

CARIBBEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS UNITE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

*A Summary Booklet on the
Caribbean Regional Consultation of Parliamentarians
on Gender-Based Violence*

**Kingston, Jamaica
November 9-10, 2011**



Executive Summary

On 25 February 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General launched the Campaign **UNiTE to End Violence Against Women, 2008-2015**. The campaign aims to raise public awareness and increase political will and resources for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. In October 2010 the Caribbean UN System Interagency Working Group for the Campaign¹ organized the official launch of the UNiTE Campaign in the Caribbean. Among the recommendations emerging at this event was a call for national parliamentarians throughout the Caribbean to engage as partners in the campaign.

Almost a year later, on November 10-11, 2011, a Regional Consultation of Parliamentarians took place in Kingston, Jamaica, in support of the call for national parliamentarians to join in the leadership of the Campaign. The consultation focused on:

- Raising awareness among parliamentarians about the problem of gender-based violence in the Caribbean
- Building political will and the capacity of parliamentarians to address and end gender-based violence
- Sharing best practices in gender-based violence prevention, and
- Identifying ways in which parliamentarians can contribute to efforts (at the national level) to end violence against women.

The consultation which was led by UNFPA was a collaborative effort involving several partner Agencies and Organizations. Partners included UN Women, the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (IAPG), Caribbean Network of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (CNPPD), and the CARICOM Secretariat.

The first day focused on improving parliamentarians understanding of gender-based violence in the

Caribbean. On the second day participants shared approaches to ending gender-based violence being employed by various stakeholders in the region, and highlighted ways in which parliamentarians can help to end gender-based violence.

Based on the presentations and discussions, and on group work done on day two, participants identified entry points for parliamentarians to become involved in addressing gender-based violence. They developed a number of recommendations and activities to address gender-based violence. Recommendations focused on:

- Increased visible public action and statements by parliamentarians denouncing gender-based violence
- Increased support by parliamentarians to the UN Secretary General's UNiTE campaign
- Use of the parliamentary space and the constituency base to encourage discussion on and action to address gender-based violence
- Facilitating a better understanding of Caribbean history and a gender-balanced appreciation of this history by improving the teaching of and the curricula for Caribbean history in schools and by mounting commemorative events and memorials to highlight Caribbean history and the role of women in the region's history
- Ensuring public education and sensitization programmes for boys and men on gender-based violence
- Reviewing existing legislation on gender-based violence and related issues, with a view to making the legislation more effective

The recommendations provided by the groups will form the basis for UNFPA's advocacy with parliamentarians on gender-based violence. The recommendations have been circulated to participants who can take steps to operationalize elements and generate additional ideas to meet country-specific needs.

¹The Working Group is comprised of representatives from UNFPA, UNICEF, PAHO, UNDP, UNIFEM, ECLAC, the RC Office for B'dos/EC and Guyana

Caribbean Consultation of Parliamentarians on Gender-Based Violence – Outputs and Outcomes

Outcomes:

The consultation was organized to facilitate a process which would lead to two key outcomes:

- Increased awareness of gender-based violence among parliamentarians
- Heightened political will among parliamentarians to address the problem

Outputs:

The meeting sought to and was successful in eliciting recommendations, and identifying entry points for involvement of parliamentarians in efforts to address gender based violence

Questions	Recommendations by Parliamentarians
<p>Group One – How can parliamentarians promote the aims of the UNiTE Campaign in the prevention of violence against women, as well as specific activities that parliamentarians or the parliament as a collective can take via the parliamentary agenda and process to address Gender-Based Violence?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that public conduct and behaviour are in sync with principles about gender-based violence ● Visit the UNiTE website and sign up to become a member. ● Make public statements/pronouncements which focus on gender-based violence and UNiTE programmes. ● Convene public consultations and dialogue with social partners (such as faith based organizations, NGOs, and the legal fraternity). ● Use the media to issue statements on gender-based violence and issue public responses to media stories promoting UNiTE principles. ● Mobilise communities to take positive action on gender-based violence through petitions. ● Use the parliamentary space to promote the UNiTE campaign principles and speak out against gender-based violence by various actions such as asking questions on order paper, placing the issue on matters on adjournment, highlighting the issue through private member business and making brief statements on GBV during key calendar dates and observances. ● Work at the constituency level to highlight the issue of gender-based violence via various activities including working with schools, organising poster competitions on the issue, providing training for trainers who will work at the community level to raise awareness of the issue.
<p>Group Two – How can improved understanding of Caribbean History help to change current beliefs and behaviours which facilitate and foster a culture of violence, and at specific strategies which parliamentarians through parliament, can adopt to address the problem of violence and reduce gender-based violence in the region?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take steps to make Caribbean history compulsory up to Grade 11 in schools ● Review Caribbean history textbooks to ensure that they are gender sensitive and incorporate new research on the history of violence in the communities and gender and history. ● Ensure that the historical content in the Social Studies textbooks at the primary school level is strengthened. ● Encourage research to strengthen and ensure a more accurate and gender sensitive history curriculum ● Make history – including recent Caribbean history – more accessible to students by using the various media to communicate with young people. ● Ensure memorials/observances and monuments to enable Caribbean people to remember their history. Celebrating such events will provide the opportunity to teach and commemorate the gender part of our history. There must be a definitive policy to use commemorative events to incorporate messages about gender-based violence. ● In partnering with artists/cultural figures to convey messages about gender-based violence, care must be taken to ensure that these persons are credible role models.

Questions	Recommendations by Parliamentarians
<p>Group Three – What strategies can be used to engage men in ending violence against women and in this regard and the specific role of parliament in supporting such strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide programmes of education and public awareness to men and boys of all classes and backgrounds to help males understand their role in the partnership to end gender-based violence. ● Encourage organizations serving men and organizations serving women to work together through consultation and discussion to ensure a real partnership in developing balanced and gender sensitive interventions to address gender-based violence. ● Use traditional and new media (including social media) and sports to facilitate partnerships between men and women to end gender-based violence. ● Address the political divide in approaching issues like gender-based violence and showing a united front in addressing these issues of national concern. ● Use the position of area representative to carry out programmes and sessions in constituencies in order to sensitize constituents on the issue. Partner with other social agencies to do this including the police, social workers and faith based groups. Such action should demonstrate a commitment to ensure on-the-ground implementation of GBV legislation drafted in parliament. ● Review legislation to ensure it adequately addresses the complex social, cultural and legal issues around gender based violence in the region.

Quotes from Parliamentarians

“Very often when people think of gender-based violence they tend to think it affects mainly the lower socio-economic group, but this is not the case.” **“**I want to really thank Ms. Assamba for her presentation. It is amazing how many women like her are abused in society.



“I had a very close friend who was involved in an abusive relationship for many years, and as close as I was to that person I did not know that such a problem existed with her. Listening to Ms Assamba, I now know that some of the problems that my friend's children were going through were a direct result of what was happening in the home.”



“The issue of gender based violence and HIV/AIDS should be spoken about and a human face put to it. If persons hear stories from persons affected, it will make a difference. I have witnessed an intervention programme at Flankers in Jamaica, and I will take that model back to Trinidad.”



“In my own country the Bureau set up for assistance to victims of violence shut their doors at 4.30 p.m. which is usually when the violence against persons begins. There are also challenges in the response given by police to gender-based violence.”



“A gentleman once came to me seeking to get an injunction from the courts for a restraining order against a woman, and the courts granted the injunction. There is the need to ‘preach the word’ in schools, in churches, and all spheres of society that violence against human beings is wrong.”

“People need support from legislators and they need support from stakeholder communities outside of state programmes and institutions.”



“As a result of attending this conference, I will take back to my country a commitment to deal with gender-based violence in a better way. As a politician I see it as my duty to help women in their fight against violence... I would like to invite all men present to commit themselves to the women present that they will help in the fight against gender-based violence.”



“I have found the use of the term “Relational Violence” in Curacao interesting as I have just been reading the OECS’ laws where they are working on Family Laws in the OECS. These laws do not take into consideration what is known as “visiting relationships” when it comes for the opportunity to apply for protection orders. This is one weakness in the laws as they stand in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.”



“We must recognize the importance of partnerships with different stakeholders across the sectors – We must partner with parents, teachers, faith based organisations, NGOs, FBOs, etc. We cannot restrict the discourse to the gender sector or to any particular sector. We need to engage with a wide range of stakeholders.” **”**



Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean – Context, History, Culture

In an effort to increase awareness of gender-based violence and violence against women among parliamentarians, the first day of the consultation provided participants with an overview of the social, historical and cultural contexts of gender-based violence in the region.

Context – Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean

Dr. Leith Dunn, Head of the Institute of Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona Campus, provided key definitions regarding gender and gender-based violence and outlined the global governance framework which exists to address this type of violence.

The gender specialist defined gender as a social construct which articulates expected masculine and feminine behaviours and attitudes, and defined gender-based violence as any act or conduct based on gender which causes death, harm, physical or psychological damage in the public or private arena. She noted that the concept of gender reflects the social power divide where the feminine is devalued. This increases the risk of gender-based violence, as ideas and attitudes associated with gender-based violence contribute to inequality.

Dr. Dunn explained that while men and boys are also vulnerable to gender-based violence, in the majority of cases men are perpetrators and women are victims. Gender-based violence includes rape, carnal abuse, sexual harassment and human trafficking. She also pointed to increased risks of gender-based violence with the internet and other new technologies.

In outlining the global governance framework addressing gender-based violence, Dr. Dunn cited various agreements and documents including: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), General Recommendation 19; the Beijing Platform for Action; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Conference on Population and Development and national plans of action. She noted however that while the Caribbean region has a good track record in ratifying conventions, there is a gap between these commitments and actual action.

In providing this context, she called on parliamentarians to be aware of and understand all these issues and linkages and their implications. Dr. Dunn cited a number of responses which parliamentarians could support including:

- Improved data collection on violence against women in the region
- More work to address sexual harassment and human trafficking"
- Legal reforms to ensure consistency and action on the issue
- Preventative action focusing on males and increased representation of women in parliaments



Dr. Leith Dunn, Head of the Institute of Gender and Development Studies, UWI, Mona in conversation with Dr. Arun Kashyap, UN Resident Coordinator in Jamaica.

Context – Gender-Based Violence and HIV and AIDS

Dr. Pierre Somse, UNAIDS Country Coordinator for Jamaica examined the links between gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS, giving examples from other regions such as Asia, South Africa and South America. Dr. Somse indicated that studies in these places clearly show the link between gender-based violence and HIV. Research from India showed that women who had experienced violence from intimate partners were three times more likely to be HIV positive than women who had not experienced such violence. He also cited 2008 data from four South American countries which showed that 78 percent of women living with HIV who had been surveyed had experienced violence at some point in their lives. He said that there is an absence of research and data on this issue for the Caribbean.

Dr. Somse identified three main actions needed to address the problem:

- Generating better evidence on the different forms of violence against women and the multiple intersections with HIV"

- Integration of HIV and violence programmes through national multi-sectoral HIV strategic plans"
- Championing leadership for an enabling environment that promotes and protects women's and girl's human rights and their empowerment in the context of HIV

Dr. Somse told parliamentarians that creating an enabling environment is a part of the role of the politician. He said the solution is complex and requires action from all stakeholders. He called on parliamentarians to provide "innovative and game-changing leadership" to trigger change in the HIV response.

History and Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean

Verene Shepherd, Professor of Social History and University Director for the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, UWI, provided an understanding of the historical roots of gender-based violence in Caribbean society. She pointed to violence against women by early colonisers who raped the region's indigenous women and used them as concubines. This gender-based violence continued with the introduction of African slavery and the rape and abuse of African women upon capture, during the Middle Passage and as part of plantation slavery, where women as field or domestic labourers were exposed to the brutality of white males.

She also highlighted the paradox which occurred in the post-emancipation era, when freed black men were expected to take on the responsibility as heads of households and women who had formerly worked as field and domestic labourers were then expected to remain at home. She said that as a result, in Caribbean society, men claim power as a right and become resentful where they perceive women's appropriation of this power. She posited however that post-modern society was never set up to give black men the tools to gain superiority over women as both freed men and women left the plantation after emancipation with little or no access to land, education, healthcare or other tools for social mobility or empowerment. This has had a lingering impact on culture and expressions of masculinity and has been manifested in physical and verbal abuse.

The historian pointed out that a survey of history textbooks has revealed that many of these texts themselves reinforce hegemonic masculinity with a focus on male dominance, the portrayal of sugar as a solely male enterprise and little or no mention of women in labour organisation. She stressed that if education is going to provide the tools for development, it needs to be anchored to a more accurate presentation of history and urged parliamentarians to support a more gender-inclusive education system.

Culture and Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean

Dr. Halimah DeShong, Lecturer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies at UWI's Cave Hill Campus looked at the role of culture in sustaining dominant ideologies of gender in the Caribbean. In defining culture as a society's way of life manifested in its tradition, belief systems, values, institutions, everyday practices and popular culture, she said that gender and its associated relations are products of culture and are therefore a feature of social life.



Dr. Verene Shepherd, Professor of Social History and University Director for the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, UWI.

She noted the intersection of gender with other social relations of power such as race and class, and said that various forms of control, including coercion and violence are used to police the boundaries in interpersonal relationships and women's space and power.

In examining the popular Caribbean art form of calypso as a site for the construction of gender ideologies, Dr. DeShong noted the gender stereotyping of both men and women in this art form. Using examples from select calypsos, she said suspicion of infidelity was the single most important threat to masculinity in these songs and therefore the most common explanation for men's use of violence against their partners. Using the example of the calypso 'No Love, No Money' she noted that depictions of domestic violence are not accompanied by outrage or condemnation, demonstrating the normalization of violence against women in the Caribbean gender landscape. She said it is important to consider how understanding of gender is embedded in our culture as this might help to explain women's greater vulnerability. Her proposal for action includes engaging women in the process of creating responses to gender based violence and finding ways to eradicate the notion of provocation and victim precipitation, as this serves to shift the blame away from the perpetrator to the victim and explains why some women avoid seeking help outside the home.

Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean – Responses and Approaches

A Personal Response – Aloun Ndombet-Assamba

Ms. Aloun Ndombet-Assamba, attorney-at-law, mediator and former Jamaican Parliamentarian, spoke on how individuals are affected by gender-based violence. Ms. Assamba shared her experiences both as a survivor of gender-based violence who now works “one on one” with battered women, and as a parliamentarian who has tackled issues of gender-based violence in Jamaica, particularly human trafficking.



Ms. Aloun Ndombet-Assamba, Attorney-at-law, Mediator and former Jamaican Parliamentarian

In using her own experiences to illustrate key aspects of gender-based violence, Ms. Assamba spoke on the need to address issues of gender-power relationships, socialisation, human trafficking, violence in the media and the inability of men and women to settle disputes peacefully. She said her own experience, as a professional middle class woman who was a victim of spousal abuse, demonstrated that gender-based violence transcends class and socio-economic differences. She also shared how difficult it was to break away from the pattern of abuse, despite her social and economic status.

“Although I was this big professional, with my own money, my own house, a good job, I felt helpless to do anything about the abuse. I had feelings of shame, and I felt I needed to protect the abuser....Ever since I have been able to speak publicly about the abuse, I have been surprised at the number of women who have been in similar circumstances like myself, who have confided that they, too, have gone through abuse and felt powerless to do anything about it,” the former government minister explained.

“Ever since I have been able to speak publicly about the abuse, I have been surprised at the number of women who have been in similar circumstances like myself, who have confided that they, too, have gone through abuse and felt powerless to do anything about it”

**– Former Jamaican Parliamentarian,
Ms. Aloun Ndombet-Assamba**

Ms. Assamba said every effort must be made to get parliamentarians involved and urged them to speak up on the issue at every opportunity, to put it on the public agenda using parliament and to work to ensure support for victims of gender-based violence.

Institutional Responses – The Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (IAPG)

Carla Rivera Avni, Executive Director of the IAPG, made a presentation on the work of her organisation to the parliamentarians.

She said the IAPG is an international NGO made up of a network of committed parliamentarians that have come together as an alliance to mobilise political will and strengthen parliamentary action. The Caribbean network, which is a member of IAPG, was formed in 2008 with the support of UNFPA. The IAPG works in each country with national groups which have their own structure, with a mandate to promote the Millennium Development Goals and the Cairo Programme of Action.

The alliance of parliamentarians promotes non-political consensus to work on development issues. It works with NGOs, UN agencies and other partners and promotes leadership among parliamentarians so that they can champion various development issues, including addressing gender-based violence.

Ms. Avni noted that a key challenge for Latin America and the Caribbean is that legislation has been adopted or improved but challenges remain in implementation and enforcement.

Institutional Responses – The UN Secretary General’s UNiTE campaign

Nadine Gassman, Senior Manager for the UNiTE Campaign in Latin America and the Caribbean and

Sharon Carter-Burke, Communications Specialist with UN Women provided information about the UNiTE campaign.

The key campaign issues highlighted were:

- The need to recognize violence against women and girls as a human rights violation and to view it as an issue central to citizens' security;
- The framework the UNiTE campaign provides to integrate all stakeholders' actions against gender-based violence while emphasizing on women needs; and
- The three pillars (Stop Impunity; Ensure 'Not Even One More' Woman or Girl is a Victim of Violence and Recognition that 'We All Are Responsible) in the Latin America and Caribbean region's campaign, with the associated actions and expected results.

The UN staffers highlighted the need for parliamentarians to use International Conventions and corresponding reports, ensure that countries make reports and ratify the Facultative Protocol and support multi-sectoral strategic plans to build enabling environments for women and girls to live a life free from violence.

UNFPA's LAC Sexual Violence Strategy (2011-2013) seeks to contribute to the reduction of sexual violence in Latin America and the Caribbean through strengthening of prevention and care policies, programmes and services and of national states and civil society, in order to address this problem.

Mrs. Carter-Burke spoke on existing mechanisms and tools for ending violence against women and shared information about the Project for Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action for Ending Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean. The project is being implemented in eight Caribbean countries. Entertainers are an integral part of this project and a number of local artistes and disc jockeys from across the region have become spokespersons for ending gender-based violence.

Mrs. Carter Burke pointed to several opportunities for parliamentarians' participation in this project and the UNiTE campaign, including: supporting national women's machineries in the development of the National Strategic Plans as well as lobbying for passage of these plans in Parliament; providing political backing for full integration of these plans across government sectors; building a gender caucus into political mani-

festoes and engaging the media on the issue of gender-based violence.



Institutional Responses – UNFPA's Latin America and Caribbean Sexual Violence Strategy

Ms. Jewel Quallo-Roseberg, Gender Specialist with UNFPA's Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean shared information about this strategy with parliamentarians. She explained that sexual violence is a priority area for the UNFPA in the Latin American and Caribbean region, based on the organization's comparative advantage in addressing this area.

She said UNFPA's LAC Sexual Violence Strategy (2011-2013) seeks to contribute to the reduction of sexual violence in Latin America and the Caribbean through strengthening of prevention and care policies, programmes and services and of national states and civil society, in order to address this problem. It is based on international agreements on human rights, gender equity, sexual and reproductive health and the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence.

Advocacy in public policy, communication for change, knowledge management, strategic alliances through partnerships and networking, capacity development and resource mobilization are among the implementation strategies for the plan. Strategic products include policies, information systems and comprehensive models for preventing and addressing sexual violence. Strategic areas of focus include male participation in prevention of sexual violence and addressing sexual violence in humanitarian, conflict and post conflict situations.

Institutional Responses – CARICOM

Dr. Hillary Brown, Programme Manager, Culture and Community Development, CARICOM Secretariat said that there is a great deal of interest in CARICOM to be

part of this initiative, adding that there is also work in training and work to facilitate regional collaboration to address gender-based violence. Dr. Brown noted that CARICOM's primary responsibility is for co-ordinating policy within the region. She indicated that CARICOM is interested in taking this project into the future. The focus is on building interest, relationships and changing attitudes.

Dr. Brown highlighted activities being spearheaded and implemented by the CARICOM Secretariat in member states, which support action on gender-based violence prevention. These include:

- The Health and Family Life Education Programme
- Child Protection
- Analysis of statistics and data
- Advocacy and Child Support
- Partnerships with the UN system as well as with civil society groups
- Inter-agency collaboration
- Appointment of an Advocate for Gender Justice
- Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) recognition
- Working with artistes to build awareness about gender-based violence-edutainment, which involved 15 artistes from Guyana and Belize



"Institutional Responses – CARIMAN's Approach

Patrick Prendergast, lecturer and coordinator at the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication, UWI Jamaica Western Campus, spoke about the CARIMAN (Caribbean Male Action Network) initiative which seeks to increase understanding of masculinity and gender issues. He noted that improved relationships among and between men and women will only be possible if there are changes in the values, attitudes and behaviours of both men and women. He stressed the need to include and involve men in discussions in order to help them to examine their own and others' positions and to choose to be a part of positive change.

He also shared findings of a CARIMAN study which consisted of in-depth interviews with experts in the field, as well as individual interviews and focus group sessions exploring issues of masculinity and gender with diverse groups of men of all ages in Jamaica, St. Lucia and Grenada. Among the conflicts identified by respondents were:

- A common societal view of men as underachievers
- Challenges faced by abused men in speaking about issues of abuse
- The fact that Caribbean societies make it unacceptable for men to demonstrate affection to their children while encouraging them to love them

The Belize Surveillance System for Gender Based Violence was developed to detect the magnitude of and trends in gender-based violence, resultant injuries, outcomes for victims and risk factors. The data generated can inform policy and practice, be used to improve services for victims and assist planners to better target interventions.

Mr. Prendergast called for the promotion and strengthening of organisations where men are working with men and mentioned the existence of a number of such organisations in the Caribbean, including Fathers Inc. in Jamaica and the Big Brother movement in St. Lucia.

Country Responses – Belize

Ms. Jewel Quallo-Roseberg of the UNFPA's Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean and Sandra Paredes Technical Specialist, Census, UNFPA, SRO made a presentation on the Belize Surveillance System for Gender-Based Violence. This system was developed to detect the magnitude of and trends in gender-based violence, resultant injuries, outcomes for victims and risk factors. The data generated can inform policy and practice, be used to improve services for victims and can assist planners to better target preventive interventions.

The system was initiated in 1999, under the Health Ministry's Epidemiological Unit, in collaboration with the Women's Department which falls under the Ministry of Human Development. It has been operating successfully and the Government of Belize has asked PAHO to evaluate it in order to identify gaps and areas for improvement. The goal is to improve data quality in order to provide the best possible information, which can be used to improve the lives of persons affected by gender-based violence.

Some strengths of the system are its multi-sectoral approach, the multiple entry points into the system for victims of gender-based violence, the internalization of the system into existing structures and use of a standardized form to address the needs of all stakeholders



Key gaps include: the need for an identified agency for oversight as none of the stakeholder agencies give oversight of the overall system; the need to provide a clear definition of gender-based violence which is understood at the community level; the need for more sensitization/education on the issue, particularly for victims who may be unwilling to report this crime; the need for continuous training at the Ministry level since there is a high turnover rate of staff in government departments; the need for a user-friendly manual and the need to revise the intake form to make it more responsive to needs.

Country Responses – Curacao

Curacao parliamentarian Mr. Gilmar Pisas explained that in Curacao, domestic violence is classified as “relational violence.” He said the definition of relational violence encompasses physical, psychological and sexual violence. He stated that Curacao chose to use the term relational violence as opposed to domestic violence, as the term domestic violence can be misunderstood to mean only violence which takes place within the environs of the home/the domestic sphere. Mr. Pisas provided statistical data indicating that in 2008 there were three victims of relational violence in

Curacao, but that in 2009 this number had increased to 30. He said that relational violence is now a priority for the Government of Curacao.

He highlighted the importance of preventing repeat offences of relational violence by working with both victims and perpetrators. In Curacao, once an offender is taken into custody by the police, the parole board is notified. The parole board provides assistance to both the victim and the offender, as it is recognized that the offender is also in need of help.

Mr. Pisas highlighted the work of a non-governmental agency in Curacao which helps victims of relational violence, but which does not always get the financial support needed. He spoke of the work of this organization in addressing gender-based violence by providing shelter and other support for victims. He noted however, the challenges it has experienced in the face of increasing client numbers and limited resources.

According to Mr. Pisas, measures taken in Curacao to reduce relational violence include:

- Preventing repeat offences/offenders by means of proactive intervention
- Alerting potential offenders of the consequences of relational violence
- Encouraging victims to press charges against offenders

He provided recommendations to improve the situation regarding relational violence in Curacao including: provision of information on where to go in case of relational violence; sensitization for school children of the dangers of relational violence and use of the mass media to educate persons on the dangers of relational violence.

Mr. Pisas noted that as a result of attending this conference he will take back to his country a commitment to deal with gender-based violence in a better way. He said that as a politician he sees it as his duty to help in the fight against violence against women.

At the end of his presentation he invited all the men in the audience to come forward and pledge themselves to end violence against women.

Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean – A Call to Action

In closing the consultation, Geeta Sethi, Director of the UNFPA Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean, thanked participants and organizers for an interesting, exciting and honest sharing and engagement.



Ms. Geeta Sethi, Director of the UNFPA Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean

She expressed delight with the level of participation and that participants had identified actions they can take to break the silence around gender-based violence, to mobilize communities to discuss the problem and to challenge social norms and attitudes that make gender-based violence pervasive. She cited some of the recommendations which had emerged from the discussion and added to these the initiation of partnerships with a range of services and stakeholders – in the medical, social, psychological and entertainment fields by parliamentarians.

Ms. Sethi also noted that while the issue of budgets did not emerge from the group recommendations, she would suggest that as parliamentarians who oversee

Ms Sethi suggested that as parliamentarians who oversee countries' budgets, participants think seriously about taking action in this area to tackle gender-based violence. She asked them to look at allocation of national resources in order to effectively address this issue and noted that with shrinking external funding, countries must allocate national resources to ensure sustained and sustainable responses.

countries' budgets, participants think seriously about taking action in this area to tackle gender-based violence. She asked the parliamentarians to look at allocation of national resources in order to effectively address this issue and noted that with shrinking external funding, countries must look at allocating national resources for sustained and sustainable responses.

In closing, she pledged the UN's and the UNFPA's support to such efforts and their willingness to work and partner with parliamentarians. She said the UN would continue to support countries and member states to honour commitments made to end gender-based violence.



PARLIAMENTARIANS

- Hon. Leroy Rogers (Anguilla)
- Hon. Walcott Richardson (Anguilla)
- Hon. Winston Williams (Antigua and Barbuda)
- Hon. Marisol Lopez-Tromp (Aruba)
- Hon. Christiaan Dammers (Aruba)
- Hon. Kenneth Best (Barbados)
- Sen. Santia Bradshaw (Barbados)
- Min. Cynthia Forde (Barbados)
- Hon. Peter Eden Martinez (Belize)
- Hon. Malvina Cecilia (Curacao)
- Hon. Gilmar Pisas (Curacao)
- Hon. Justina Charles (Dominica)
- Hon. Victor James (Montserrat)
- Hon. David Osborne (Montserrat)
- Hon. Anesia Baptiste (St Vincent and the Grenadines)
- Hon. Fredrick Stephenson (St Vincent and the Grenadines)
- Hon. Amery Browne (Trinidad and Tobago)
- Sen. Nicole Dyer-Griffiths (Trinidad and Tobago)