



Talking Points for Planning & Resource Mobilization Specialist, Angela Davis

National Consultation on Domestic Violence

Savannah Beach Club Hotel, Bridgetown Barbados

March 24-25, 2025

Partner Remarks

Protocol

- Hon. Kirk Humphrey, MP, Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs
- Ms. Carina Cockburn, IDB Country Representative in Barbados
- Mr. Jehu Wiltshire, Permanent Secretary – Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs
- Mr. William Warner, Director, Bureau of Gender Affairs
- Heads of Government Departments
- Academia and Civil Society Partners
- Members of the Media
- Other Specially invited Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and welcome to Day 2 of the National Consultation on Gender-Based Violence/Domestic Violence in Barbados. I am deeply honoured to be here with you today, as we continue our collective journey toward addressing and eradicating domestic violence in our society.

Reflecting on Day 1, I was reminded of Barbadian literary George Lamming's work "In the Castle of My Skin" and a particular chapter that reads...

"He would come home drunk and start to beat her. She would try to protect herself, but he was too strong. We would hear the slaps, the thuds, and her cries. We were too scared to intervene, huddled together in the corner, praying for it to stop."

This scene vividly describes the physical and emotional impact of domestic violence on the family, highlighting the fear and helplessness experienced by the children who witness it.

The novel offers a powerful narrative that sheds light on the complexities of domestic violence, critiquing the structures and norms that perpetuate this seemingly continuous cycle. It reinforced that this is not just a personal issue but a societal one that requires our collective action.

In the Caribbean region, the prevalence of intimate partner violence is alarmingly high. UN Women prevalence statistics show that up to 30% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime.

Here in Barbados, recent statistics from the police indicate that despite there being a **2%** decline in serious crime in 2023 there was a concerning spike in domestic violence incidents **572** reported cases of domestic violence in 2023, compared to **471** cases in 2022, a **21%** increase¹.

These numbers are not just statistics; they represent real lives, real pain, and real challenges faced by women and girls across our region. They underscore the urgent need for action and the importance of our work here today. As was addressed yesterday, there are many faces to domestic violence and while women and girls are disproportionately affected, we fully recognise that any violence inflicted on another human being is unacceptable.

There are a range of direct costs associated with domestic violence, including costs on the healthcare, police, justice and social welfare systems, as well as costs of victim support services (e.g., shelters, counselling, legal aid). There are also indirect costs related to VAWG, such as lost employment, wages and productivity, learning time lost and harm to the well-being of VAWG survivors and their children. Ultimately, VAWG negatively affects the lives of communities and undermines poverty reduction measures.

Yesterday we heard:

1. 60% of unnatural deaths were women and girls

¹ Statistics from the Barbados Police Service Annual Grand Conference

2. 380 of those 572 DV cases were women with 430 men being perpetrators

- Statistics which continue to rise and persist despite the nation's alignment with international treaties, conventions and best practices, as well as local legislative and policy reform efforts.

One must ask... "What more do we have to do?"

UN Women is poised to support the Government of Barbados in its efforts and would be available to provide:

Technical support:

- Support for the development of a National Action Plan on Domestic Violence,
- Rollout of the updated Partnership for Peace programme,
- Institutional strengthening of duty bearers through the Gender Responsive Policing Programme,
- Support to advance the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

We will continue our Resource Mobilisation efforts – to support the increased availability of globally comparable data on Violence against women and girls (VAWG); and supporting the call for a national prevalence survey.

Our efforts must be comprehensive and multi-faceted. This includes further strengthening legal frameworks, improving access to justice, providing support services for survivors, and engaging men and boys in the conversation. It also involves addressing the social norms and cultural practices that perpetuate violence and discrimination against women. This cultural connection was presented by Ms. Barnette in her opening presentation yesterday, but it is one which is rarely given the attention it deserves if we are to arrest the deep-rooted cultural influences which shape our socialization and notions of power and gender.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) now celebrating its 30th year, and as critical as it was then, it remains a comprehensive policy agenda for achieving gender equality, offering a roadmap to addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and ensuring women's voices are heard in all areas of life.

The WPS agenda and the BPfA are closely linked in their shared commitment to advancing gender equality and women's rights. With both frameworks stressing the importance of women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in decision-making, especially in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding².

Women's participation in the peace processes is indispensable especially in the Caribbean, where communities are often vulnerable to natural disasters, socio-political tensions and hardest hit by gang-related violence.

We must emphasize the role of women as active contributors to peacebuilding and security, promoting sustainable development and inclusive cooperation across multiple nations³.

The Government of Barbados, in collaboration with UN Women and other UN agencies and partners, have made significant strides in addressing gender-based violence. However, the journey is far from over. We must continue to build on these efforts and ensure that our actions are informed by data, evidence, and the voices of those most affected by violence. While this may be a marathon and not a sprint, every hour of every day, another life is in jeopardy and for many, time already ran out. We must always remember the humanity behind the statistics and not allow the testimonies of survival and resilience shared yesterday, and those that you may have heard before be in vain... **1 in 3**

Today, we will delve deeper into the strategies and initiatives that can help us close the gaps and advance our national priorities. As we participate in today's activities, I encourage each of you to engage actively, share your perspectives, and contribute to the development of actionable solutions, as Minister Humphery implored us so to do. Remember, our strength lies in our unity and our shared commitment to a violence-free society.

Let what we do today be reflected in our shared vision for Barbados and indeed the Caribbean, where every woman, girl, man and boy can live with dignity, safety, and respect.

² UN Women. 2020

³ UN Women. 2024. Women Peace and Security Working Group for Arab States Prepared for the 25th Anniversary of the WPS Agenda. Generation Equality Compact On Women, Peace And Security And Humanitarian Action

Thank you, and I look forward to a productive and impactful day of discussions.