

**UNIFEM
Help & Shelter**

Report for period January to June 2009

Strengthening Policy Frameworks and Social Services, Public Education & Advocacy to Reduce Gender-Based Violence

A. 3rd Narrative Report (January to June 2009)

1. Project Objectives.

- The enactment and implementation of new sexual offences legislation.
- Amendment of and substantial improvements in the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act by convene consultations and developing and piloting a protocol for police and front line workers.
- Train and sensitize police officers better enable them to implement the DVA and sexual offences legislation and assist their communities in the prevention of gender-based violence.
- To increase awareness of frontline and community workers to gender-based and domestic violence.
- Raising awareness and knowledge about DVA and new sexual offences legislation among the Guyanese population, especially those most at risk of gender-based violence.
- Enhance legal services at Help & Shelter for survivors of gender-based violence.

2. Description of project activities undertaken during the reporting period.

The target groups reached are as follows;

- ❖ Law enforcement
- ❖ Service providers
- ❖ Educator/students
- ❖ Community leaders/members NGO's and the
- ❖ General public

The following activities listed in the work-plan were conducted during the reporting period and were;

- The Sexual Offences Act
- Protocol Part 1
- Police Training (substitute Community Policing Groups)
- Public Education
- Awareness sessions
- Materials

Sexual Offences Act

The coalition to stamp out sexual violence against children was formed on the 29th March 2009 between Red Thread and Help & Shelter. The first meeting attracted the attendance of over 50 persons who had agreed to work on a plan of action to deal with the problem at hand. A decision was made at the second meeting that the coalition should start with a picket campaign every Thursday in-front of the Office of the President from 4 to 5 pm – this is now an ongoing activity that is supported by men and women from all walks of life. The media both print and TV is also involved in highlighting this activity. The coalition had also conducted a press conference with all the media houses that involved a 6 member panel where each person made a presentation on the issue of sexual violence against children. Another activity is scheduled to be conducted in front of Republic Bank on Water Street on the 10th July 2009 where volunteers and staff would be sharing out brochures and leaflets to the general public. The Sexual Offences Bill was in

Attorneys General chambers for some time and is now to be tabled in parliament to become an Act. The process is slow and frustrating and the coalition is working towards speeding up this process.

See attached press statement and members of the coalition on the picket line.

The Protocol

The legal consultant is now working on the protocol for health workers; the others are completed and these are; the protocol for social workers; police officers; the persecutors and magistrate's staff, all of which were sent to the Minister of Human Services & Social Security who is to look at these for approval.

The legal consultant also intervenes in cases when clients needed legal advice and the preparation of protection orders.

Police Training

This activity is yet to be done for the next period. The policing group in Region 3 had contacted Help & Shelter to conduct training with them and plans are now being put in place to do so. Added to the conduct of these activities, the Guyana Police Force is now putting in place a domestic violence unit at every police station that is now being refurbished. Help & Shelter will continue to lobby and advocate for continued training to be done with police officers at all levels.

The public education outreach activities;

Several activities were conducted during the reporting period and these included continued programs on channel 102, NCN and Little Rock TV stations, where public education officers appeared 16 times doing 1 hour session each time with discussions on topics such as; DV and its effect on the individual; Family & Society, Child Abuse and how to deal with it, Suicide and its relationship to DV, HIV/AIDS, Substance Abuse and Men who experienced DV. During the TV programmes, phone lines were opened and several calls were received on air. Telephone calls made during the programme dealing with Male Abuse showed that the most common form of domestic violence experienced by men was emotional abuse; callers thought that men are also physically abused by their wives. After these discussions several calls were made to our hotline numbers that reflected an increased of hotline callers and victims visiting the office during the reporting period.

Advocacy

Help and Shelter has advocated and continues to advocate for relevant legislative changes, most recently with regard to new sexual offences legislation as part of the [Stamp It Out! Campaign](#) and for the removal of provisions allowing corporal punishment in the Education Bill. We helped craft the National Domestic Violence Policy and are represented on the National Domestic Violence Task Force and the National Task Force to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

See attached National DV Policy

Materials

The production and distribution of information materials on gender-based violence, the Acts and other available social services were re-printed during the 6 months reporting period and these were;

Pamphlets, Brochures, Flyers – 15,667

Posters – 518

PSA's on TV – 288 spots and 2 radio stations – 124 spots. The broadcast was not done during the cleaning and repairs to the building after the fire.

NGOS/AGENCIES/REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

The topics that were presented for the conduct of activities included:

Effects of DV-GBV on the Family; Relationship between drugs/DV-GBV & effect on children; Behavioral signs of abusers; sexual abuse; Drug Abuse; HIV/AIDS & Adult Survivors; DV & Drug Abuse; Services of Help & Shelter; DV-GBV; DVA & Child Abuse; DV; Web of Abuse; DV-GBV; Self; Child Sexual Abuse; Healthy-Unhealthy Relationship; Child Abuse, Child Sexual Abuse, TIP's, Substance Abuse; Effects of DV on children.

The target groups were the inmates of Lusignan Prisons and Timerhi Prisons; the Female Rehab Centre; the Obama Youth Group; delegates of the Ms. Guyana Renaissance Pageant; the Nazarene Women's Group; the Nazarene Youth Group; the Community of Leguan; volunteers and staff of Youth Challenge Guyana; the staff of Ruimveldt Children's Aid Centre; the members of the Parika Youth Group; Participants from Wales community (a cane farming area); the members of Jesus New Covenant Ministries (religious group); Lutheran Church (Men's Group); members of the Lutheran Church; Participants (frontline workers) at Regional workshop in Region 6; members of the Cancer Society-Berbice group; Regional w/shop –Lake Mainstay Region 2; Regional W/shop with Sophia religious group and participants of the Support Group – St. Georges Church;

Evaluation of Awareness Sessions at NGO's/Agencies

Evaluation of the awareness sessions conducted with NGO's and other governmental and non governmental agencies showed that participation was rated 95% as excellent at the sessions, 4% as very good and 1% as good. Understanding of topics presented was rated as 94% excellent, 6% as very good. Facilitation was rated as 98% excellent and 2% as very good and the ratings on the overall sessions were rated as 100% excellent.

PRIVATE SECTOR/BUSINESSES

Sessions were done with Sterling Products Ltd and all the branches of Republic Bank (All locations; Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice) and the topics were; Self; Gender; Cycle of Violence; Alcohol / Drug abuse; HIV/AIDS; DV and DVA.

Evaluation of these session indicated that participation, understanding of topics discussed, facilitation and rating on the overall session was excellent. During the session participants examined the impact of childhood experiences on their lives and they also shared their own personal experiences.

Awareness Sessions

Work done at the health centers in Regions 3 and 4 during the period and the names are: Albouystown; Betervergwagting; David Rose; La Grange; Leonora Hospital; East La Penitance; Craig; Supply; Herstelling (Youth Friendly); Mocha/Arcadia; Melanie; Sophia; South Road; Goed Fortuin; West Demerara Hospital; Parika and Queenstown.

The topics presented were;

Domestic Violence; Self Entrapment; Child Abuse/Neglect; DV Murder; Healthy Unhealthy Relationship; Child Abuse; VAW; Alcohol Abuse; Men & Violence; H&S Services; DV; Child Sexual Abuse; GBV;

Here are some feedback from the visits at the Health Centres

- During the session on Domestic Violence at Grove health centre participants' major interest was in the response of the judicial system to domestic violence cases. Many of the participants felt that the laws were not being fully enforced as in cases where abusers are set free if the victim withdraws charges against them. They felt that even if the victim wants the matter to be dropped the police should still proceed with the matter and ensure justice is served. Participants were informed about the DVA and urged to make use of it. They were also informed of H&S's court services and how they could access these.

- As a result of the awareness sessions, 4 persons, (1 male and 3 females) were referred to H&S for counselling. One of the referred cases involved a female who showed suicidal tendencies, she was spoken to by the facilitator on site before being referred to H&S. Feedback from participants showed that interaction was very good generally, views shared by participants included that women should not be charged for killing men if done in self defence, that organizations should engage in house to house visits to encourage abused women to speak out and women generally need to be educated and empowered to speak out. It was obvious that many of the persons participating in awareness sessions had some serious personal issues affecting them.
- **BV Health Centre-** In discussing the topic of child abuse domestic violence and the recent case of a 17 year teenager who is charged with killing her step-father; participants were of the view that some women love their men more than their children and so condone the abuse their children suffer at the hands of their male partners or husbands. In discussing the case of the 17 year old charged with killing her step father, participants said that the 17 year old female teenager was abused by her step father and her mother encouraged this behaviour. Female participants felt that the mother should be jailed because even in death she continues to defend the man who abused her daughter and is not attempting to reconcile with her daughter. Other experiences of domestic violence were also shared at the second awareness session held at this health centre. One young woman spoke of being severely beaten by her husband until she took the decision to leave her husband after being diagnosed with cancer. Another middle aged woman tearfully spoke of being subjected to all forms of domestic abuse from the age of 17 to 45 which was when her husband died. She also disclosed that her daughters were presently being brutalized by their husbands. The telephone numbers of Help & Shelter's Crisis Centre were given so she could pass them on to her daughters. On leaving the health centre the facilitator was approached by another young woman who had just come from the probation officer, she complained of being emotionally abused by both her husband and relatives. The abuse has forced her to sell at the market to maintain her children. She also said that her husband would never visit the probation office and her children are suffering as a result of all of this. The facilitator advised her to seek counselling at help & Shelter.
- **East La Penitence HC-**During this session aspects of healthy relationships were discussed, participants were given handouts to guide them in understanding their relationships with their partners better, they were encouraged to work on personal issues within their relationships which may be unhealthy and also to seek counseling where necessary. Most women said they were in healthy relationships but after going through the handout changed their minds. Persons were also told not to just look at where their partners are wrong but to also examine their own behaviours, take responsibility for their actions and to know they have an equal responsibility to make changes in their relationships Participants were reminded that Help & Shelter counsels both males and females.
- At Supply the issues of domestic violence were discussed along with information on services offered by H&S. After the session the facilitator spoke individually to two participants one was referred for counselling at H&S and to seek help from the probation & welfare department of the Ministry of Human Services. The other was briefed on the web of abuse and cycle of violence and told to pass on this information as well as services available, including shelter services, to her sisters who are both in seriously abusive relationships. Brochures were distributed to the participants including the one on Gender Based Violence.

For the reporting period the public education team visited several schools and tertiary institutions and these were:

Ascension Community High; Berbice High School PTA Teachers; Ketley Primary; Enmore Primary; Institute of Professional Education (Secondary); Bel Air Primary (PTA); Samatta Point Nursery PTA; Guyana Technical Industrial Centre; Supply Primary; Enmore Primary; Soesdyke Community High; Institute of Professional Education (2 locations); Berbice High School Students & PTA; University

of Guyana; Sophia Special School; Sisters Primary Pupils & PTA; St Aloysius; South Primary; St Gabriel Nursery Teachers; Wellington Park Primary – Pupils & PTA

And the topic presented at the above learning institutions were:

Parenting skills DV and effects on children; Safe & Unsafe Touches; Self, Gender, Healthy/Unhealthy Relationships, Sexual Abuse; Child Abuse; Every One Has a Body, Our Bodies Are Private; Understanding Self & STI's; Teenage Pregnancy; Rights & Responsibilities; Rape/Sexual Assault; Violence, Substance Abuse, HIV/AIDS; Emotional Abuse and Help & Shelter's Services.

Here are some of the Feedbacks received from some of the schools

- **At Ketley Primary School** sessions on the theme of safe and unsafe touches and body ownership, the students were enthusiastic and participated fully in the topics discussed. Feedback from participants showed that making the students aware of the importance of knowing their bodies and its various parts had enabled them to be more conscious about people they trust as well as strangers. At one of the 6 sessions held, involving 28 students, 95% indicated that they are exposed to violence in their home. The facilitator had recommended that the high level of violence being reported by the students at home should be addressed seriously.
- **At Soesdyke CHS** 3 sessions were done on healthy/unhealthy relationships. The facilitators decided on doing separate sessions with the girls and boys, as the boys said they were not comfortable in opening up in the presence of the girls. Separate session was also done with the parents of the students. During the session with the male students it was revealed that almost all of them are in some kind of a relationship including a sexual relationship with females. According to some of the male students they cannot end the relationship due to fear that the girl might commit suicide and fear also on their part that they might not see another girl to have sex with again. During the session with the female students they realized that they were indulging in unhealthy relationships and behaviours but had been unaware of this before the awareness sessions. They decided to improve the quality of their relationships and hope for continued guidance.

In discussing HIV and relationships it was apparent that none of the male students knows his blood group or has ever had an HIV test done. This is particularly disturbing as they all confessed to having girlfriends and being sexually active.

The session with the parents of the Grade 10 students was a very interactive and energetic one even though only 5 parents attended of which all were female. Parents shared their views on the topics of child abuse and its effects. A number of issues came up including the impact of religion and politics and how these are contributing to the lack of a moral society, participants also agree that parents contribute significantly to the negative behaviours of children. One female parent sighted the advent of equal rights as the beginning of the problems we now face with domestic violence. Participants were briefed on the importance of taking time out to speak with their children and to address issues affecting their children and were also informed of visiting H & S for counseling for themselves and their families if needed.

- **At Supply Primary School** it was observed that many of the students had no knowledge of their basic rights and responsibilities. The sessions involved a very healthy discussion in which the students ask a lot of questions and participated in answering questions asked, also reading out information, it was observed that many had very good reading skills. Students were also taught a little song on their rights which they totally enjoyed and which will also help them in remembering their basic rights and were encouraged to share the information they received with their friends and family members with whom they promised to do.
- On the theme of body ownership at Ketley Primary School students were eager to participate in the activities and had a fair knowledge of body parts.
- At Enmore Primary School on the same topic of body ownership students were found to be shy and reluctant initially to name their body parts. With assistance from teachers a new method of

getting this information was used as this was considered somewhat of a taboo subject. With this new approach participation by students increased.

- **GITC-** During the first awareness session participants were divided into 4 groups and given tasks to do-these were to identify the causes of teenage pregnancy the effects, consequences and measures taken to reduce, or curb teenage pregnancy.
- During the second session, facilitators covered the different forms of conflict resolution. It was evident from the responses received that about 87% of the participants resort to using violence or fighting to resolve conflicts. The young men claimed it was very difficult for them to walk away from disagreements since this is often taken as a sign of weakness and opens oneself to be taken future advantage of such as teasing or humiliation from peers. Participants were given alternatives for dealing with conflict and even though they personally felt it was a long process, many agreed to try these methods when dealing with conflicts in the future. Students were given examples of the results of dealing with conflict in violent ways and how this can affect them and others for their entire lifetime.
- At the third session students participated very well in the discussions on dating and healthy relationships. Some views expressed included having both persons agree on the period dating would last for.
- Some students felt it was OK to lie to their partners either to protect them or because that may be the only way to make them stay
- Students felt that sex cannot be avoided during dating
- It was said that older women are paying young boys to have sex with them, the young men believed that they are using the women and doesn't see it as a form of abuse of them
- Some students felt that their likes and dislikes should be shared by their partner if not this could create problems.
- Students were given handout on healthy relationships and urge to read and share with others.

Please see the attached statistical data/charts on the above activities

3. Problems/constraints/difficulties experienced (e.g. objectives, target, funds, management, budget status or timing). Explain how these were resolved.

The main difficulty experienced on the project is the training with police officers and the completion of the protocols and these positions have not been resolved. We have made several efforts to arrange the training with the police but got no cooperation from the commissioner. We were told that domestic violence topics are included in the curriculum for training the new recruits, but the difficulty of officers behaviours towards DV cases still persist at some of the police stations. The only good news is that the Guyana Police Force – with funding from the IDB- is in the process of refurbishing the police stations across the country and that they are building a domestic violence unit at every station under re-construction.

The developments of the protocols for social workers; the police, persecutors, magistrates' staff is completed and was sent to the Minister of Human Services & Social Security for viewing and approval. Only recently we were asked to re-send these documents to the Minister. We are yet to meet with a representative of the Ministry of Health for their intervention on the protocol for health workers. There was a recent fire at the Ministry of Health where the office was completely destroyed and we would suspect that this may be another set –back in terms of meeting a representative from this ministry. Concerning the other areas we have not encountered any difficulty.

4. Project Impact: success stories and achievements.

The project had definitely created a distinct impact on the general populace since we have had a tremendous increase of our clientele accessing all of our services which include face to face and hotline counseling, court support, referrals and accessing our Shelter. For the first time in our history the Shelter had and now has full occupancy. For the first time we are able to extend our counseling services to two

(2) remote areas in Regions 1 and 3 with funding from the Canadian High Commission through the Caribbean Gender Equality Program for six months –until the 15th February 2009.

In terms of the Sexual Offenses Bill that was tabled in parliament recently the coalition (Help & Shelter and Red Thread) continues to conduct the picketing exercise in-front of the Office of the President that have attracted people from other parts of the country and groups from civil society. The bill on Sexual Offenses was tabled in parliament and the next stage of this bill is to go to the select committee before becoming a legal document in form of an Act. The impact of the project is also derived from the broadcasting of our PSA's on Radio and Television on a monthly basis. Due to the cost of airing the PSA's on all TV stations, the advertising agency have developed a strategy as to rotate the airing using 6 TV stations per month instead of all 11 and for the other month another 5 stations. This was able to attract the outlying, rural and urban parts of Guyana. On radio, some of our old ads continue to be aired free of cost.

The success of the project is also due to our public education officers appearing on TV and sometimes radio programs discussing specific topics on gender-based violence. Interviews conducted with project staff by the media both print and electronic have captured the views of the public and this had caused an impact on the project.

See attached

(a) How did the project improve participants' ability to take advantage of new opportunities?

The presentations made on different topic areas would have given the participants an opportunity to take advantage of new opportunities in terms of making choices, based on their relationships with their spouses or families in terms of improving the relationship or severing the relationship and moving on with their lives. The participants who were referred to the organization for counseling were given an opportunity to be counseled, to seek redress through the legal system or through referrals for job opportunities and other needs they would have had. The services of the Shelter would have given the participants/clients and where possible their children, the need to access the residence of this facility.

(b) Did it bring about systemic change that will increase participants' choices or promote their empowerment?

Yes. During the presentation of the many sessions with different target groups it was revealed that our culture had led us to believe that –in this case- women were meant to endure the beatings from their partners and the concept of “if he na beat me, he na love me” still persist in our society. From the feedback received the facilitators did an excellent job in trying to break this cultural belief and most time would do follow up sessions with the target groups for them to understand that they have legal rights and that they can communicate in a non violent way. Many women were referred to the Crisis Service Centre for counseling where they were empowered and referred to relevant agencies where their needs were met.

(c) How did the Trust Fund grant help in building the executing agency's capacity to monitor the project and empower the project participants?

This was done through the feedback received from the participants when the monitoring and evaluation officer would have seen their evaluation forms, did the reports that were sent to the board and staff working on the project and had discussion at our planning meetings where decisions are made on what to do next for the beneficiaries. Most times the request of what the participants or groups made is discussed and follow-ups are done in terms of, if the finance is available, to do what was requested. In this case we were able to shift funds allocated under one activity to another since after most sessions the request made was for us to do more sessions. (The shifting of funds was for travel and in this case the balance of admin. travel when necessary was used).

(d) Did the project offer opportunities to link with work in other communities/countries and promote internal, cross-regional information sharing and collaboration?

Yes it did. One of the activities conducted by the public education staff and volunteers was to disseminate Help & Shelter's brochures and to have a one-on-one discussion with the villagers in Leguan. The demand from the people was to extend our counseling to the area since it is plagued with abuse and alcohol consumption. Two of our counselors, a male and female, are to start a 6 months face-to-face counseling service in this community and this opportunity to extend our counseling services in this remote area was made possible by the Caribbean Gender Equality Program where Help & Shelter was awarded funding for the conduct of this activity and also to build capacity with 2 organizations in Region 6 (similar to the one we did under the UNIFEM Grant) and to train staff and volunteers with counseling skills with another NGO, Hope for All, in Suddie Essequibo, Region 2. Due to the publicity of this program other organizations have approached us to conduct similar program with them.

The formation of the coalition between Help & Shelter and Red Thread, to work towards the elimination of all forms of violence and in this case specifically placing emphasis on Sexual Violence Against Children – thus the demands placed on the organization for information sharing and collaboration.

These are examples of what came out from the conduct of workshops in the Regions:

Republic Bank (Berbice) - Participants welcomed the information on Alcohol and the Family, one participant shared her experience with domestic violence at the hands of an alcoholic husband. Referrals were made to AA meetings in Berbice. Participants requested additional sessions.

At the second session done with the above organization participants asked many questions about alcohol, helping the alcoholic and help for the family of an alcoholic. One family is presently seeking counseling from the Transitional House and Help & Shelter on alcoholism as a result of these sessions.

Republic Bank (Georgetown) –Participants were very outspoken on the topic of HIV/AIDS and alcohol. After the session one participant followed up with a phone call to the facilitator requesting additional information on a rehab centre for a family member.

Region 3 Workshop, Wales Community Centre - Each participant represented different areas/communities in the region and the human resource manager of Wales Estate requested that Help & Shelter conduct a session with members of staff and also the Health & Safety Officer of Wales Estate asked that sessions be done with the Policing Group in Region 3.

(e) What were the outputs produced (positive/negative/neutral)?

The project produced outputs that have surpassed our targets in terms of the number of persons reached for each target group as mentioned in the work plan. For example, under public education activity we were able to reach more than 30 teachers, nurses, social workers and community leaders. For the awareness sessions conducting 1-2 hours sessions with PTA's; at the health centres and with women and girls, youth groups and religious groups, the numbers reached were overwhelming due to the demand of the sessions. For instance at the Beterverwagting Health Centre over 100 persons would attend this clinic on a daily basis due to the geographical locations of the villages on the East Coast of Demerara and the non-existence of the facility in these villages.

(f) What are the proposed follow-up activities and recommendations for the remaining project implementation period?

The proposed follow up activities will include the conduct of awareness sessions at health centres and youth groups, workshops with policing community groups, to conduct 2 regional workshops in Leguan and Berbice, the completion of the health protocol and the full implementation of the protocols that will assist the process of the Domestic Violence Act. The legal consultant is to conduct training with members

of staff on the Children's Bills that was passed in parliament recently and also the use of the protocols for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act.

The statistical data in the form of charts that are attached, have shown that we have gone over our numbers reached with some target groups and this is due to the request made from other groups who would have attended the sessions and passed on the information to other groups or persons who would call in to request that we do sessions or workshops. An example is referred to; one of our facilitators who conduct sessions on alcohol/substance abuse did a session with a group and one of the participants is a staff at the Republic Bank. The presentation was so good that the staff informed management –thus the conduct of activities with staff members of Republic Bank at all its locations in Guyana.

B. Financial Report

Here is a breakdown of the expenditure on project activities for the reporting period.

Please see the attached financial statement.