



UN Barbados and the OECS 16 Days of Activism 2022 Official Event

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Caribbean

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Barbados is known for many things its beauty; Barbados is one of the oldest democracies in the Western hemisphere and has a long-standing reputation of social cohesion. However, the last few years with the stresses of economic crises, climate crises and the COVID-19 crisis has had a significant impact on gains made towards sustainable development. The tourism sector, hardest hit by COVID-19 contributes 31% to GDP and is responsible for 33% employment. There has had to be a concerted effort to strengthen economic, social and environmental resilience as opportunities for creating equitable and sustainable livelihoods become scarce and criminality increases across the board including gender-based crimes.

Data from five of the six countries (Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and St. Lucia) under analysis in in the Crime Trends Survey report reveal that women are more likely than men to be employed by the government. Barbados has a Gender Inequality Index of a value of 0.284, ranking it 60 out of 160 countries in

the 2017 index, this is not terrible for a country of Barbados' size but there are very high incidences and startling incidences of reports of gender-based violence. For the Caribbean countries that have comparable data available (Bahamas, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Jamaica, St. Kitts/Nevis, Dominica, Barbados, and Trinidad & Tobago) experienced a rate of rape above the unweighted average of the 102 countries in the Crime Trends Survey.

What we try to communicate at UN Women is that when we focus on the gender-based aspects of violence, this is just one way in which violence manifests. If you see violence manifesting itself in the home in extreme ways, you should not be surprised that it is manifesting in the communities in similar ways. Gender-based violence is the canary in the coalmine, because we are also starting to see higher and higher reports of violence across society.

Didier spoke to the 1 in 3, and Minister Jordan also noted that too often we sometimes become immune to the statistics, but it is true Minister Jordan and anytime we have a session, we have psycho-social support on board because generally in our region, there is someone in the room who has had direct contact with some form of gender-based violence.

For the countries that have data in the Caribbean, it is 46%, that is basically 1 in 2 women (who have experienced at least one form of violence in their lifetime). It is because it has unfortunately been normalised across our societies.

So, what can we do?

The first thing we need to highlight is the European Union's incredible contribution, 500 million Euro across the world on gender-based violence in the Spotlight Initiative; specifically, violence against women and girls to work on six different areas:

- (i) Laws – to make sure the laws are where they need to be. Congratulations again to the Government of Barbados who in 2016 updated the Domestic Violence Act and the Protection Orders Act.
- (ii) Working with the Institutions – the national gender machineries to make sure they are in a position to actually deliver on the legislation and policies in place. Because if we have great legislation and we have no implementation that is not justice served.
- (iii) The third and perhaps the most critical in some ways, is that work of prevention. Behavioural norms, attitudes, what do we believe is normal. The research shows that persons who believe that it is normal and natural for a man to be violent in his relationship with his partner are more likely to be abuse in their relationships; almost two times more likely. So, working at the root causes is one of the key areas which will serve to prevent more cases of gender-based violence.
- (iv) The fourth area is the work with the services – the police, the judiciary, the health services to ensure that they are ready and the referral pathway works. The worst thing is when our civil society colleagues who do a lot of the service provision go to seek the support of the State and cannot get through in certain areas and this is across the region and across the world.
- (v) The Data – We still need data in Barbados on prevalence. What we know is that unfortunately, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase of 38% of people who reporting through calls of incidences

to the police. That has gone down significantly, but it, like all forms of administrative data tells one aspect of the story, those who report. We need reliable data that is ethically collected on prevalence, so we know exactly what is happening, so we can best target it.

- (vi) And finally, the work of civil society must continue to be supported consistently, because they do the work, and they are where we cannot be.

What about the men, people keep asking. The data still shows that women are the large majority of victims of gender-based violence, specifically, domestic violence, intimate partner abuse, sexual harassment and sexual assault. But what the data also shows us is that young men who are in families where they are suffering corporal punishment or shame, or watching their mothers be abused, are also more likely to be perpetrators and young girls who suffer from corporal punishment, witness their mothers being abused are also more likely to be victims.

So, we need to start the work early, because beyond the binary keep talking about the gender binary, there is a binary, unfortunately, that we have of good and evil. People are people and they make choices based on the tools that they have. Unfortunately, many young men and older men do not have tools in their toolbox, and women as well, to resolve conflicts effectively in their relationships.

Thanks to the Government of Canada many years ago, we were able as UNIFEM at the time to take a better practice from Canada around a psycho-social support programme, 16 weeks with men - rehabilitation without incarceration. That programme evolved into the UN Women Partnership for Peace Initiative.

That programme has been going for over 15 years in the Caribbean, specifically in Grenada with very low recidivism rates and with the men coming back to also support other men through the process.

It is about accountability, and it started in Barbados and unfortunately we did not get to continue. We spoke to Minister Kirk Humphrey and discussed doing the work to get the programme running again in Barbados. We are very excited, to be able to announce the re-launch of this programme in Barbados, starting next year. We are using our core funds for this because we believe deeply that we need this in Barbados again. We are very excited to be working with the Government of Barbados including the Ministry of Labour across all aspects of the ways in which violence manifests itself in our communities, especially in the workplace.

Gender equality if we are doing it right, should be working to ensure that regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, class whatever grouping we place on a human being when they are in a space, that everyone has equal access to resources, opportunities, justice and the chance to fulfill their greatest potential.

We have seen too many women die at the hands of those who love them and now we are seeing many of these men kill themselves too, leaving children without parents. They are better ways to resolve conflict, there are better ways to love and lose without violence.

Thank you for joining us tonight. Thank you for all of your work to support ending violence against women and girls which is a critical aspect for achieving the sustainable development goals.

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