



Seminar on the Conduct of National Prevalence Surveys on Gender-  
Based Violence in CARICOM

*Sharing Knowledge and Experiences from 5 CARICOM Member States*

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4 March 2020

United Nations House – Barbados

Good morning, it is my sincere pleasure and honour to welcome you to UN House and this Seminar, in my capacity as Representative of UN Women Multi-Country office for the Caribbean. I extend greetings to you also on behalf of the UN Women Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

As CARICOM makes strides toward the Sustainable Development Goals and the region we want, we are acutely conscious this cannot be achieved unless women and girls, and all of society, are free from violence.

Without reliable and relevant data, it is not possible to adequately treat, reduce and prevent violence against women and girls. Today, you will receive information produced for the first time ever from 5 countries in CARICOM on the prevalence of violence against women and girls. Through this multi-agency effort, we formally close significant gaps in efforts to map and identify patterns and drivers of Violence Against Women and Girls.

In doing so, the picture across these 5 countries is disturbingly clear:

- **Women** aged 15-64 have experienced at least one form of violence ranging from 39 % to as high as 55%;

- **28% to 38% of women** have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a partner in their lifetime;
- **Physical violence** ranges from 25% to 35%.
- **Emotional violence** which is usually the most commonly reported form of violence **range from 29% to 40% of the women surveyed**. It also needs to be said that **the lack of physical scars makes no form of violence a lesser concern. All forms of violence cause grave harm.**

You will hear more data and analysis later in the detailed presentation of the results.

I am confident you will all agree with me, that these findings are an **urgent** call for action. A call for action that directly tackles the gender drivers of violence in our societies.

What are these gendered drivers?

- Societal norms that continue to promote the status of men and boys as higher than that of women and girls (who are seen as subservient to — and subject to the authority of — their male counterparts) are a primary driver of VAWG.
- Notwithstanding women's gains in public life and laws, policies and initiatives to promote women's equality, there continues to be prevailing attitudes that perpetuate VAWG, such as women's primary responsibilities are in the home and that men are the natural authority.

The scourge of Gender-based Violence (GBV) extends beyond partner-inflicted violence globally. Data from the 5 countries confirm that:

- 20% to 38% of have women experienced non-partner sexual abuse in their lifetime;
- 13 % to 19% per cent reported experiencing this abuse before the age of 18.
- Being young is the most significant risk factor for non-partner sexual violence (NPSV), including rape, attempted rape, unwanted sexual touching and sexual harassment.

Work on preventing and ending violence against women at the global, regional and national levels shows that there is widespread impunity on sexual violence and rape. This is why the UN Secretary-General announced at 25th November 2019, International Day for the Elimination of All forms of violence against women, that the UNiTE Campaign will for the next two years focus on a rape as a specific form of harm committed against women and girls, in times of peace or war.

All the forms of violence described are a human rights concern, devastating to families, a burden on our health system and bring with them a societal imperative to address. The violence described in the pages of these five country reports are also inter-generational in nature with impacts on multiple lives for years and decades to come since IPV adversely affects all aspects of women's lives.

- Women who began their first union at a young age, lack family support or have a controlling partner have an increased risk of experiencing physical and/or sexual IPV.
- Women who witnessed violence against their mothers in childhood or have a partner who witnessed such violence are at significantly higher risk, continuing the cycle of exposure and IPV through to their own children.
- Most women who experienced IPV in these countries never sought help. Victims, community members and stakeholders attributed this to lack of knowledge of available help, perceptions of being blamed or stigmatized by their situation becoming known throughout the community and inadequate support structures to ensure victim safety after reporting violence to the police.

UN Women has invested significantly in supporting member states in strengthening capacities to fill the data gaps on violence against women and girls. In 2013 the CARICOM Ministers of Human and Social Development (COHSOD), agreed that this Model should be piloted in 2 CARICOM countries. That goal has been far exceeded as 5 countries have now conducted these surveys, with support from a suite of development partners and donors that include the IDB, UNDP, USAID and CDB. We express our thanks to these partners and also the team at the Global Women's Institute of George Washington University, GWI, which has been providing

technical support and assistance in all the countries. We also thank the authors of the qualitative research reports and all others who worked so diligently to ensure this report was produced.

Working with regional partners, the Caribbean Development Bank and CARICOM, we developed the CARICOM Prevalence Survey Model. The CARICOM Model is based on the long-tested global World Health Organization (WHO) model which is considered internationally to be the best practice for national, population-based studies on prevalence data on GBV.

This CARICOM model also allows us to capture information on the consequences of GBV for women, their children and families, women's help-seeking behaviours and risk and protective factors for violence. It allows in a real way for the voices of women and girls to be heard.

UN Women, with support from CDB, prepared a compendium document, which we will be handing over to CARICOM today. This document represents almost 6 years of work and is driven by the 2013 COHSOD agreement to pilot the survey. It includes a paper on the experiences of conducting the survey in CARICOM; a technical guidance note; question by question manual; and the adapted survey questionnaire. CARICOM now has a compendium of documents to support a standardized approach to the measurement of prevalence of intimate partner violence in the region.

As we know and as the survey results reinforce, we need to address the root causes as well as the drivers of gender-based violence which lie in cultural and social norms and practices, which reinforce and perpetuate unequal relations of power between women and men. UN Women is working on several fronts to address VAWG, to respond to women and their children as victims of violence but also as agents of change. For example -

Our Foundations Programme is a flagship initiative in this regard, as is the work the Office has supported around the Partnership for Peace Programme. Foundations is a group-based education programme geared at consciousness raising among young people of the multiple ways in which notions of gender shapes sociocultural realities in our region. UN Women has designed this multifaceted toolkit to build competence among young people to address gender-based violence, with an emphasis on violence against women and girls, and moreover contribute to

building violent-free generations. Partnership for Peace (PfP) represents a 16-session curriculum for men designed to encourage and support men in achieving a violence-free lifestyle. It is based on the premise that violence is intentional and that abusive behaviours are chosen methods for gaining control of persons and situations. The program uses a psycho-educational approach in order to convey that violence is unacceptable and that violent habits can be broken, sharing concepts and techniques that help to replace violent behaviour with preferences for respect, open communication and healthy relationships.

The key message is that violence is a choice, that participants are responsible for their choices, and that they alone are accountable for the consequences of the actions they take.

In closing, I wish to congratulate those who had the vision and the courage to start this journey and see it through to fruition today. I wish to pay tribute to the women, the survivors who shared their stories and let us into their homes and their lives – without them we would not be standing here today. This is not something we take lightly.

Best wishes for a successful seminar and I look forward to continuing collaboration with all our partners here gathered.