



# NONE in 3

## **Preventing Domestic Violence** <sup>tm</sup>

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**12.08.16**

At an event chaired by Madame Justice Jacqueline Cornelius at the Savannah Hotel on Thursday August 11<sup>th</sup> new research on domestic violence in Barbados and Grenada was presented. The EU-funded *None in Three* project, led by Professor Adele Jones from the University of Huddersfield, UK has conducted the first study in the region to focus specifically on women who experienced domestic violence while pregnant and the experiences of women with disabilities. Delegates at the conference learned that far from the assumptions most of us carry about the protection and celebration of a new life when a woman is pregnant, it seems that in some cases pregnancy can *actually* be a catalyst for violence. The team of Caribbean experts said all forms of abuse had been reported: sexual, physical, financial and psychological and that the stories had indicated relentless and harrowing violence, often over many years. Psychotherapist, Dr Hazel Da Breo talked about the impact of violence on the foetus and explained that a child born from such circumstances was at a serious disadvantage from birth since the effects could be life altering. She explained that there were crucial lessons from the research for the training of health professionals in antenatal settings to help them pick up the signs of violence at an early stage so that women could be signposted towards help. We learned too, that women with disabilities who experience domestic violence may also need additional support. Their stories were similar in the types and extent of abuse, but differed because these women also suffered discrimination in relation to their disability and had reduced opportunities to escape violence or live independently. Dr Ena Trotman Jemmott explained that disabled women had talked about the way in which men used their particular impairments to further abuse them. Examples were given of women in wheelchairs being physically entrapped, women being ridiculed in public as stupid because of speech difficulties and a blind woman being isolated through deliberate sensory deprivation. Denise Tannis, a Research Consultant who had conducted the research in Barbados pointed out that alongside

these stories there were also important messages of resilience and strength and that for most of the women this had been derived from their faith.

The None in Three project also includes research on the perspectives of men and youth – a crucial but oftentimes neglected voice in debates on domestic violence. Research Consultants Tyrone Buckmire and Lee Rose presented their research with 61 males aged from 16 to 80 years. The audience learned that men often feel marginalised in discussions of domestic violence but given the opportunity, they have much to offer in generating solutions and that male perspectives can tell programmers much about how to target interventions and education. One of the findings of this research, was that some men believe that women “provoke” violence through their behaviours. Interestingly however, there were also men who challenged this idea and reiterated the view that regardless of provocation, violence is still a choice and that men need to make other choices. One particularly worrying finding was that only one man identified sexual violence as a form of domestic violence, raising questions about some men’s views on sexual entitlement. The research also identified that there is a need for agencies to consider male victims of domestic violence as there is very little support for them and that perpetrators of violence need help at an earlier stage, *before* they reach the courts.

Both men and women talked about the normality of being exposed to violence and abuse in childhood and suggested that these early lessons contributed to the expectation of violence as a feature of being a man in some instances and the acceptance of violence as something quite common among some women. Research participants also suggested there was need to consider the role of parents in over-disciplining children, since this is where they often have their first experience of violence.

Dr Morella Joseph, an education specialist who spent 14 years with CARICOM provided the keynote speech at the conference. Speaking on the links between violence in the home and violence in the school, Dr Joseph drew on her personal experiences as a teacher in St Lucia when she had nearly lost her life to a cutlass attack by a 15 year old boy. She pointed to the existence of numerous international studies that show that most violence and delinquency among children and young people stems from violence in the home. Her own story had a powerful and moving effect on the audience and she explained that even though she had survived such brutal violence, her response had been one of compassion and understanding. She had learned that this boy had slept with a cutlass under his pillow every night to protect himself from an abusive father. He had grown up witnessing violence to his mother and he lived in mortal fear of violence himself - it was all he knew. She said it was crucial for governments to understand the causes of violence and argued that this should be the number one priority for social policy in Caribbean societies. She said that if all governments have to offer is to suspend, expel and punish students, the problem could never be solved and that when a child is ejected from school, he is denied the only opportunity he may have had to help him change his behaviour. As a reject of society, what else do we offer a child but involvement in crime and further violence.

One of the highlights of the conference was the presentation on the first prototype of a computer game that aims to educate and change children’s attitudes towards domestic violence. In the same way that some computer games *breed* violence, the None in Three team believe that a game designed to generate empathy and awareness about the consequences of violence may actually help to prevent it. In fact, as Gill Kirkman, Principal Lecturer in Social Work and part of the development team pointed out, computer games that encourage positive social behaviour are increasingly being used as an intervention for problems affecting children. The game, which will eventually be rolled out in selected schools and colleges as an education tool will be subject to rigorous scientific assessment to test its effectiveness.

The None in Three project is underpinned by a dynamic social media programme, the highlights of which are films featuring members of the general public. In concluding the formal presentations, Barbadian Media Consultant Ryan Greene and his team presented a vibrant and stunning visual collage of some of their work.

Feedback from delegates was overwhelmingly positive with one participant remarking:

*The meeting was awesome and so informative. I was really glad I could make it. The presentations left me speechless, especially the ones that conveyed the personal struggles of those who were victims of violence. It makes me want to be as involved as I can be. Please let me know if there are any areas I can help in and I will try to do my best to be a participant and to stop this scourge on our society.*

Alongside representatives from government departments and civil society organisations, the event was attended by Chief Justice Sir Marston Gibson and HE the EU Ambassador to the Eastern Caribbean and Barbados, Mikael Barfod and his wife Mrs Maxia Barfod.

Ambassador Barfod provided the closing speech for the event, remarking on the progress of the project to date and the importance of the information that had been shared. Pulling together all of the threads of the various presentations, the Ambassador hoped that some of the crucial debates generated would be picked up by civil society organisations and especially, the religious leaders present since one of the key findings of the research was the view that the Church could play a major role in preventing domestic violence. Referring to its dynamic social media presence, Ambassador Barfod suggested that None in Three has the potential to spread its message across all sections of society, and that it was his belief that only through a 'whole of society' approach could domestic violence truly be tackled. In closing he thanked the stakeholders, government departments and agencies of both countries for the support extended to Professor Jones and her team.

The event concluded with a tribute to Ambassador Barfod. This was delivered by Professor Jones in recognition of the value of his contribution to promoting the rights of women and children in the region to be protected from violence in all its forms and also to mark the end of his term of office in Barbados. Gifts were presented to Ambassador and Mrs Barfod and the evening ended with an evening reception in their honour.

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