



# G . e . n . d . e . r . DIALOGUE

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**Regional Conference on Gender-based Violence  
and the Administration of Justice held in Port-of-Spain**



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Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, there has been increased momentum in the justice system towards addressing gender-based violence and the development and/or modification of laws focused on domestic violence. This led to a proposal by the coordinators of the Caribbean Gender Equality Programme (CGEP) to review the investments made by the Canadian International Development Agency/Caribbean Gender Equity Programme (CIDA/CGEP) in gender-based violence in the Caribbean over the past five years by holding a **Regional Conference on Gender-based Violence and the Administration of Justice**.

This proposal was also endorsed by regional organizations of the United Nations system, academic/research institutions, NGOs, the CARICOM Secretariat and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Conference was held in Trinidad at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Port of Spain, from 3-5 February 2003 and was funded by the CIDA/CGEP and co-hosted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean.

The objectives of the Conference were two-fold: first, to review the justice system responses to gender-based violence with specific focus on police training and the support offered by social services and, second, to develop an integrated plan of action to address gender-based violence with particular attention to the justice

system.

The main speakers at the conference were Sir Dennis Byron, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Supreme Court, and Ms. Tracy Robinson, Lecturer in the Faculty of Law, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. Sir Dennis spoke to invitees on the topic “The Administration of Justice and Gender-based Violence”, while Ms. Robinson’s topic was “Rescuing and Reinscribing Gender: A Prelude to an Agenda for Addressing Gender-based Violence in the Administration of Justice”.

Invitees to the formal opening ceremony were welcomed by His Excellency, Mr. Simon Wade, High Commissioner for Canada and Senator the Honourable Glenda Morean, Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago. Over 100 participants from 14 Caribbean countries, Canada, representatives of development agencies, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations attended the conference. Also in attendance at the opening ceremony were members of the Trinidad and Tobago justice system, including Chief Justice, Mr. Satnarine Sharma; Chief Magistrate, Mr. Sherman McNichols; the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr. Geoffrey Henderson; and Commissioner of Police, Mr. Hilton Guy. Also in attendance were members of the Ottawa Police Force in Canada, who came to share their own experiences in the development of protocols for dealing with gender-based violence and the creation and impact of a special domestic violence unit in the police force.

The meeting began with presentations of some of the issues arising out of the training programmes that were implemented in the subregion from the perspective of trainees as well as of the trainers. The representative from the police force was Mr. Keith Renaud, Secretariat Manager of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP), who also obtained training in domestic violence. Dr. Janice Jackson, advisor to CIDA on the Police Training Initiative in Guyana and Ms. Carla Bakboord, Vice President of CAFRA and the Women’s Rights Centre in Suriname made presentations from the perspective of trainers.

Several country reports were presented in which participants outlined the nature of the training programmes they had received, as well as the constraints, opportunities and initiatives which arose out of the implementation of the training programmes. A number of experts made presentations on their experiences in the areas of general social service support and delivery to the justice system, counselling of victims of gender-based violence and counselling and rehabilitation of perpetrators of gender-based violence.

The conference ended with the formation of working groups in which participants examined and reported on the following issues: (a) Developing guiding principles for intervention programmes for victims and perpetrators; (b) Strengthening police training: The way forward; and (c) Developing police response protocols.



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The Board of Presiding Officers held its thirty-fifth meeting in Havana during the period 28-29 April 2003. Representatives of 19 member and associate member countries attended this meeting. The Caribbean was represented by delegations from Antigua and Barbuda, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles.

The meeting considered reports from member countries and the ECLAC secretariat on the implementation of the Lima Consensus and the Beijing Platform for Action. Many of the countries had been working extensively on violence against women and there were calls for a strengthened and integrated approach to ending all forms of violence against women. In arguing for a stronger evidence-based approach to policy and programmatic action, the representative of Puerto Rico reported on the initiation of a one-year study on the treatment of domestic violence cases within the justice system.

The meeting was informed that with the exception of Honduras and Nicaragua, all Latin American countries had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. This was in sharp contrast to Caribbean member countries, in which only Cuba and the Dominican Republic had signed the optional protocol.

The meeting also considered the agenda for the upcoming Ninth Regional Conference on Women which is scheduled to

take place in Mexico by mid 2004. Preparatory meetings in the Caribbean, Mexico, and for the first time, South America will convene, prior to this meeting. Both the regional conference and the subregional preparatory meetings will focus on two main themes – the economy, poverty and gender equality; and empowerment, institution building and gender equity. Both of these themes will be considered within the framework of human rights. In addition, Caribbean delegations called for a focus on health, particularly, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

The delegates in attendance acknowledged the contributions made by women's organizations to public policies on gender equity and proposed that the government delegations attending the Ninth Regional Conference include representatives of civil society organizations in the respective countries.



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## *Perspectives on domestic violence training programmes in the subregion*

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There were three presentations on the experience of police training on domestic violence, one from Mr. Keith Renaud, Secretariat Manager, ACCP, and a participant of the training programme developed for police, and the other two from the perspective of trainers, Ms. Carla Bakboord of Suriname and Dr. Janice Jackson of Guyana.

### **A perspective from the Police**

**Mr. Keith Renaud**, spoke of the challenge of overcoming the traditional attitudes of police to domestic violence. He explained that throughout the region domestic violence was vastly underreported and the traditional response to domestic violence by police was rooted in historical views concerning the role of women, as property, and the characteristic of submissiveness that they were expected to possess.

Mr. Renaud said that the introduction of the concept of community policing was one of the initiatives that was expected to make a difference in the response of police to the issue of domestic violence, and other community problems. Important to the implementation of this concept were the twin pillars of community policing: problem solving and collaboration with society.

He admitted, however, that in spite of the training received,

there were a number of challenges associated with changing the entrenched attitudes of police to domestic violence. In this context, he pleaded for patience from the implementers of the training programmes in their expectations of behavioural and attitudinal changes since, he explained, there were several structural and psychological factors that prevented the implementation of change in a uniform manner throughout the subregion.

By his own observation, Mr. Renaud indicated that approximately one third of all police officers and social workers had been exposed to training in the area of gender-based violence. He ended his presentation by reiterating the ACCP's commitment to the support of all citizens.

### **The Perspective of Police Trainers**

**Ms. Carla Bakboord** reported that in Suriname the absence of policy frameworks to facilitate the battle against domestic violence had led to the launching of a campaign in 1997 to eliminate violence against women. One of the initiatives of this campaign was to develop training modules to sensitise police to the problems of violence against women. Out of the sensitisation workshops that were held, the Chief of Police, Suriname, and the Surinamese Chapter of CAFRA made a request for special training for police officers and social workers

In the first phase of the programme, 19 women and nine men drawn from the police service, the university, social work, government and non-government organizations were selected for training as trainers. The trainers selected were representative of the diversity of the country in terms of its ethnicity, culture, region, gender and language. Police trainers trained a total of 460 police officers, while trainers drawn from among social workers trained a total of 140 relief officers. The training conducted by the social workers was held in several districts in the country. As a follow-up to the training initiative of the CAFRA/IDB project, a national network for the eradication of domestic violence was also established.

As a result of the interest expressed by activists and police officers in other CARICOM countries, a proposal was submitted by CAFRA to the IDB for a regional domestic training programme for police and social workers. The first stage of this phase of the exercise involved the development of a Train the Trainers Manual. This manual was used to train 160 police officers and 40 social workers from the English-speaking Caribbean. The training was executed in two phases. The first phase was held in Trinidad and Tobago in June 2000 and the second phase in Jamaica in July 2000. These 200 persons are now training the police and social workers in each island of the Caribbean.

Ms Bakboord observed that although not all police officers and government and non-government organizations had changed their attitude towards gender-based violence, there had been some changes at the governmental, civil society and judicial levels. The police service in Suriname, for example, had appointed a domestic violence coordinator to deal specifically with the issue of domestic violence. There had also been training for prosecuting officers, lawyers and judges, and the media had started their own programmes on domestic violence. Ms. Bakboord reported that religious organizations and political parties had also been involved in these training initiatives.

**Dr. Janice Jackson** reported that between 1992 and 1999, the police force in Guyana had benefited from training programmes carried out by various agencies in the area of domestic violence. She explained that in March 1999, 18 members of the police force were exposed to a training of trainers programme funded by the CGEF. The training highlighted various issues, including the existence and influence of the personal politics of the trainers regarding the issue of domestic violence. The unearthing of these personal views, while learning how to deal with domestic violence and the reasons for holding these perspectives, was often a very emotional experience for participants.

Dr. Jackson observed that the effectiveness of the training programme rested on the ownership of the programme by the police. She said that this was often not the case since the training programmes were often designed and funded by



agencies for the police. As a result of this lack of ownership of the programme by the police, when minor obstacles arose, the trainers were often unable to maintain their schedules and meet their targets in the training of the police.

As a result of her experiences in Guyana, Dr. Jackson made the following recommendations regarding the delivery of training programmes on the issue of domestic violence to police:

- The roles and responsibilities of the partners in the training process should be clearly stated and periodically revisited;
- Mechanisms for institutionalisation of the training should be developed at the highest level of the police force;
- (It should be recognised that persons identified as trainers might themselves be perpetrators or victims. As such a mechanism should be developed to help them to work out personal issues/conflict;
- A reporting system should be developed where the activities, challenges and impact of the trainers and the programmes could be documented to mediate the impact of the loss of some of the trainers due to retirement or transfers;
- The responsibility for police training could not continue to be the main responsibility of external agencies, therefore, the police should take ownership of the training, and select training materials that were best suited to their environment;
- Sensitisation of senior officers should be effected if the environment was to be made more receptive to domestic violence training;
- A policy on training in domestic violence should be articulated; and

- There should be a strong commitment of finance resources for the training initiatives.



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## Recommendations arising out of the Working Groups

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### LIST OF RECOMMENDED AND IDEAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR A PERPETRATOR'S INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

- - It should be mandatory, even though persons may also attend voluntarily.
  - Initial psycho diagnostic assessment of person is necessary in order to determine the potential participant's readiness and suitability for the programme.
  - Structure is preferred, using groups or classes.
  - Monitoring and supervision of facilitators, participants and programme is important.
  - Contact should be made with the victim to give support and monitor the progress of perpetrator.
  - Victim's information must be absolutely confidential.
  - Individual counselling might may be recommended as needed, but is not to be the main method of programme delivery.
  - Records should be maintained.
  - Prevention mechanisms - supportive environment will be maintained. This will not be detailed as it would vary from community to community.

### RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICES

- Police officers should be trained in crisis intervention skills.
- There should be proper training to highlight the boundaries of the use of crisis intervention skills by police officers.
- Social workers should also have crisis intervention skills.
- Front line staff should be exposed to post trauma

counselling.

- Counselling should be funded by government agencies.
- All ranks in the police service should be trained to deal with victims of gender-based violence.
- There should be clear sanctions for non-compliance with guidelines.
- Legal Aid support should be made available to all women, since, as victims, they were most vulnerable to the effects of gender-based violence.
- Government should fund advocacy services performed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- Public education is necessary in the fight against domestic violence.
- Medical system needs to be properly trained to deal with victims of gender-based violence.
- Government needs to make a policy statement on domestic violence.
- There should be follow up and support for the victims.
- The needs of children who are affected by domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence have to be seriously addressed.

#### **STRENGTHENING POLICE TRAINING: THE WAY FORWARD**

- Social housing needs to be developed.
- Conduct a needs analysis and identify deficiencies in the training of police to handle gender-based violence.
- Gender-based violence training should be mandatory and made part of the curriculum in police training.
- The Domestic Violence Act should be included in examinations for the promotion of police officers.
- Training and sensitization in gender-based violence for police officers of all ranks, including senior police officers should be instituted.
- Training was also needed for frontline operators, dispatchers, and 911 operators.
- Frontline persons also need specialized training in dealing with sexual offences.
- Police officers who were going to work in the sexual offences area should be carefully selected.
- Resource personnel, other than the police, should assist in police training.
- There was a need for constant briefing sessions for frontline workers to remind them of protocols taught in training.
- Police training should emphasize problem-solving and critical thinking.
- Regional standardization for training in gender-based violence.



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Excerpts from: *Rescuing and Re-inscribing Gender: A Prelude to an Agenda for Addressing Gender-based Violence in the Administration of Justice*

Address given by Tracy Robinson

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Invariably, those who historically have been responsible for bringing us to this point remind us that acts of gender-based violence cannot be individualized or taken as the discreet acts of individuals. Instead they both represent and reinforce core societal ideas and practices about the proper roles of men and women in society. Invariably then, gender-based violence is a mirror to social relations. It profoundly tells us about life where we

Invariably, those who historically have been responsible for bringing us to this point remind us that acts of gender-based violence cannot be individualized or taken as the discreet acts of individuals. Instead they both represent and reinforce core societal ideas and practices about the proper roles of men and women in society. Invariably then, gender-based violence is a mirror to social relations. It profoundly tells us about life where we are.

One thing we do know about life where we are is that relations of gender are fundamentally relations of power. Well-known social scientist and men's studies scholar, Professor Barry Chevannes,

says: Caribbean manhood may be seen as an expression of control over women, a matter of relations of power. Power is secured by prevailing ideological concepts and where these fail, by force – ‘violence’, in other words. Respected social science research on gender violence in the Caribbean confirms a correlation between these forms of violence and male insecurity and describes the violence as partly a response to perceived threats to masculinity by women.<sup>1</sup> Fundamentally, these forms of violation can be understood, “as a strategy of dominance, exclusion, control, and retaliation—as a way to keep women in their place and out of men’s.” We now know from the activism and research that the family as the private domain has been a key site of oppression for women, and that controlling women’s sexuality has been a mode of dominance.

But ultimately those working on the ground have insisted that gender-based violence be recognised but not ghettoised. The women’s movement has insisted that addressing gender violence is essential to women’s equality, integral to taking women’s citizenship seriously. It is tied up, not disconnected with the struggle against women’s lower earning power (despite their educational levels), the devaluation of women’s work in the home, the sexual division of labour, the poverty of women and their families. This is all part of a struggle for women’s freedom, and a life with autonomy, dignity and integrity, which is about equality. I am saying as best I can, as plainly I can, that this term gender-based violence is not a sanitised categorisation of social phenomena. In the sounding and reverberation of every syllable of its name is embedded a politics, a struggle with the affirmative goal of equality. Rescuing gender therefore means as the first step recovering and reintegrating that political agenda in the translation to policies and programmes.

What are we then to make of the tremendous public awareness that now exists around gender violence? Plenty good. This is a tribute in large measure to women’s activism and advocacy. But on listening to many public debates and the righteous indignation that coalesces around stories of violence, and reading many sensationalized front page stories about women who are already dead, I am now deeply troubled that the times

we seem to see women the most are when we can hear them the least. In normal times, we hardly pay attention to the voices of those involved in woman-centered work at the community level, political level, and state level, but it has now become a form of public perversity that women silent and silenced by violence capture a country's imagination<sup>2</sup>. By localizing the problem in a single perpetrator and failing to consider systems of gender inequity, by translating it into a simple law and order problem typical of the injustice others in society face, rather than understanding its gendered dimensions we read 'gender' out of the term gender-based violence.

But there is much more going on here. We have also begun to say that this is not just a woman thing, that gender connotes both men and women, and that these forms of violence occur to both men and women, therefore our response and understanding should be neutral to gender. I would agree that the content of laws must give men who experience gender-based violence equal access to the justice system as it does women. But make no mistake, there is nothing symmetrical about gender violence. There is a new political correctness and influence that requires us to say that gender means both men and women. Respectfully, this is vacuous talk. Gender is not a means of crudely categorizing folks: A, B, C and D. It has always been a tool for understanding relations between folks. A gender problem therefore is not a problem of women or of men, but a problem connected to woman-ness or man-ness. We must stop putting gender in with one hand and neutralizing it with the other. Rescuing gender means understanding that this term continues to connote as between men and women, relations of power and relations of asymmetry. Law and policy must reflect this. So rescuing gender and re-inscribing it in an agenda addressing gender-based violence means taking women's concerns and issues seriously. The only thing one sided about this is the well-established disproportionate incidence of violence where women are concerned.