Project Report: WOMEN'S CONVERSATIONS 2023

How we manage and survive Gender Based Violence

A WINAD Project

Project Title	Women's Conversations: How We Manage and Survive GBV
Agency & Office	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women UN House Chancery Lane Port of Spain Trinidad & Tobago WI Attn: Je'nille Maraj

Consultant Team	**Ms. Folade Mutota & Deborah Mc Fee PhD**	**Mailing Address**	**Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD)** **PO Box 10134** **San Juan** **Trinidad & Tobago WI**

Telephone	**1-868-680-0354**	**Email**	**winad1999@yahoo.com**

Authors	Deborah McFee, PhD
	Folade Mutota MBA
Lead Researcher	Renee Maria Cozier BSc, MSc

CAPA (Crime and Problem Analysis Branch of the TTPS)

CBO (Community Based Organization)

CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams)

CSA (Child Sexual Abuse)

CSO (Civil Society Organization)

DV (Domestic Violence)

FBO (Faith Based Organization)

GAD (Gender Affairs Division)

GBV (Gender Based Violence)

IGDS (Institute for Gender and Development Studies)

IPV (Intimate Partner Violence)

NGO (Non-Governmental Organization)

NPSV (Non-Partner Sexual Violence)

PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

TTPS (Trinidad & Tobago Police Service)

UWI (The University of the West Indies)

VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls)

WINAD (Women's Institute for Alternative Development)

WC Women's Conversations

WHS (Women's Health Survey)

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Key Terms and Definitions

Concept/ Term	Meaning
Sex	Basic biological dichotomy between male and female
Gender	A system with two principal dimensions: one ideological and one material: ■ The <u>ideological dimension</u> of gender indicates how, notions of femininity and masculinity are constructed and maintained within a given society ■ Out of these notions of masculinity and femininity, men and women *(different groups of men and women)* gain different access to, and are unequally allocated status, power and resources within a society, thereby bringing to life the <u>material dimension</u> of the social relations of gender (Barriteau, 2003)
Gender Relations	The social relationships between men and women that reflect and reproduce gender differences constructed in a particular context, society and time. They express differentiated power, rights, responsibilities, and values, as well as mutuality; gender relations intersect with other social relations based on age, class, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and disability.
Gender Balance	Equal or fair distribution of women and men within an institution or group, giving equality of representation.
Gender Equality and Equity	These concepts are not the same, although they tend to be used interchangeably. Equality is rights-based. Women and men have equal rights enshrined in international standards and treaties and should have the same entitlements and opportunities. Equity entails justice in the fair distribution of resources; taking into account the different needs of women and men, girls and boys. It is best used when linked clearly to rights as an outcome of gender equality.
Gender Division of Labour	The work and responsibilities assigned to women and men based on gender identity. In most societies, men's work is more highly valued than women's work. Much of women's work is unpaid and un- recognized.
Condition and position	Used to differentiate between material conditions, in which women and men live and position or status they hold in society.
Development Approaches (WID/GAD)	Women in Development (WID), and Gender and Development (GAD) refer to two essentially different approaches to development. WID is based on the assumption that women are 'left out' of development and need special projects to integrate them into the development process. Gender relations and power inequalities are not addressed, and women's participation is often passive. GAD is based on gender analysis, and sees gender equality as a fundamental goal, in which women's empowerment and agency are central to the development strategy.
Gender Mainstreaming	A strategy first articulated by GAD goals and a commitment to gender equality in all aspects of policy and programme design and implementation. Its aim is to transform the 'mainstream' at all levels to end gender discrimination. When transformation of gender relations is not on the agenda, mainstreaming can be a WID strategy in disguise, in which gender issues are integrated to the point of invisibility.
Sex Dis-aggregation	Identifying and highlighting the differences for women and men in all aspects of life. It is particularly important for understanding gender differences within units of analysis such as 'household', 'family', 'community', 'market' and 'nation'.

Concept/Term	Meaning
Gender Analysis	Based on sex dis-aggregated data and accounts of women and men, it goes further to examine why the observed differences exist. It explores history, mechanisms, dynamics and effects of gender relations. It examines the structural causes of gender inequalities from the household to the nation state, making links between these levels and uncovering resulting sex discrimination in the assertion of rights and power and access to resources.
Access and Control	Access to resources means being able to use them; control over resources means deciding who may use them and how. This forms part of the Harvard gender analysis framework.
Gender Based Violence	Violence against women and children is often referred to as gender-based because it is rooted in unequal relations of power between men and women in relationships and in society-at-large. GBV is an umbrella term for any harmful act perpetuated against a person's will and based on socially ascribed gender differences between males and females.
Sexual Violence	Sexual violence is defined as a sexual act committed against someone without that person's freely given consent. Sexual violence can be divided into the following types: • Completed or attempted forced penetration of a victim • Completed or attempted alcohol/drug-facilitated penetration of a victim • Completed or attempted forced acts in which a victim is made to penetrate a perpetrator or someone else • Completed or attempted alcohol/drug-facilitated acts in which a victim is made to penetrate a perpetrator or someone else • Non-physically forced penetration which occurs after a person is pressured verbally or through intimidation or misuse of authority to consent or acquiesce. • Unwanted sexual contact • Non-contact unwanted sexual experiences
Domestic Violence	Domestic violence is a complex pattern of behaviours that may include, in addition to physical acts of violence, sexual abuse and emotional abuse occurring in the home. Although men are victims at times, women experience (at far greater rates than men do, and women and children often live in fear as a result of the abuse that is used by men to maintain control over their partners.
Intimate Partner Violence	The term "intimate partner violence" describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression (including coercive acts) by a current or former intimate partner.
Gender and Policy	**Gender-blind policy**- ignores the different socially determined roles, responsibilities and capabilities of men and women. It is based on information derived from men's activities and / or assumes those affected by the policy have the same (assumes male) needs and interests. **Gender –neutral policy**- policy not specifically aimed at either men or women and is assumed to affect both sexes equally. However, many times these policies are in fact gender blind.

Concept/ Term	Meaning
	Gender – specific policy recognizes gender differences and targets either men or women, within existing roles and responsibilities. **Gender – redistributive policy**- seeks to change the distribution of power and resources on the interests of gender equality.
Human Rights	Human rights are based on the principle of respect for human dignity and the recognition of the inherent worth and equality of all human beings. Human rights are universal, meaning that they apply to everyone, everywhere, at all times. They are also indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated, meaning that they cannot be separated, denied, or prioritized over others.
Rights based Approaches	Rights based approaches to social change are rooted in an understanding of the roles of and responsibilities of Duty Bearers and Rights Holders. Duty bearers are state or non-state actors that have the obligation to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil human rights of rights holders. Rights holders can make legitimate claims to their rights, and they can participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.
Social Justice	Social Justice recognizes the inherent dignity of all people and values *every life* equally. It calls for both personal reflection and social change to ensure that each of us has the right and the opportunity to thrive in our communities, regardless of our identities.
Governance	Governance structures are frameworks that define the roles, responsibilities, and relationships of different actors within an organization or system. They specify who has the authority to make decisions, how those decisions are made, and how the results are communicated and monitored.
Civil Society	Synonymous with the Third Sector, advocacy groups, NGOs, social movements, human rights organizations and other actors involved in change work. Specifically excluding those involved in the market, and those involved in acquiring political power. The role of civil society is to ensure that national, community and all other governance structures take on the views of as diverse a population as possible
Violence Against Women (VAW)	Violence Against Women is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women. These acts include threats such as coercion, deprivation of liberty and can take place in both private and public life (Beijing Declaration and POA).

The Women's Conversations: How we Manage and Survive GBV, undertaken between August and December 2023 provided for the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) an invaluable opportunity to understand the diversity of experiences of women within and across the Regional Corporations of Tunapuna / Piarco and Mayaro / Rio Claro, as well as the women of Tobago.

Of particular importance is the universal nature of crime – both in rural and urban communities. Although Mayaro/ Rio Claro was the more rural of the two Regional Corporations, the women spoke to the ways in which crime, and gun violence impacted on the communities. Interestingly, in the context of the crime being experienced in communities, every group of women spoke to the communities being, safe, beneficial and for some idealistic. The co-existence of crime and criminality with such facets of peace and security is a phenomenon in need of additional unpacking. Each community articulated aspects of life in their community of which they were proud.

Women and Girls contend with GBV both publicly and personally in the home. The vulnerability of women and girls with disabilities is extreme. Increased levels of gun violence results in a pervading sense of insecurity for all women and girls. For those women and girls who are unable to see or hear, or have limited mobility, their inability to form a relevant response of self-preservation, heightens their vulnerability, and produces a sense of anxiety as they navigate their space, and work through the mechanics of protecting themselves and their families.

These personal anxieties co-exist with an understanding that the labour market is shifting. Men who depend on physical labour for their livelihoods are increasingly marginalized in the formal labour market. Therefore, the movement of guns as part of the drug trade and their related economies are increasingly perceived as legitimate means by which a significant number of men will now make a living. Therefore, the mechanisms of coping with such shifts in the labour market, and their impact on the household in particular, is a critical quality of life impact for many women. Insights into geography as a determinant

of insecurity, beyond the well-known violence of urban hot spots is an important contribution to the WCs. The place of other urban, rural, and rural coastal communities all come to this conversation with very specific, nuanced experiences of insecurity. The WCs revealed the significance of rural, as distinct from coastal-rural communities, within the broader national eco-system of crime and criminality. These communities, often overlooked, are fundamental to how crime is perpetrated and understood nationally.

Of particular importance to this report are the ways in which coping strategies are not often invested in formal institutional mechanism established to address crime. Women's capacity to cope with insecurity lie mainly outside the realm of the TTPS and those legal and bureaucratic structures designed in response to GBV, such as shelters. For communities not impacted by GBV, safety lies in their ability to protect themselves. Overall, the WCs revealed very practical framing of the embedded, structural nature of GBV. For us in Trinidad & Tobago, it reiterated the cyclical nature of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and our critical need for care services to be offered in a less disparate, more community-based manner.

Trinidad and Tobago Quick facts (2023)

Area
5,128 km

Population
1.53M

GDP
37B USD

HDI
0.821 (2021)

Data from the Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service revealed that there were approximately 19,078 reports relating to domestic violence incidents between 2000 and 2013. Approximately 75 per cent of these reports were related to female individuals (UN Women 2018), however little is known about the extent of armed sexual violence against women. In its 2018 pilot study on the role of women in communities, WINAD recommended that," *state agencies such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline can cooperate with NGOs to develop a data collection instrument to record such data and add to the body of knowledge on this matter*". Ending VAW is a central pillar of the work of the women's movement in Trinidad and Tobago for several decades, resulting in legislative and policy prescriptions, and a multitude of programmes and projects designed to raise awareness and facilitate behaviour change.

Since 2001, WINAD has piloted initiatives and a research agenda on prioritizing gender analysis and gender mainstreaming in small arms control and security sector reform. This project will strengthen efforts to situate women's experiences of insecurity and gun violence in private and public spaces and endorse the provisions of UNSCR 1325 and UNGA Resolution 65/69 on women, peace and security (which promote protection for women in vulnerable situations and women's full and equal participation in decision-making).

The Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) was founded in 1999 and introduced its Inter-generational Women's Leadership Programme in the same year. WINAD exists to advance the rights of women and girls through thought leadership, mentoring, quality service delivery, and stakeholder engagement.

Women who reside in the participating communities may experience inadequate social service delivery due to security risks associated with the communities since gang violence sometimes create borderlines (geographic spaces with restricted movements based on gang association). Collection and use of quality, comparable data to inform public policy making and delivery of relevant and timely service is an imperative for prevention efforts.

An important aspect of the work WINAD does in bringing insight into the insecurities experienced by women, is captured through the Women's Conversations (WC) model of information gathering. The Women's Conversations project has a proud history and an impactful legacy. The Conversations started in 2008 with looking at how women frame and experience issues of human security. Women's Conversations 2008 took the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) across Trinidad, facilitating workshops and engaging women in communities. This was followed by the Women's Conversations Caravan, ushering in a cross-fertilization of ideas and analysis among women from diverse communities who traversed Trinidad to meet with each other. The Conversations have also taken the form of Friday afternoon sessions, attended by women at WINAD House, where select presenters lead discussions on any issues affecting women. Whether it is the community-based facilitated sessions or the WINAD House-based led deliberations, the Women's Conversations have been a critical catalyst for the organization to prioritize advocacy and co-create deliberative spaces for diverse groups of women.

All Women's Conversations have produced for WINAD new ways of understanding women's lived realities and practical issues of survival across Trinidad and Tobago.

In 2023, the WCs constructed as part of the Spotlight Initiative, provided the opportunity to engage with women from the Mayaro / Rio Claro Regional Corporation and the Tunapuna/ Piarco Regional Corporation in Trinidad. In Tobago, the WCs convened in the

communities of Belle Garden, and Bon Accord. The main focus of the WCs was to uncover how women in these areas manage GBV.
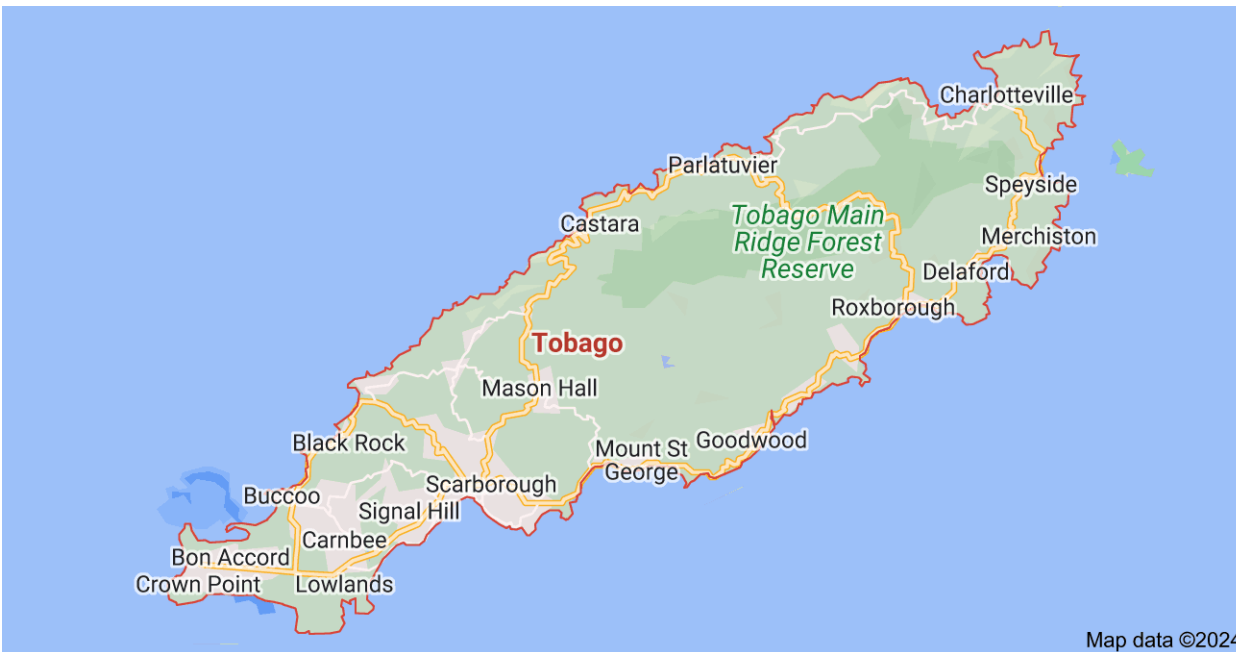
Map of the Tunapuna/ Piarco Regional Corporation

Map of the Mayaro/ Rio Claro Regional Corporation

Map of Tobago

Project Objectives

✓ To identify innovative personal security strategies, using the WCs methodology

✓ To identify at least three policy or programmatic initiatives to be undertaken by the state, independently or in collaboration with civil society, to prioritize data collection on firearms use in family violence and develop protocols for managing victims, removing guns from homes, enforcing the law, and delivering integrated gender-responsive services

Project Partners

- Gender Affairs Division of the Office of the Prime Minister Gender & Child Affairs
- National Centre for Persons With Disabilities
- Ms. Sonia Le Maitre
- We Care Deaf Support Network

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- Helping Her Foundation

- Gender Based Violence Unit of the TTPS

- Mayaro Past Pupils Association

- Office of the Member of Parliament, Mayaro

- Office of the Chairman, Mayaro Rio Claro Regional Corporation

- Office of the Chairman, Tunapuna Piarco Regional Corporation

- Councillor J-Lynn Roopnarine, Curepe/Pasea

Methodology of the WCs

The Women's Conversations design and implementation was informed by the empowerment framework, where agency is a central tenet of empowerment (Hammer and Klugman 2016). Agency speaks to the capacity to take purposive action and pursue goals, inherent in which is decision-making, leadership functions and collective action (Ibid). Empowerment is a process of transition from a state of powerlessness to a state of relative control over one's life, destiny, and environment. This transition can manifest as improvements in both the perceived and actual ability to control. The WCs are grounded in an understanding of the power of collective action and leadership.

Conversations were structured in two parts: Conversations prior to, and after the formal facilitated sessions, and those within the context of the conversations. Both provided integral learning for the post-project working relations among women as well as between women and institutions with regard to empowerment. Peterson and Hughey's study on social cohesion found that women were more empowered than men by participatory processes coupled with connection to community. The study suggests that empowerment for women may be more effectively enhanced through participation in community groups and activities in which relational processes are emphasized.

Built into the overall process is a feedback loop as a means of reporting to participants and soliciting the input of stakeholders. The process of inquiry included a verification workshop with participants, experts, practitioners, and representatives of intergovernmental organizations, and the government. Additionally, the end of project report of findings session facilitated a collective review of the report content and ensured collective analysis towards a common position on policy recommendations.

The effects of a participatory approach to empowerment became evident during the conversations as women contributed recommendations for many of the challenges they identified in their communities and the country. In a significant number of instances, they retained the locus of control/leadership to manage the challenges. The WCs approach did not assume that the researchers nor facilitators knew the best design or most appropriate issues to explore in any given context. In fact, it benefited from broad participation from women and organizations that serve women to decide on every aspect of the project from design to logistics, and mobilization. This networking approach expedited access to expert knowledge on issues such as gender analysis, creating connections between macro level policymaking and levels of violence experienced in communities, sustainable development, communications, and governance in the design stage of the Women's Conversations. During its implementation, networking ensured a focus on the dynamics of relationships whether it was the relationships among women or relationships women have with their significant others, the State, or other institutions.

The networking also benefited women's organizations through the exchange of information in the Women's Conversations, which would influence their future programming to serve women better.

Focus Group Informed Methods

The WCs is a focus group informed method of data collection. Although, focus groups are often not used to collect generalizable, broad-based statistical data sets, over the years the

WCs have provided ideal reproductions of the wider society in miniature (Nagy Hesse-Biber 2014). Like most focus group informed data collection, the WCs provide in-depth data on the lived realities of the participants. The inherent value afforded by the collective reasoning and the interactive nature of the WCs allow for critical insights into the ways in which public policy is experienced, across and within diverse populations (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000). Ultimately, the WCs are invested in details of personal negotiations of various challenges, and questions of both process and content, not statistical broadly placed overviews. In 2023, WINAD was able to host WCs with over one hundred women in the selected Regional Corporations, in Tobago, and a select group of differently abled women. WINAD selected the rural community of Toco, in Trinidad, to test the WCs methodology given the community's socio-economic similarities to communities in the Mayaro/ Rio Claro region, as well as to enable the team to have insight into some of the issues that women may wish to explore in the WCs.

Conceptual Pillars of the Project

Framing Development

The Women's Conversations model is a feminist informed, developmental initiative. It treats with development as a multi-faceted people-oriented undertaking, with an overarching goal to improve the lives of women (Girvan 1997). Departing from an understanding of development as solely economic growth, or as structural and transformative change, the WCs are based on a construction of development premised on expanding of choices of individuals, protecting the rights of the individual, and the advancement of social justice. Development is not seen as largely a technical problem, neither is it a state of being to be given to the poor (Parpart 2002). Development in the context of the conversations project is a complex, reciprocal, ongoing process that pays attention to local knowledge, women's accumulated knowledge (Ibid) and multidimensional gender-sensitive measuring of well-being. Fundamentally, this is

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relational, and based on respectful partnership, and participatory approaches that are invested in peoples' ability to identify their own development goals and solutions.

The privileging of the experiences of women's voices is grounded in a belief that knowledge does not exist as a free objectively floating variable, neither is development experienced equally or equitably across and within populations. Knowledge is the product of a social context, a particular gendered reality, and it is exerted in relations of power, and attached to distinct power positions (Parpart 2002). By engaging the voices of women, this WCs series, seeks to illuminate the ways in which GBV is framed, experienced and managed across geographies and levels of ability.

Social Justice

Social Justice recognizes the inherent dignity of all people and values *every life* equally. It calls for both personal reflection and collective action to ensure that each of us has the right and the opportunity to thrive in our communities, regardless of our identities. When we acknowledge that oppression exists and work together to *end systemic discrimination and structural inequities*, we increase the promise of a more just world.

We envision a world where:

- every person's life is equally valued,

- the inherent dignity of all people is recognized,

- the opportunity to develop one's full potential is available to every person, and

- systematic discrimination and structural inequities have been eradicated.

Mobilization and Coming to Populations

The mobilization methodology was anchored on the objectives of the project to: identify women's innovative survival strategies; recommend policy and programmes for data collection; and identify protocols for delivering gender responsive services. It sought to

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insulate the Women's Conversations from partisanship and any kind of bias that could prove to be barriers to inclusion. Consequently, the Community Leaders were selected based on several criteria including:

- history of unbiased and successful community mobilization or leadership;
- demonstrated commitment to defending women's rights;
- knowledge of the community;
- credibility in the community and among key stakeholders;
- availability;
- support for WINAD's programming.

The orientation for the Community Leaders included an interactive briefing about the project and they subsequently participated in several planning meetings that reviewed project implementation and revised the methodology. Community Leaders were also supported in their outreach to key stakeholders whom they collaborated with to identify participants.

A total of seven persons (five women and two men), were engaged to mobilize participants for the targeted communities, including the community of the differently abled women. The project identified three persons initially to provide this service. However, during the implementation phase it became necessary to allocate additional technical resources. These resources were required to ensure the inclusion of women with disabilities, communities that enhanced the representation of age, ethnicity, geography, economic/social class, and level of vulnerability to firearm-related criminality. The aim was to amplify as much as possible the voices of those most affected by these issues as effectively as possible. The project would have benefitted from a longer implementation phase, in hindsight, to extend the engagement across a wider, more diverse platform.

Communal spaces were identified in each community to get real representation, and one WCs was held online. The time for each, including the online WCs, resulted from consultation with the key stakeholders in each community. The Project Team was onsite

at least thirty minutes prior to the start to welcome participants and support the Community Leader with logistics. Conversations were followed by expressions of gratitude and successful interventions on behalf of participants who requested post WCs personal support or services for the community. For example, a community kiosk was introduced in the Mayaro community to offer feminine (period) products to women in a three-month pilot project, in collaboration with the Helping Her Foundation. In addition, counselling services were secured for two women from the National Family Services Division, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

Team Members

- ✓ Project Administrators
- ✓ Facilitator
- ✓ Rapporteur
- ✓ Researcher

Women's Conversations Schedule

Location	Date	Time
Toco Regional Complex (Pilot)	August 19th 2023	1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
Mayaro Regional Complex	September 28th 2023	4:00pm - 6:00 pm
Tobago ✓ Belle Garden Multipurpose Facility ✓ Buccoo Multipurpose Facility	October 7th 2023	9:30 am-11:30 am 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
The Chamber Tunapuna Regional Corporation	October 14th 2023	1:00 pm - 3:00pm
Rio Claro Learning & Development Centre for Special Children	October 21st 2023	9:30 am - 11:30 am
Women Living with Disabilities (online)	November 11th 2023	2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Warrenville Cunupia	November 28th 2023	6:00 pm - 8:00pm
Pasea Community- Curepe Anglican Primary School	December 13th 2023	6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

Trinidad and Tobago Crime Statistics 2022
Source: https://cso.gov.tt/subjects/population-and-vital-statistics/crime-statistics/

Gender-Based Violence in Trinidad & Tobago

In the most recent National Women's Health Survey (WHS) done in Trinidad and Tobago, it was reported that in "the 15 to 64 age brackets, over 100,000 women in Trinidad and Tobago are estimated to have experienced one or more acts of physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by their male partners" (Pemberton and Joseph 36). The WHS was a national, quantitative, cross-sectional survey conducted in 2017 designed to provide a diagnosis of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Trinidad and Tobago, with a specific focus on intimate partner violence (IPV) and non-partner sexual violence (NPSV).

Furthermore, it was found that "women are also exposed to other forms of abusive and controlling behaviours by their partners in the form of emotional (also known as psychological) and economic abuse, the former being the most common form of IPV" (Pemberton and Joseph 36). The direct impact of violence may be further compounded for women if they experience pregnancy. In such cases partner violence either remains just as prevalent or becomes worse than prior to pregnancy. Such violence may account for maternal mortality, although this association is often unrecognized by policymakers. In examining the normalcy of violence in Trinidad and Tobago, respondents were also asked about their perceptions on whether experiencing violence is normal for women. The responses were mixed. It found that some "patriarchal beliefs are still pervasive and there is a highly significant relationship between a partner's controlling behaviour and women's experience of emotional, physical, and sexual partner violence" (Pemberton and Joseph 50). The report also noted that factors including fear of shame and the 'normalcy' associated with violence, prevented women from accessing help.

Below are the key findings of the study:
• 30 percent of ever-partnered women experienced lifetime physical and/or sexual partner violence; and 6 percent experienced this in the 12 months prior to data collection
• Emotional violence presented as the most common type of violence experienced (35% lifetime; 12% current).

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- Almost one in three women experience lifetime physical IPV (28% lifetime; 5% current), of which most experienced a severe act of physical IPV at least once (64%).
- 7 percent of ever-pregnant women experience physical IPV during a pregnancy, of which two in five experience worse violence during that time than otherwise.
- About one in 10 women experience lifetime sexual partner violence (11% lifetime; 1% current).
- About one in 10 women experience economic partner violence in their lifetime (11%).
- Experiencing IPV is rarely one-off; at least half of female survivors of IPV, whether current or lifetime, experience violence "many times" (Ibid).

Gangs Profile in Trinidad and Tobago

The Anglophone Caribbean archipelago of islands, located between the major suppliers and consumers of illegal drugs, are increasingly challenged by gun violence. The geopolitical reality of the region forces these Small Island Development States (SIDS), to grapple with the fallout of being a critical transshipment point for the movement of guns and drugs globally. The high levels of firearms-related death of young men is one such fallout. This is really the product of a complex interface global and local, socio-cultural, socio-economic, historical and gendered forces at play in the Caribbean as the region seeks to address its place in the global political economy of gun transfers and gun violence.

The Caribbean is not a major producer, consumer, and neither an exporter of conventional arms. However, despite comprising 8.5 percent of the world's population, the region accounts for 27 percent of the world's homicides, 42 percent of all firearms related deaths worldwide (UNOCD 2005- 2006). Between 2004 and 2006, only 3 percent of global arms trade transfers involved the Caribbean. According to a 2013 study, states in Latin America and the Caribbean account for 32% of the world's recorded homicides (Ibid; 3). 2007 – 2012, firearms accounted for approximately 69% of homicides in Central America and Mexico, 65% in the Caribbean and 52.7% in South America. Compare these figures with the global

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average of firearms accounting for 46.3% of the homicides committed (Broomley & Malaret, 2017). Very often, the guns that accompany the drugs moving through the region ends up in the hands of members of gangs.

Area	Firearms as % of homicides
Central America & Mexico	69%
Caribbean	65%
South America	52.7%
Global Average	46.3%

Picture 1 F irearms Statistics for 2007 to 2012

Source: Author adapted from Broomley & Malaret 2017

Data from the Crime and Problem Analysis branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and Katz and Choate (2010) concur that there were approximately 95 gangs in Trinidad and Tobago and approximately 1,269 gang members, with the majority of gangs concentrated in Port of Spain and the Western and Northern Police Divisions. More recent data from the TTPS indicates that in 2014 there were approximately 92 gangs and 1,699 gang members. Katz and Choate further indicate that approximately 83 percent of gang members are of African descent, 13 percent of East Indian descent, and four percent of other ethnic backgrounds.

Gang Member Ethnicity in Trinidad and Tobago 2014

- African
- East Indian
- Other

4%

13%

83%
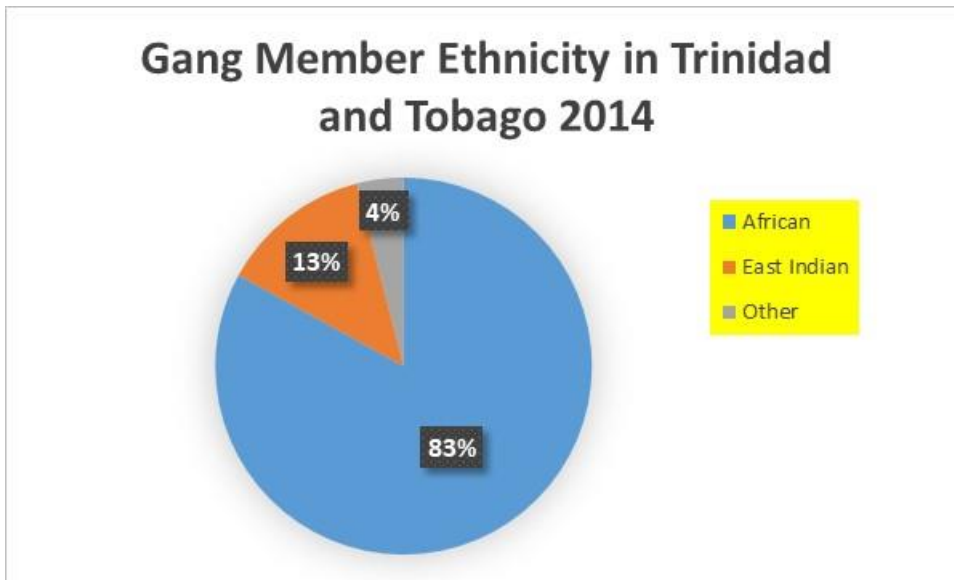
All of the gangs in Trinidad and Tobago are male dominated, with about 87 percent comprised of adults. Two-thirds of gangs have between six and 50 members while 95 per cent of gangs are comprised of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The majority of gangs in Trinidad and Tobago (86 per cent) have a group name, while 61 per cent refer to themselves as a gang, 26 percent as a crew, and 4.2 percent as a clip or unit. A large proportion (88 percent) claim turf while 75 per cent defend their turf.

The vast majority (85 percent) do not have special symbols or identifying clothing and, almost without exception, illegal activity is accepted by all gang members. Twenty-six per cent of gangs in Trinidad and Tobago locate their date of origin prior to 2000, while the remainder originated after 2000. Gangs in Trinidad and Tobago are typically smaller than gangs in Latin America and the United States (US), and typically do not have linkages to gangs in other parts of the region or to gangs in other countries. This contrasts with some of the larger gangs in Latin America which have connections to other gangs within their region and in the US (Katz and Choate 2010; Wells, Katz and Kim 2010) (Seepersad and Williams 2016:76).

The existence of gangs is an extremely challenging problem in Trinidad and Tobago. Available data indicates that gang violence is increasing and is associated with the increased usage of firearms. Gangs also appear to be integrated into some communities, creating additional challenges for their eradication (Seepersad and Williams 2016:102). Apart from the high rates of homicide that are central to the proliferation of gangs in Trinidad & Tobago, these gangs produce increased levels of insecurity nationally, while contributing to a normalizing of violence against women within the communities in which they operate. These forms of violence include, rape, sexual harassment, Child Sexual Abuse and DV.

The Geography of Crime in Trinidad & Tobago

Crime and insecurity in Trinidad &Tobago are often constructed as products of the hotspots. These are largely urban spaces that are identified as being the source of most of the crime problems in Trinidad & Tobago. The WCs in 2023, which started with a pilot in the fishing and agricultural village of Toco, engaging Mayaro (which is historically dependent on fishing and oil production), and agricultural Rio Claro, challenged the idea of the place of the urban hotspot in the crime matrix. In recent years, shifting economic fortunes throughout the country has contributed to fundamental shifts in how men participate in the labour market. The regional movement of guns and drugs has also meant that for many coastal rural spaces there have been increasing numbers of persons owning guns and becoming part of the transshipment economy. For women in these geographies that means that gun ownership has now extended beyond that of the local hunter with a legal firearm. Many of them now find themselves negotiating life where guns are part of their domestic arrangements. These mainly illegal weapons are in their houses, and they must find ways to navigate intimate relationships and the rearing of children in homes alongside these firearms. The nature of this challenge was highlighted most vividly in the

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context of rural coastal communities and rural communities. Ultimately, those places where guns and drugs enter the country are pivotal to the crime ecosystem. Additionally, the ownership of guns in these communities saw persons being very hesitant to report GBV when it occurs.

WCs and Public GBV

For the women who participated in the WCs, public manifestations of GBV took on five distinct forms. It is important to note that although, one community - Warrenville indicated that they were collectively safe and generally without incidents of GBV, all other communities spoke to the existence of public forms of GBV. These were as follows:

- ✓ Early sexual initiation
- ✓ Rape
- ✓ Sexual Harassment
- ✓ Child Sexual Abuse
- ✓ Intimate Partner Violence

Early Sexual Initiation and Early Unions for Young Women and Girls

Early unions forced on young women, is often unpacked as a cultural phenomenon in keeping with deep seeded cultural norms often supported by religious beliefs. For many of the women in urban vulnerable communities, and some coastal rural communities, some young girls are experiencing a peculiar vulnerability. They are being coerced, and at times groomed, into early sexual initiation and unions. In these therefore, the impact of the movement of guns and drugs are being experienced, the emergence of the 'community leader' or 'big man' was a reality. Young women who reside in these vulnerable

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communities are at times targeted, and families threatened with reprisal killings, therefore they are compelled to become the partners of gang leaders and gang members.

Once girls enter these unions, their families are seldom able to remove them from the union. Fear of gun violence compels many family members to comply with the wishes of the community leader. The WCs feedback was clear that the Trinidad & Tobago Police Service (TTPS) tends not to be a viable option in instances such as these. Therefore, many families are left with no legal option to report or take any action in such instances. This form of early sexual initiation is a complex, emerging phenomenon. Here, geography is important to how we frame and make meaning of this phenomenon. In some rural spaces, it may surface as young people forming households early. In urban hot spots, it is often a product of the community leader asserting his control over select young women. However it is packaged, it is most often Child Sexual Abuse. This form of violence frequently comes to light in spaces where there is a heightened level of violence, and a proliferation of gangs and gang culture, which at times merge to produce a displacement of official state-based security mechanisms. That is, official security is replaced by illegal and illicit power structures exerting control over specific regions. The insecurity experienced by many young women in such communities is complex and intersectional. Rape, child sexual abuse and sexual harassment are all housed in the context of this experience. What may begin as public harassment can transcend to rape and evolve into early forced unions. Given the prevalence of gangs, this emerging form of GBV needs critical attention.

Rape and Sexual Harassment in the WCs

Rape is experienced mainly as a subset of being kidnapped and assaulted. The WCs in urban areas spoke to a fear of women and young girls being kidnapped. Not kidnapped for ransom, but kidnapped and raped. There were multiple accounts of women and girls pulled into cars, or being pulled into houses on their way to school or as they went about their everyday activities. Women are particularly afraid of this. Mothers spoke to the fear of leaving their daughters to walk to school, the fear of dropping them off at school when

the school gate is not open- exemplified by girls left outside the school gate by mothers in order for the mothers/ parents to be able to reach to work.

Here the concern for girls is palpable. Mothers reported incidents of harassment of young girls by adult males. What makes the harassment deeply troubling for some women is the fact that the TTPS is frequently hesitant to engage with such cases. It is perceived as not being serious enough to require much police attention and the mobilization of resources to address the issue. Street harassment also, in terms of that which may be experienced by adult women is a serious threat to women. The threat of street harassment is felt intensely in situations where women are new to neighbourhoods and generally are not known by residents.

GBV within the Home (Private)

Women's experience of GBV was difficult to unpack; most women took a while to speak to the incidents of GBV in the public gaze. The instances of Intimate Partner Violence and Child Sexual Abuse in the home were difficult to get. There is a high level of comfort that women experience, as they speak to public incidents of crime and criminality. The levels of crime within the home are the most difficult to uncover. The WCs identified the following as critically important to our framing of GBV in the home:

- Incest
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Domestic Violence in the form of Intimate Partner Violence

Child Sexual Abuse in Trinidad and Tobago

Child Sexual Abuse is a major ongoing issue within the region.

- In 2020, Jamaica reported 9,800 cases of Child Abuse with 20 percent of these cases being CSA (Rampersad 2021).
- In Belize, by the first half of 2021 over 200 cases of CSA were reported (Wong 2021 a) and in the same year, Grenada had 51 reports for the first quarter of the year (Wong 2021 b).

Much like other Caribbean nations, CSA is the second most common form of reported Child Abuse in Trinidad and Tobago, with the first being neglect (Wong 2021 a; Bishop 2023; Reddock, Reid and Nickenig 2022, 179). The twin island nation reported 915 cases of CSA from May 18, 2015, to February 17, 2016, 1,800 cases within a period of 21 months in the years 2020-2021 and over 500 cases from October 2022-April 2023 (Harracksingh and Johnson 2022; Rampersad 2021; Bishop 2023). The prevalence of CSA is a fact that is common knowledge in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, in a 2007 survey on the norms and values of the people of Trinidad and Tobago 87% of participants highlighted CSA as a nationwide issue (Matroo 2011 as cited in Reid, Reddock and Nickenig 2014, 258).

Incidences of CSA are not only high in Trinidad and Tobago, but also seem to be increasing in number. However, the persistent question specific to GBV is -whether the reporting of incidents vis a vis the occurrences are increasing, as the collective consciousness of the population becomes more sensitive to the ills of these acts. However, the research indicates Sookraj (2011), that cases of sexual assault against children increased in the period 2009-2010. This was corroborated by the Trinidad and Tobago Women's Health Survey, which indicated that CSA was reported mainly by women between the ages of 20-24 with 37% of women reporting experiences of CSA falling into this age category (Ministry of Social Development and Family Services 2020, 14). Whilst older women between the ages of 45-49 also had a high incidence of CSA with 23% reporting childhood sexual abuse, it is the

higher percentage of women in early adulthood who have experienced CSA that suggests incidences may be increasing over time. Moreover, it is possible that the COVID 19 pandemic and its disastrous social and economic impacts has increased the vulnerabilities of children thereby leading to even greater incidences of CSA (Wong 2021 b). This, however, has not yet been sufficiently addressed in Caribbean scholarship.

CSA and Incest in the WCs

Every community, with the exception of Warrenville and Pasea, spoke to incest being a major issue. One participant indicated that the crime of incest was the most prevalent crime in Trinidad & Tobago. In her estimation, incidents of incest outnumbered all other crime, including larceny and other petty crime. Of significance was the shared belief that girls who are younger than 10 were in fact victims, while those who are teenage and above 10 were enticing the perpetrators. This was so, even when persons spoke about the same child. The transition to pre-teen and teen sympathy for their plight diminished. A persistent reality was that most neighbours and individuals within the community did not know how to report cases of CSA in the home. Reporting channels remained unclear and a general fear of mismanagement of the report by the TTPS was a recurring theme. Most persons indicated an inability to begin a conversation on CSA with members of families involved in and affected by the act.

Domestic Violence (more accurately Intimate Partner Violence)

Overarching Insecurity

The heightened levels of gun violence created an overall sentiment of insecurity. Persons highlighted that although Intimate Partner Violence was common, the levels of gun violence contributed an increase in the multiple points at which harm can be experienced. Therefore, the existence of guns in the home meant that children had to be protected from guns. The TTPS, in pursuit of gun related activity, was more likely to bust into houses and

use forced entry into domestic spaces. The trauma of experiencing IPV for most survivors is not efficiently acknowledged nor addressed. Most of the women have a strong connection to their respective faith, which serves as an anchor that keeps them sane. Based on their responses several of the women suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTDS) and are unable to source mental health services to help cope with these negative experiences.

Economic Vulnerability

The economy is not as viable as it once was. Women in every community indicated increased difficulty in the labour market in terms of ability to secure employment. There are high rates of youth unemployment that creates deep fear in communities where large cross section of young men are idle. Even in communities such as Mayaro that have historically depended on the oil industry, the post-COVID reality of labour in that sector is such that mechanization has replaced manual labour on the platforms. As a result, many of the downstream industries that service the platforms are no longer viable. Oil is enjoying high prices on the global market; however, for the first time in many years, oil-based communities are not able to tap into the gains of these global trends.

The Need for Women to Speak

Women's ability to access safe, female controlled spaces to speak was a significant theme in the WCs. In rural communities, this was expressed as an absence of Social Workers and Youth Officers. In more urban communities, the need for affordable mental health facilities and the structures for women to come together and speak to their challenges were identified as an urgent need. The need for women to talk with one another, as a means of coming to their own coping strategies, or as a means of just hearing themselves think was seen as a fundamental coping mechanism around GBV.

Women with Disabilities and Insecurity

The needs of women with disabilities often do not make it to the mainstream. Disabilities heighten levels of vulnerability. An inability to hear gunshots or see when someone is running with a gun is a serious threat to ones existence in Trinidad & Tobago in 2023. Factors that exacerbate women living with disabilities capacity to connect to the labour market are important determinants of levels of vulnerabilities including GBV and IPV. The levels of isolation are extremely high for women living with disabilities. Add to this the fact that increased gun violence, both privately and publicly results in larger cross sections of the female population becoming persons with disabilities. Sensitization is needed for the population; simple reporting is often impossible: police stations do not have ramps.

Women living with disabilities expressed an enhanced mindfulness of the fact that many of the victims of gun violence are bystanders. Persons who happen to be at the wrong place when random gunfire happens. Disabilities such as impaired vision, hearing loss and limited mobility heighten vulnerability to such incidents, moreover, the unfortunate reality is that gun violence and extended exposure to GBV frequently leads to the development of disabilities. For women, the ways in which DV and IPV often results in developing disabilities over time is a persistent reality.

Women With Disabilities and IPV

> *'Imagine having to wait on the person who beats you, to take you to the police to make a report'* Participant WCs 11/11/2023

Women living with disabilities are extremely vulnerable to IPV. Participants indicated that they were unaware of the availability of shelters suitably equipped to accommodate

individuals with disabilities. There is a lack of information about shelters altogether. When abuse happens, nothing can really be done beyond confiding in someone close. There are not sufficient professionals to help treat with issues arising amidst the need to seek shelter for persons with disabilities. Confiding in someone close is limited, as persons may not want to get involved because of fear.

It was agreed that there is no support for navigating nor understanding how to navigate the world as someone with a disability when faced with abuse. Of some importance was the need for a distinct, targeted form of counselling for persons who acquired their disability at a later stage in life. Overall, however, the need for professional services (on a pro bono basis) to be made available and shared with persons in the community was a necessity.

The psych-social support for persons with disabilities must come from within their community. Able-bodied persons, although they may be helpful partners and advocates cannot empathize with persons with disabilities to provide requisite support. There are persons with disabilities that are trained and capable to provide professional mental health wellness services. However, these persons have not been given the opportunity to do so.

How do Women Cope Overall?

Crime	Response / Coping Strategies
All crime. Notably acts of public violence	Extreme hyper vigilance and fear
Public acts of violence and gun violence	Moving from hot spots to less heated geographies. Although one runs the risk of losing family and social networks to support childcare. Moving is important.
Public acts of sexual harassment	Negotiating the block- cultivating protection/ watch out for the pleasant guys who may be on the block.
All crime	Turn to spirituality or God to manage extreme feelings of hopelessness
All Crime	TTPS is a mixed bag, although there has been a change of attitude in the last 10-12 years. Fear that the TTPS informs the person being complained on is constant. Persons with disabilities are not taken seriously; petty crimes do not count to the TTPS. If one lies and says there is a gun, TTPS will arrive.
Intimate Partner Violence	Isolation of oneself from judgement. Create distance between you and your family to manage the abuse.
Intimate Partner Violence	Accepting violence in order to live
Violence Against Women and Child Sexual Abuse	Take on a masculine, or authoritarian persona. Cuss for you and yours and be willing to fight to protect those you love and yourself. Particularly if you are the head of a single female-headed household, you must be able to defend yourself

Crime	Response / Coping Strategies
All crime	Not walking in fear
Violence Against Women and Child Sexual Abuse	Limit movement of children and themselves
Violence Against Women and Child Sexual Abuse	Decide to live with the gangster
IPV	Find counselling (the cost is prohibitive but PTSD is real for many survivors)
IPV	No shelters. Shelters are not serious options for survivors in most of the communities visited.
IPV	Hide the abuse fact to avoid judgement
Public crime	Communities create homegrown systems of protection

Women with Disabilities Additional Coping Methods

Crime	Response / Coping Strategies
Gun Violence and CSA	Ensure that those in your care are in your line of sight, for those persons who may be hearing impaired
All crime	Play to your disability
All Crime	Working with civil society organizations who advocate for persons with disabilities
	Seek persons with disabilities as service providers

Overarching Considerations

The analyses of insecurity in Trinidad and Tobago have grown comfortable with a largely class based, racially derived, gendered generalization of the drivers of crime and criminality. We have not moved sufficiently away from generalizations, socio-economic rooted framing of our crime challenges. There is an urgent need to spend time deliberating on data-driven (qualitative and quantitative data), more context specific, indigenous readings of our insecurity challenges. Central to such framing are understandings of the complexity and place of youth unemployment as a driver of insecurity, the place of non-hotspot communities (particularly rural and coastal rural communities) in the crime ecosystem, and the significance of various forms of GBV as expressions of masculinity that are germane to gang culture. Additionally, government agencies will have to work out the extent to which existing institutional structures are equipped to facilitate the much needed qualitative inquiry or seek relevant civil society actors as research partners to compile the needed data.

Empowerment and Support- Police, Participants, Community

- Participants stressed the importance of creating safe spaces where women feel comfortable expressing themselves.
- During these Conversations it was noted, and very importantly so, that because some people have difficulty communicating, it is not easy for them to go to the police to report. The presence of someone who will listen and empathize is crucial.
- Participants also suggested reaching out to community police as a means of getting support within communities:

- In addition to reporting GBV as a crime, participants emphasized the need for survivors to be directed to other attending services that may exist, such as counselling, and stress clinics where possible.
- Fear of reprisal and death impacts on the likelihood of neighbours reporting incidents of GBV. The proliferation of gun-related activity nationally demands a revision of confidential protocols across service providers.
- Women repeatedly spoke to a perceived inter-generational nature, and the all-of-the-family impact of CSA and other forms of GBV:

  Our CSA and GBV institutional responses need to address the psychosocial healing needs of older survivors who are no longer in violent situations but are managing long term impact

  The trauma experienced by family members who were bystanders to IPV and CSA also needs to form critical components to institutional GBV responses

  CSA and IPV re-education require a commitment to ensure that families are equipped to manage the collective shame that is experienced when these forms of GBV emanate from within their immediate and extended households

- Return Youth Officers and Community Social Workers to the communities.
- Create spaces for more WCs in communities.
- Reporting of incest as a crime needs to be revisited urgently. Children need parents to report crimes, incest is most often perpetrated by a parent or close relative.
- Support groups designed to address the needs of GBV survivors who are persons living with disabilities are urgently needed within the context of social service delivery.

Research & Data

- Expand research on women with disabilities and the ways in which they experience

diverse forms of insecurity (economic, social, psychological, …).

- Women and girls with physical and psychological disabilities as victims of GBV must be researched as their abuse is less likely to be detected compared to able-bodied women and girls.

- At the point of reporting, data sets on persons living with disabilities need to be established and maintained.

- Protocols on access to crime data need to be harmonized across institutions involved in data collection and storage.

- Protocols on use of data must be developed and adopted for crime prevention and policymaking.

- The extent to which persons fear reporting GBV to the TTPS and other relevant institutions must be researched. In depth qualitative inquiry into the reporting of GBV must form part of this research.

- The geographies of crime and the diverse experiences of women across and within geographies need to be unpacked through qualitative and quantitative data sets.

- The national crime response must be expanded beyond the urban-hotspot focus, to research the ways in which rural and coastal rural communities form part of the national criminal eco-system.

- Early sexual initiation as a function of gang-related violence needs to be researched as a peculiar vulnerability experienced by girls of marginalized communities.

- The prevalence of incest as a distinct form of CSA requires a review of current CSA-related data collection and storage protocols, and where possible, pursue the development of more survivor-friendly protocols across service providers.

Reporting

- The logistics of reporting all experiences of GBV must be revisited towards the establishment of more user-friendly protocols.

- Child Sexual Abuse must be treated with some urgency in terms of confidentiality

and reporting protocols.

- TTPS should pursue collaborations with civil society to relevantly expand its overall response to CSA and other forms of GBV.

- Clear consequences must be established for TTPS personnel who treat with the details of GBV in a less than confidential manner.

- All TTPS stations should be made accessible to persons living with disabilities. Both physically and specific to training of personnel to receive reports.

Quotable Quotes

"Maloney not as bad as yuh think.""I get so accustomed to it that it don't bother me anymore." – in relation to gun and gang violence in her community.

"As a disabled woman it is scary because what I does sit down ……. and see, a lot of people does be missing."

"In my area if yuh stand up talking to police for too long you can get yuhself in some serious lot of trouble."

Mayaro is the most beautiful place and you can always see a fish for sale, get hand of fig and fix something to eat

There are no blue overalls in the junction in the morning you know·

COVID taught companies that they can function minimally; no need for in-person employment. Everything was computerized and online.

· Offshore platforms like Cassia B & C were unmanned and fully online, while Cassia A was still manned, but minimally.

· People keep domestic violence hidden; no one speaks about verbal abuse.

· It starts to chip away at you, you begin to lose yourself, it gets to the point where you can't function without them (the abuser).

· Young people are in abused relationships (17-21 years old), they don't understand themselves, they are young, and they become abused.

· I would never disagree with a one-night stand.

· Positive experiences in Arouca, but issues in Bon Air West: · Safety concerns, crime, and home invasions prevalent.

· Infrastructure poses a physical risk to persons with disabilities.

· Bullying experiences for children with parents with disabilities is a serious problem

· **Challenges with reporting authorities' sites – infrastructure of police buildings not accessible to persons with disabilities.**

"They (the social worker/ TTPS/ other authorities) could deal with it, but how fast could they get you out of the situation and find a place that is willing and able to take care of you."

· **Men are like sponges, soaking up bad habits from Trinidad.**

· **Marijuana and cocaine dealing is a job now.**

· **Our Tobago brand is now, "Destination capital for parties".**

· **Party drugs- ecstasy, mushrooms, pills are out there to attract kids.**

· **Incest- The biggest crime in Tobago but is not reported/underreported.**

· **Children are not taken seriously, very surface-level care; we have trauma-stricken children walking around.**

· **People are using money to buy guns instead of houses and cars. They are even using their 'back-pay' and loans to purchase firearms and ammunition.**

· **After time is up in shelters, you are moved out in broad daylight, and some of the women have no other choice but to go back to abusers, perpetrators.**

· **Guns are to intimidate women, to show power, to threaten. "A gun = a real man."**

· **Out of control, escalating, robbing supermarkets, recent robbery here, but nothing came of it. People from outside commit the robberies.**

· **We have a lot of abuse; child sexual abuse with the father/stepfather, domestic violence, beating etc.**

· **There was a case recently of a girl being 'pimped out' and the police knew what was going on. (Referring to Andrea Lallan)**

Some gun-point robberies, neighbour got robbed two nights in a row. Robberies are out of hand. Crime too. Nobody can control the crime. Minister, army, coast guard, no one can solve crime.

· There are people who make guns from scratch; learnt welding and construction in schools and use that knowledge to make guns. The police are involved in gun making.

· People do a lot of things for money; people are poor here.

· People here plant to survive, and we are much poorer now because of the economy and Covid etc. Nobody is recuperating.

· Everybody goes out to work, sometimes they have 2-3 jobs just to survive and pay rent.

· Everybody must survive; salaries can't buy groceries, bills and pay rent etc.

· Sometimes people are forced to do wrong things to survive.

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