today is critical for a sustainable future”, and Ambassador Malgorzata, while congratulating UNFPA and other partners on the report, stated that comprehensive

sexuality education was a powerful tool for children to have increased self-confidence, critical thinking and the capacity to make informed decisions. “I trust this is the starting point of renewed sexuality education more inclusive and respectful of every child and every young person in the Caribbean, and you can count on my support to make the change happen”, she said.

The findings will be used to strengthen regional capacities to advocate for and deliver quality, evidenced-based CSE for in- and out-of-school youth in the Caribbean, as well as assist in the design of a regional CSE strategy for the formal education sector in the Caribbean. Through these initiatives young people will receive improved CSE services that can allow them to reach their full potential.

The launch was held on the eve of International Women’s day which was observed under the theme “Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow”.

Essential Services a key step in fighting GBV

by Alison Drayton

A cursory glance at newspaper headlines across the Caribbean paints a grim picture of the impact of gender-based violence (GBV) in the region, particularly violence against women and girls (VAWG): “Woman hacked to death at home...”, “Cop convicted of raping teenager...”, “Man charged with raping daughter”, “St. James-based pastor charged with the rape of a teenage girl”, “Mother, step-father charged with inciting 13-year-old daughter to have sex...”.

Are we prepared to accept this as our legacy?

GBV refers to any harmful act perpetrated against a person’s will. And that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty.

Recent studies undertaken in Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago estimate a high prevalence in intimate partner violence and child sexual abuse, as well as a significant risk for women and girl survivors being killed by their intimate partner.

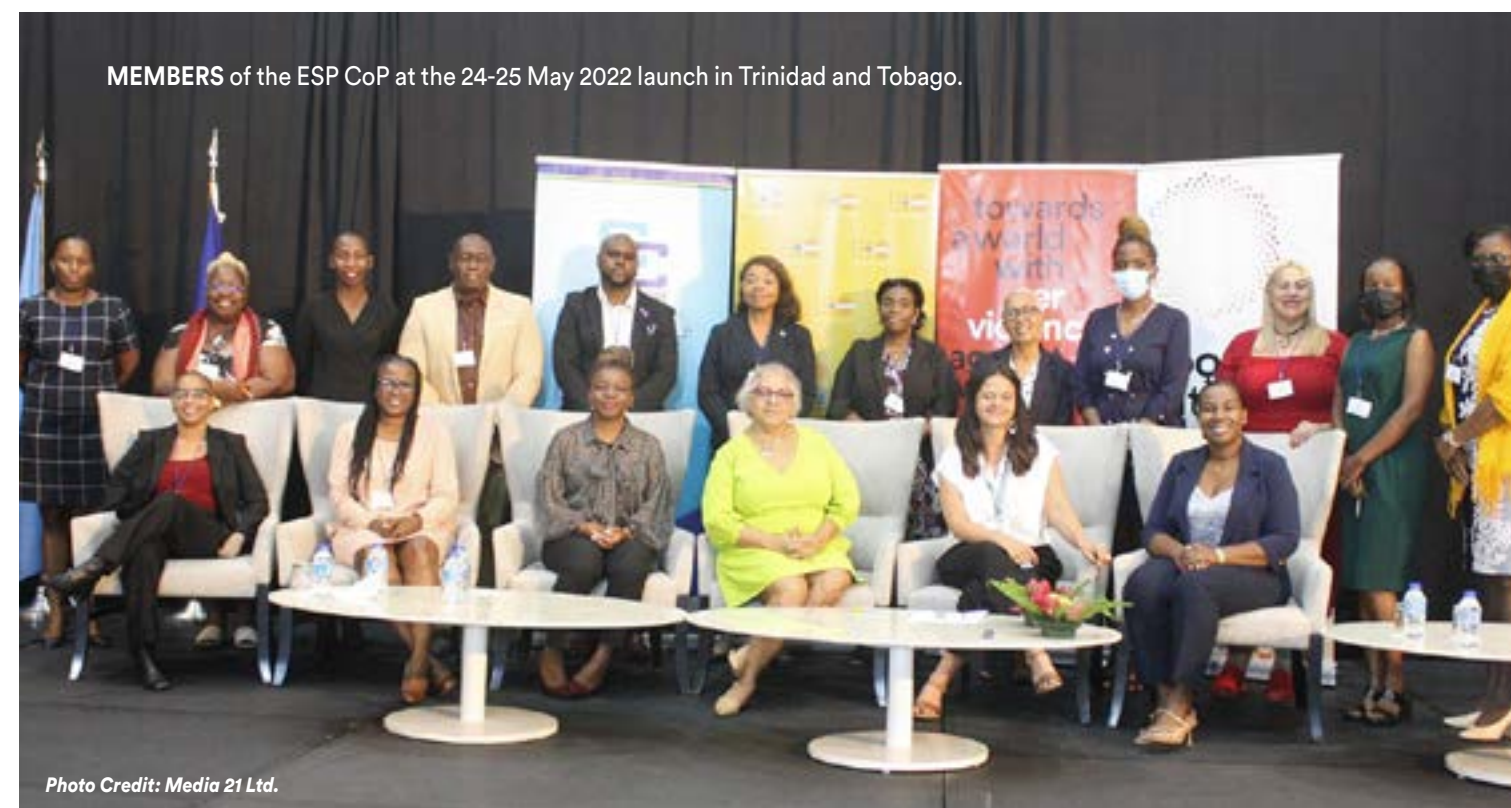
While prevention of these crimes lies mainly at the perpetrator’s hands, a number of these incidents (including deaths) can be prevented by service providers, who, with the proper training and resources, will be able to mitigate risks, protect survivors and hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes. Essential services, such as health service providers, are also considered as entry points for survivors

of GBV, especially those who are suffering from intimate partner violence and are being isolated from their support networks, or those who are unaware of having been subjected to GBV or don’t know where to find help. These entry points, when properly trained and provided with adequate resources, can become safe havens for survivors.

Additionally, when services such as the police, justice mechanisms, health points and the social protection system work together to ensure referral pathways are clear and responsive, survivors are better supported to navigate their options, without having to tell their stories to multiple actors and be re-traumatised all over again.

Under the EU-funded Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have established the regional Essential Services Package Community of Practice (ESP CoP), a space that will allow for key regional institutions and national gender bureaus to establish standards and priorities in ensuring service provision for survivors of GBV is of the highest quality.

The ESP is a guidance tool for the provision of essential services that will be available to GBV survivors. These services include health, social services, justice and policing. When these services are in place and offered to all survivors and those at risk of experiencing GBV, the consequences of violence on the health, well-being, safety and resilience of survivors can be mitigated, and can essentially save lives.



As the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, it is UNFPA’s responsibility to collaborate with partners and stakeholders, like CARICOM, to ensure services are carried out in safe, ethical and confidential ways, and in a manner that is non-judgmental and non-discriminatory.

Unfortunately, a lack of coordinated services, human resource capacity and general mistrust in our systems result in under-reporting, and the burden of care, healing and recovery often lies on the shoulders of the survivor—and this is one of the reasons for this collaborative effort to establish the ESP CoP.

The ESP CoP is co-chaired by CARICOM and UNFPA. It is a space for representatives of the health, social services, justice and policing, coordination and governance, humanitarian and education sectors at the regional level, including UN agencies overseeing the implementation of the Regional Spotlight Initiative.

A space where these regional institutions will sit together with representatives of national gender bureaus across all countries and territories of the Caribbean, to exchange

good practices, adapt global standards and facilitate south-south cooperation in the prevention and response to GBV.

In addition, several civil society organisations have also been invited to participate in all relevant events and meetings, so as to ensure a common approach and understanding.

Following a virtual regional inception workshop at the end of 2021, CARICOM and UNFPA hosted a regional launch of the Programme on 24-25 May in Trinidad and Tobago. Members of the ESP CoP agreed upon the key priorities and action plan for the coming year, based on the findings of a regional ESP Lessons Learnt Study, currently being conducted by UNFPA.

UNFPA is committed to achieve, by 2030, our three transformative results of zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal death, and zero GBV and harmful practices. The ESP CoP will undoubtedly contribute significantly to the achievement of the third zero here in the Caribbean.

■ **Alison Drayton is the former Director and Representative United Nations Population Fund Caribbean**



ESP CoP LAUNCHED

GENDER PRACTITIONERS from across the Caribbean at the two-day meeting held to launch the Essential Services Package Community of Practice.

Photos credits: Media 21 Ltd.



FROM LEFT: Dr. Tameka Romeo - Gender Lead, Gender & Child Affairs Division, Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago; Alison Drayton - former UNFPA Caribbean Director; Dr. Douglas Slater, ASG - HSD, CARICOM Secretariat; Sharon Rowley - Spotlight Initiative Trinidad National Champion; Peter Cavendish - European Union Ambassador to Trinidad & Tobago and Muhammad Muwakil - Spotlight Initiative Trinidad National Champion at the launch of the ESP CoP.



DR. DOUGLAS SLATER, Assistant Secretary-General - Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat delivered remarks at the launch of the Essential Services Package - Community of Practice.



SHARON ROWLEY, Spotlight Initiative Trinidad and Tobago's National Champion delivered remarks at the launch of the ESP CoP.

Koren Norton, Local Researcher on the UNICEF Spotlight Child Marriage and Early Unions (CMEU) Project, Consultant, Author and Trainer in Antigua and Barbuda.

BREAK THE SILENCE ON EARLY UNIONS

If a girl has formed an early union, there is always a punitive approach in my opinion... they have to go to counselling every week, they have to get intervention... and so counselling becomes a punishment. There is no opportunity for conversation in terms of the girls being able to have the power to say what they need. They're always in a disadvantaged position where only law enforcement officers are talking to them, or a principal, or welfare officer or a magistrate. At what point do we empower the girl to tell her story?

Koren Norton, a local researcher in Antigua and Barbuda, explains that early unions are more common than we think. Informal unions, also called "visiting relationships", between an adult and a child below the age of 18 years are a violation of human rights that disproportionately affect girls. as they are more likely to miss school, become pregnant and lose opportunities for earning an income.

There is limited data on early unions in the Caribbean region, so the true scale of the problem is likely underestimated. Only a handful of countries collect data on this specific practice. However, we do know that one in four young women in Latin America and Caribbean were first married or in a union before the age of 18 years. Prevalence varies significantly between countries, from 8 per cent in Jamaica to more than 30 per cent in Belize and Suriname,

with the highest prevalence at 36 per cent. The prevalence in the Latin America and Caribbean region has not decreased in the last two decades.

While linkages of cause and effects are understood on a global level, effective regional intervention programs cannot be established without a clear understanding of patterns, key issue linkages, trends and manifestations in the context of the Caribbean region. The need for a mapping of existing data, as well as further gathering of qualitative data is a first and necessary step in planning for interventions given the complex nature of child marriage and early unions.

Koren has been collecting primary data through the Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative – a collaboration between UNICEF and the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine campus, for a regional study that aims to map available data and further understand practices and perceptions of child marriage and early unions in the Caribbean. Antigua and Barbuda is among the six countries in the Caribbean where the study is being undertaken.

Koren Norton conducted individual, semi-structured interviews with women who were married below the age of 18 years. She led focus groups using Knowledge, Practices and Attitudes (KAP) community consultations with adolescent girls. She also produced a narrative report on the history of women's advocacy related to child marriage and early union in the country. Due to the current circumstances of restricted travel around the country, she completed some of the tasks using a distance research methodology.

While the study provided a platform for women and girls to share their perceptions and gain the knowledge they need to be active in their own communities, Koren explains that the existing systems in Antigua and Barbuda are designed in a way where "there is no opportunity for conversation in terms of the girls being able to have the power to say what they need. They're always in a disadvantaged

position where only law enforcement officers are talking to them, or a principal, or welfare officer or a magistrate. At what point do we empower the girl to tell her story, and say what she needs and what she is not getting? That does not happen".

Recalling multiple stories of girls under 18 years that she has worked with in the past, Koren shuts down the common stereotype that girls' sexual desire is the leading reason for early unions. The majority of the time, girls engage in sexual activity either because they need the financial benefit for survival or because it was forced upon them. A survivor-centred, rather than victim-blaming approach, is necessary to fully grasp the socio-cultural and economic context and scope of the issue.



One of the most common challenges Koren faces in her work is how to help empower girls who may not recognise that they are in abusive relationships.

She explains that because girls are groomed from an early age, they learn abusive behaviour as affection and thus, for them, the lines between abuse and affection or love are blurred. The hope is that the outcomes of the study will strengthen the evidence base in the Caribbean and the interventions that follow will generate dialogue among adolescent girls, feminists, community leaders and government representatives to stimulate public debate on the strategies required to break the silence on child marriage and early unions and address the practice across the region.

Research Interns join fight to EAVWG

Five research interns, who were selected and evaluated across the Caribbean are understudying the Lead Researcher who is conducting a regional study on the economic costs of sexual harassment in the workplace. This will help to develop the capacity of the regional pool of experts capable of undertaking economic costs of VAWG at national level. Meet three of the five interns.

LISA ONESIA HUSSAIN got her diploma from the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College, Division of Arts, Sciences and General Studies (2011–2013), after completing the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations in economics, accounts, applied mathematics, communications and Caribbean Studies.

She then gained a Bachelor of Social in Economics from the University of Guyana (2014–2018) with a distinction. Some fields of economics Lisa studied included applied economics, applied macroeconomics, macroeconomics and statistics.

Where did your interest in research develop?

My interest in research developed from having conversations with my mom. My mother made it her mission to give me the educational opportunities she did not get. I remember going home from school and telling her about my homework and reading my essays for her. While she may not have been able to advise me on the specifics (grammar, punctuation), she listened to me and made critical and thought-provoking comments.

As I look back, I see how this exercise not only developed my interest in research but made me love the area because it is the best way to critically assess any phenomenon.

What do you hope to achieve from this internship with the UN Women and how do you plan to use this experience in the future?

I hope to make a positive contribution to the study estimating the economic cost of violence against women and girls in CARICOM. This is important for me because I aim to break down the tolerance for VAWG in Guyana. In addition, I hope that after my internship I would have learnt more about the issue of VAWG and improve my data and information analytical skills. I plan to use this experience to further the work I am doing with the University of Guyana Female Empowerment Movement, influence Guyana's data collection practices, and relate it to my mission for a more financially inclusive Guyana for women, girls and the poor population.

Tell us about the work you are doing with the Spotlight Initiative.

Data collection is generally a challenging exercise so doing it for an issue that is very sensitive and most times a taboo area, is even more challenging. However, as a result of my internship, I learnt a lot about how to utilise the next best available option(s) and conduct secondary



analysis from other reliable sources.

What excites about this body of work?

What doesn't excite me? Observing the challenges my mother faced as both my mom and dad, throughout my life, it became my mission to empower women and girls to access and pursue opportunities to their hearts desire. However, the nature and the ingrained systematic barriers make that task seem insurmountable sometimes, but I believe that when the numbers are revealed; when we have measured the problem, we can solve the problem.

How do you see this body of work impacting the region as it pertains to ending VAWG?

I think it will give everyone a stark look at our reality. It will highlight the ineffectiveness of reactive measures and motivate our leaders, policy makers, and other stakeholders to take a more preventative approach to ending violence against women and girls.



CEDRINA CARR holds a BSc. in Economics and a MSc. Development Statistics with a concentration in Social and Demographic Statistics.

Where did your interest in research develop?

I did my Bachelor's degree in Economics and never in my wildest dream I thought I would be doing Research. I was offered a job at the HEU Centre for Health Economics, UWI - St. Augustine as a research assistant and it was there I developed an interest in doing research.

What do you hope to achieve from this internship and how do you plan to use this experience in the future?

I hope to gain more knowledge that will help me to advance in my career as a researcher. Additionally, I hope to apply the knowledge and skills gained towards projects that will benefit subgroups that are affected by social issues.

Tell us about the work you are doing with Spotlight Initiative.

I am currently assisting with the writing of a policy brief for the National Study on the Economic Costs of Violence Against Women and Girls in Jamaica and I am also working on the data collection for the Economic Costs of Violence Against Women and Girls in Grenada.

What excites about this body of work?

The most exciting part about this work is knowing that it will positively impact the lives of women and girls in the region.

How do you see this body of work impacting the region as it pertains to ending VAWG?

By highlighting the real challenges that affect women and girls and the cost of violence against women and girls it will allow policy makers throughout the region to make more informed decisions to end VAWG.

WEMYSS DE
FLORIMONTE
GBV Coordinator for
UNFPA in Guyana

One woman's passion for helping survivors

by Jasmayne Payne

From the outside, the de Florimonte looked like an average, well-to-do family. de Florimonte was a well-respected senior journalist, his wife was a nurse, and they had nine children together. de Florimonte had a habit of consuming alcohol, and when he imbibed, it had an immediate effect on their home. This would lead to conflict in the home.

As the youngest child, Wemyss de Florimonte recalls reciting the prayer **The Blood of Jesus**. It was taught to her by one of her sisters, who used her faith to comfort her siblings.

"To this day, I can't hear that thing without getting upset," she says. "That cycle continued throughout my childhood."

However, she never doubted that her parents loved their children. Now 49, the Gender-based Violence (GBV) Coordinator for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Guyana believes that her parents did their best with the knowledge that they had.

Patriarchy

"My father's ideology was deeply-rooted in patriarchy," she says. "He also served in the Guyana National Service. When he came home, the whole house had to be clean. Food had to be on the table. If not, everybody had to be uncomfortable."

In a house of 11 people, she often felt invisible and sought attention elsewhere. At 15, she became pregnant by her 17-year-old

neighbour. When the relationship didn't work out, de Florimonte, now a teenaged mother, entered a new relationship that resulted in abuse.

"Abuse doesn't happen 24/7. There are beautiful days or months with love and affection and then there's the abuse, and when that happens, we know that it's going to end; we look forward to the next phase," she says. "And so, oftentimes, our brain tends to block out the bad parts."

After several attempts, de Florimonte finally left her partner for good following one particularly violent episode. She says that her father was instrumental in giving her the courage to leave by letting her know that she was always welcome to return home if she was unhappy.

Finding Purpose

de Florimonte dropped out of school to take care of her daughter but decided to complete her high school education at the age of 30. She later gained a degree in social work and says her studies helped her heal from her trauma.

"I told myself, 'I am going to study social work, and it will heal me. I want to understand how to be a better parent, how to get over this [trauma] and the way that I respond to situations. As a parent, I sometimes used to lash out at my children,' she says, "I recognised I was traumatising my children because of my trauma."

■ Continued on the next page.



WEMYSS DE FLORIMONTE presenting at a workshop for women living with disabilities during the 16 Days of Activism against GBV in 2021. Photo: Spotlight Initiative/Jasmaine Payne

■ Continued from previous page.

What started as a journey toward self-healing turned into a passion for helping others. She quickly became a pillar of support for the other women in her course. “So many women have gone through these things, and they’re still going through it,” she says. “I think because of my [outspoken] personality, they found it easier to talk to me, so I started being the unofficial class counsellor.”

Since graduating, de Florimonte has worked as the Head of the Women of Worth programme with the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, providing small business financing for single-parent women at low-interest rates, among other roles. She continues to help women and girls through her work with the Spotlight Initiative.

Changing the Culture

“Gender-based violence is systemic. It’s rooted in all of our practices, our norms, our institutions, so addressing gender-based violence requires a multi-sectoral, multi-

layered as well as a community-centred approach,” she says.

“We can make a difference with [the] Spotlight Initiative because it addresses gender-based violence or violence against women and girls from all these different angles.”

Despite some progress, she says more must be done to create cultural change so that women can come forward, share their stories and have the courage to leave violent situations.

“I am a fighter, always,” she says. “And I was always taught to speak out and not be afraid. But [society] denigrates women so badly. [It’s] as if we don’t understand that this is something that all of us might have grappled with – whether personally or through interactions with a survivor. [We need] to talk to survivors. Let us support them, let us work with them, let us remind them that many of us went through this but by the grace of God, came through.

“Support is everything.”

SPOTLIGHT ON INTERNS



KENYA EVERSOLEY holds a BSc in Social Work with honours, and a master of Applied Psychology with distinction.

Where did your interest in research develop? It all started when I did my undergraduate practicum at the University of Calgary. I did a research practicum at Woods Homes, a children’s mental health care centre. I assisted in a pilot, a follow-up study on single session therapy and its benefits. Since then, my love for social and psychological research continues to grow and I have managed to assist in research projects with the World Bank, the government of Barbados and other organisations.

What do you hope to achieve from this internship with the UN Women and how do you plan to use this experience in the future? I hope to improve my research skills and gain more experience in the field. I would love to continue to assist in research at UN Women in other research opportunities.

Tell us about the work you are doing. I was given the responsibility to assist with creating the infographics for the Jamaica research and I am currently assisting with the online survey for Grenada.

What excites you about this body of work? Simply being a woman, conducting research for the safety of women is indeed an honour and a privilege. Knowing that the results of this research will have a major impact on the lives of women and girls across the Caribbean excites me.

How do you see this body of work impacting the region as it pertains to ending Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)? I believe that this body of research is a form of advocacy on behalf of women and girls, which will open the eyes of government leaders and policy-makers on the incurred costs of VAWG and how they can assist from an economic perspective with the anticipation of less cases/occurrences of VAWG.



Gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and crucial to its achievement



Guidelines for GBV in the workplace soon

The Caribbean is one step closer to having joint Regional Guidelines for Gender-based Violence (GBV) at the Workplace Level.

Recently, over 130 people from 18 Caribbean countries – including Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago – participated in the **Strengthening Regional Cooperation Workshop**.

The objective of the one-day virtual Workshop was to bring employers and employees/workers together to establish a baseline policy for addressing GBV at the workplace. The joint initiative between the Caribbean Employers' Confederation (CEC) and the Caribbean Confederation of Labour (CCL) is supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) under the Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative.

Dr. Andre Vincent Henry, Director, Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies (CCLCS) in his Opening Remarks emphasised: "There's a lot of work to do and we have very little time to do it. Gender-based Violence is a scourge for which we must all take personal responsibility. We must help eradicate it in our various spheres of operation; and this work can be done through this regional labour movement partnership."

"The objective of this workshop is to familiarise participants with the minimum ILO standards addressing GBV in the world of work. In a more practical sense, today offers participants the opportunity to review and comment on the Working Document – **A Guide to Addressing GBV at the Workplace through Policy**," said Akins Vidale, Project Lead for the Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies. "We are not asking you to rubber stamp this

document; you are asked to interrogate the document so we can bring real change to the workplace."

The workshop – hosted by Ian Daniel, Head of Department, Labour Studies, CCLCS – opened with a plenary discussion by Paz Arancibia Roman, ILO Regional Specialist, Gender Equality and Non-discrimination for Latin American and the Caribbean, and Erica Martin, Labour Law and International Labour Standards Specialist, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean.

Both presenters emphasised the importance of the ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) also known as C190 – the first international treaty to recognise the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including GBV and harassment.

Also present were Asiya Mohammed, GBV Specialist for the Spotlight Initiative at UNFPA's Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean and Anyka Batista of the Spotlight Initiative Technical Coordination Unit, Trinidad and Tobago.

Discussions followed the Plenary, where participants were asked to provide feedback on and strengthen the clauses of the working document, which included Employer's and Employee's Responsibilities; Training and Education; Reporting GBV Incidents; Special Leave; Confidentiality and Data Protection. Participants also highlighted that many of their workplaces did not have a policy on GBV; that there was limited confidence that confidentiality on reported GBV cases would be respected or that support services would be provided by employers.

One participant – Alice Regis of the Grenada Technical and Allied Workers Union described

the workshop as, "very informative with eye-opening contributions from the groups.

It sheds light on what needs to be done and how much is being done at present. I am more educated now on gender-based violence than when I started this workshop. Thank you!"

The Joint Regional Effort between the CEC and the CCL under the Spotlight Initiative will run over a six-month period between April

and September 2022.

This venture is a significant opportunity for employers, workers, and their representatives to create and shape workplace policies and cultures to efficiently address and eliminate GBV.

The CCL and CEC will host a follow up Workshop to integrate final comments on the updated working document on Wednesday 8th June, 2022.



THE Caribbean CSO Retreat

Civil Society Organisations
will meet and strategise
on how to strengthen the
Caribbean movement to end
Violence Against Women and Girls.

8-14 August 2022

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