



Cedrina Carr



Kenya Eversley

Spotlight on our Youth: NextGen of Researchers

What was initially a three-month internship turned into one of the best two-year experiences for the young research assistants attached to the United Nations European Union-funded Spotlight Initiative (SI) – an ambitious, multi-sectoral, interlinked, community-centred programme aimed at eliminating family violence and violence against women and girls in the Caribbean. UN Women Multi-Country Office (MCO) – Caribbean, in its role as the lead agency for Data and Research in the SI, led a multi-country study on the Economic Costs of Violence against Women and Girls (ECOVAWG).

Five CARICOM-based young researchers Kenya Eversley, Cedrina Carr, Lisa Hussain, Shernia Joseph, and Kevelle Cooper, from Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad & Tobago respectively, accepted this opportunity to develop and strengthen their skills in data collection and analysis but more importantly, to contribute to an initiative which: empowers young women and girls, works towards achieving gender equality, and addresses VAWG in Caribbean societies.

Dr. Bazlul Khondker, an economist with global expertise on costing violence against women and girls was contracted by UN Women to lead the multi-country research initiative and the young researchers had the opportunity to understudy him and his team, which comprised of Dr. Samantha John-Aloye and Lebrechtta Nana-Oye Hesse-Bayne – Jamaica; Tiffany Barry – Guyana and Dr. Tonia Frame – Grenada.

Complementing the robust research team leading the multi-country ECOVAWG study, the young women with academic backgrounds in Economics, Finance and Psychology joined the UN Women MCO Caribbean team as interns. They were embarking on a journey to contribute to addressing an important data deficit in our region – the economic costs of violence against women and girls.

The researchers received training from lead researcher Dr. Khondker on estimating the ECOVAWG and collecting and analysing relevant data for such an exercise. The training was designed to equip them with the knowledge and tools needed to conduct their individual research papers and complete various assignments under the internship.

With their own passion for undertaking Caribbean specific research and addressing VAWG at the country level, the young researchers produced individual research papers on areas that were relevant to their country contexts. These included domestic violence and homelessness, economic abuse and the direct cost of VAWG in both Jamaica and Grenada.

Substantive feedback on their papers were provided by consultant expert reviewers including Dr. Bazlul Khondker, Dr. Philomen Harrison (Economist and former Director of the Regional Statistics Programme of CARICOM Secretariat; and Dr. Elizabeth Villagomez (specialist in applied economics in the areas of social policy and labour market issues).



Shernia Joseph



Kevelle Cooper

allowed her to assess how to close the gaps since poverty, mental health and violence against women and girls, are interconnected, all of which are key components of her Ph.D research.

For Cedrina Carr, her conversations with women who experienced violence was eye-opening to the realities faced by them and the need for investment in the protection of women and girls.

The young researchers acknowledged the critical role youth play in conducting research and the significant contribution they can make in helping to eradicate VAWG. They recommended that international development agencies including other UN agencies should capitalise on this opportunity for young researchers to contribute to the areas they are passionate about such as gender equality, economics, and women's empowerment.

The internship was described by the young researchers as an "insightful and empowering experience," one that if given the opportunity again, "we would not change anything about our experiences as research assistants under the Spotlight Initiative."

The young women highlighted the kindness, encouragement, communication, and support from Isiuwa Iyahan – Deputy Representative and Marcia Lavine – Programme Associate of UN Women MCO – Caribbean which they described as unmatched and made this new role easier to manage and understand. They relied heavily on strong communication as the internship was undertaken remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. In addition, the researchers said it was the bond of newfound friendships with each other that made the internship the most amazing experience, coupled with being surrounded by other women equally passionate about the livelihoods and well-being of Caribbean women and girls.

They recommended the training as an avenue to increase the knowledge and competencies of future young researchers with an interest in studying ECOVAWG. As a call to action, they said given the data deficits in the region, catalytic investments in research and data management are critical to addressing this deficit.



Lisa Hussain

Kenya Eversley highlighted that "the internship was insightful, informative and a pleasure to be a part of."

Importantly, the internship opened doors of opportunity for the young researchers to be globally recognised for their academic acuties and pursuits. Lisa Hussain was awarded a Chevening Scholarship to complete her Master's in Financial Technology at the University of Kent. Lisa is also interested in pursuing a Ph.D focusing on the financial inclusion of women and girls in Guyana and the linkages between inclusion and violence against women.

Shernia Joseph (who also started her Master's degree during her internship - in Climate Change, Management and Finance) recently won the Black Future Leaders Award at Imperial College Business School, which highlights individuals who can contribute to their communities and those with great leadership potential. Shernia attributes receiving the award to the internship opportunity with the UN Women MCO and her specific role as research assistant. Kenya Eversley said while her area of focus is on poverty and mental health stigma in the Caribbean, her research paper for UN Women

“ There should always be a transfer of knowledge to the younger generations. - Cedrina Carr ”

Credit: Article prepared by Kenisha Chase, Gender and Development Intern, UN Women MCO-Caribbean