Combating Sexual Violence against Children in the Caribbean: From Isolated Actions to Integrated Strategies

Report on the High-level Consultation on Sexual Violence against Children
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Adapted from the Newsletter of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, April 2014

The protection of boys and girls from all forms of violence is a concern the Caribbean cannot afford to omit from its post-2015 development agenda. In fact, freedom from violence is indispensable to a sustainable future in which children will be able to grow up healthy, well-nourished, resilient, well-educated, culturally sensitive and protected from abuse and neglect. A future in which equity and social progress will be a reality for all members of the human family.

Despite important progress made in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), violence remains a harsh reality for too many of the region’s children. Pervasive, socially condoned and concealed, violence knows no geographic, cultural, social or economic borders and it happens even where children should feel safest – in care and justice institutions, in schools and within their homes.

Witnessing violence, experiencing neglect and trauma, enduring intimidation, humiliation and physical aggression, and being subject to abuse and exploitation are frequent dimensions of a sad continuum in children’s lives. Its impact is often irreversible, especially in younger children who have less ability to seek support and greater chances of suffering long lasting emotional and health damage, compromising the development of the brain, and experiencing insecure attachments and increased risks of aggressive behaviour and self-harm later in life. Violence goes hand in hand with deprivation, with higher risk of poor health, poor school performance, long-term welfare dependency and a deep sense of fear.

Beyond individual victims, violence compromises social progress and sustainable development. It is frequently associated with poor rule of law, weak law enforcement, and a culture of impunity. Moreover, violence brings with it far-reaching costs for society, diverting scarce resources, destroying social and economic gains that took years and decades to build. Strong political, administrative and societal commitment to prevent and address violence in homes, schools and other institutions and in public spaces; to reduce crime, violence and exploitation of children, as well as to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and secure a culture of non-violence is required. Effective, accountable and transparent institutions and justice systems are crucial to safeguard children’s right to freedom from violence and fight impunity.

The Caribbean must UNiTE to end violence against girls and boys and particularly the insidiousness of sexual violence. It is just not a human rights imperative; it is also a question of good governance and good economics.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful conference on combating sexual violence against children in the Caribbean involved the coordinated efforts of many people, institutions and governments. The organisers, UNICEF-ECO and UNITE are therefore grateful to the various partners who were involved in the planning, provision of technical support, organisation and funding of the conference. In this regard we would like to express profound thanks to:

- CARICOM
- UN Women
- UN Resident Coordinator
- UNICEF, New York
- UNDP
- UNFPA
- PAHO
- ILO
- United States State Department
- Barbados Hilton Hotel
- Child Care Board (Barbados)
- University of the West Indies
- British High Commissioner (Mr Paul Brummel)
- Regional Director, UNICEF, The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office, Panama (Mr Bernt Assen)

The Government of Barbados generously offered to host the conference and for this we are especially grateful. Special thanks as well to the distinguished participants who worked collaboratively and tirelessly to ensure that the forum produced outcomes which can significantly reduce the incidence of child sexual abuse in the region. The contribution of the children who participated was significant and greatly enriched the conference outcomes.
**ABBREVIATION**

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CARICOM</td>
<td>Caribbean Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organisation</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention Eliminating All forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>COHSOD</td>
<td>Council for Human and Social Development</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Conventions on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CSA</td>
<td>Child Sexual Abuse</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (United Kingdom)</td>
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<td>HFLE</td>
<td>Health and Family Life Education</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>PAHO</td>
<td>Pan American Health Organisation</td>
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<td>PAWI</td>
<td>Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies International</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNIC</td>
<td>United Nations Information Centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children Fund</td>
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<td>UNICEF-BECO</td>
<td>UNICEF Barbados and Eastern Caribbean Office</td>
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<td>UNICEF-TACRO</td>
<td>UNICEF The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office (Panama)</td>
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<td>UNITE</td>
<td>United Nations Secretary General’s Campaign to End Violence Against Women</td>
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<td>UNSVAC</td>
<td>United Nations Study on Violence against Children</td>
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<td>VAC</td>
<td>Violence Against Children</td>
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<td>VAWC</td>
<td>Violence Against Women and Children</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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On November 20th, 2012 policy makers, Ministers of Government, academics, practitioners and other experts from throughout the English-speaking Caribbean, Suriname, and further afield, met in Barbados to examine the challenge of sexual violence against children in the Caribbean. This conference sought to build upon the momentum generated against child abuse by the 2006 United Nations Global Study on Violence Against Children (UNSVAC) and the various activities and other research studies which were prompted by its findings.

The UNSVAC revealed that very often children and adolescents are at risk of gender-based violence from people they know and should be able to trust – parents, boyfriends or girlfriends, schoolmates, teachers and employers. Globally, the prevalence of forced sexual intercourse and other forms of violence involving touch, among boys and girls under 18, was 73 million (7%) and 150 million (14%) respectively. While boys faced a greater risk of physical violence than girls, girls faced a greater risk of sexual violence, neglect and forced prostitution. Up to 21% of women in some countries reported having been sexually abused before the age of 15. Nearly half of all sexual assaults worldwide are against girls 15 years or younger, and of the 700,000 individuals each year forced into human trafficking, 80% are women and girls.

The widespread acceptance of sexual violence as a normal feature of life, particularly by children, is a grave cause for concern in the Caribbean because of the link between child sexual abuse and the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. In the context of the region the early onset of sexual activity has been identified as a contributory factor to the spread of HIV infections in the region. The gravity of the situation was highlighted in a World Health Organisation report in 2000 which found that 42.8% of sexually active Caribbean children had their first sexual intercourse before the age of 10. By the time a young person reached between the ages of 16-18, approximately 29.8% had more than five sexual partners. Many of these were forced sexual encounters.

In the Caribbean the UNSVAC was followed up with several state and regional initiatives including the 2012 CARICOM Declaration on Child Sexual Abuse of the Twenty-Third Meeting of its Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) on Children and Youth which was convened in Guyana, July 10th - 11th, 2012. This declaration condemned all forms of sexual abuse of children and agreed there could be no justification for such practice. The COHSOD also agreed to review the entire system of investigation and prosecution of child sexual abuse (CSA) cases to ensure compliance with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
The primary objective of the Barbados conference was to review regional progress on preventing and responding to the sexual abuse of children in the Caribbean and to set targets which would be used to guide and evaluate future actions and progress. The conference examined the issue of CSA within the wider context of attempts to end all gender-based violence, and served as a regional stocktaking on the results and approaches to ending impunity to the sexual abuse of children. In preparation for the conference the organisers, UNICEF and UN Women, commissioned a stocktaking review of progress in the region to end the sexual abuse of children, and to provide better quality services to aid the rehabilitation of children and families affected by sexual abuse. This progress report found that over the past two decades or more, Caribbean countries had made steady but slow progress in addressing the issue of violence against children.

Most countries had, for example, incorporated measures to criminalise the sexual abuse of children into national legislation and imposed greater sanctions against perpetrators. All governments had also developed some type of policy, initiative, programme or action to prevent and combat CSA. They all had mechanisms and agencies with primary responsibility for child protection, including responsibilities relating to the prevention, reporting and management of responses to CSA. Additionally, as a consequence of the efforts of international development partners, governments, non-governmental organisations and community-based entities, there was heightened awareness among the public about issues relating to CSA. In most, if not all countries there was greater acknowledgement among policy makers of this abuse as a socio-economic and human rights issue, as well as a major public health challenge linked to various forms of sexual and reproductive health concerns.

The report concluded that while much has been accomplished since the launch of the UN Global Study on Violence Against Children in 2006, progress had not been as significant as it could or should have been, given the greater focus and attention on CSA generated by the UN Study.

Inspite of the achievements there remained serious challenges and unresolved issues relating to the efforts to prevent and manage responses to CSA. Throughout the region countries exhibited severe weaknesses in the timely provision of quality services to sexually abused children and their families.
Regional Challenges to Providing Timely, Quality CSA Services:

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A need for more and better accredited staff training</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Insufficient focus on the gender dimensions of CSA for prevention and treatment purposes</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Inadequate or absence of full and responsive service coverage after hours</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Variations in service accessibility and availability due to such factors as geographical location</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Variations in waiting times to have initial assessment</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Slow and inadequate response of services</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Inadequate provision to deal with variations in reporting and referral pathways</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Weak or non-existent Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms and processes</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Lack of child-friendly police, court and medical procedures for abused children</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Not enough focus on the provision of service when it is most needed, as opposed to when it becomes available</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Inadequate data collection and use of data to inform service provision</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>No consistent approach to information sharing among agencies</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Weak participation and involvement of children in decisions affecting them</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Need for more school, family and community-based resources and services</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Persistence of silence, shame and stigma among sexually abused children and their families</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Lack of specialised provisions for specific groups including children between birth and 5 years old, children with disabilities, children with cultural and religious peculiarities, and children with language/translation issues</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Insufficient allocation of financial, human and other resources</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Insufficient prevention and awareness-raising programmes</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Confusion and fear surrounding disclosure</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Very few services targeted at parents, guardians, caregivers and families</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>A general lack of specialised services, i.e. psychological</td>
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The various studies and the progress report which preceded the conference, as well as the actual meeting of the stakeholders at the conference, generated many critical suggestions and recommendations to guide action at national and regional levels, in order to prevent and better manage the sexual abuse of children in the Caribbean.

Suggestions and recommendations were encapsulated in a call-to-action appropriately entitled the "Bridgetown Declaration and Agenda for Action to Combat Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean". (Appendix 6) Conference participants, through a process of group consultations, also produced implementation strategies and plans of action for the key strategic issues and objectives contained in the Declaration and Agenda for Action. These were organised around the following four main thematic areas:

- Legal, Policy and Regulatory Systems
- Systems and Institutional Reform
- Societal Behavioural Change

**Gender and Child Sexual Abuse**

The articulation of the conference declaration and the development of time-bound implementation strategies and plans were significant, in that they represented the first detailed collective strategy to tackle the problem of sexual abuse of children in the Caribbean. As such, the conference played a pivotal role in improving regional policy makers and other stakeholders’ understanding of the challenges posed by sexual violence against children, as well as of the multifaceted characteristics and multi-dimensional impact of the problem.

Although conference delegates were concerned about the potential difficulties in implementing all areas of the declaration and the strategies developed, they were nevertheless confident and determined that these mechanisms would, for the first time, enable governments and other stakeholders to take decisive actions to combat the sexual abuse of children. They would also significantly heighten the profile of the issue within the context of public policy, health, human rights and other national debates across the region. At the same time, improved regional coordination in combating sexual violence against children was seen as a realistic possibility and outcome of the conference.
### Recommendations for Preventing and Managing CSA in the Caribbean:

1. Revision and harmonisation of national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international child protection instruments
2. More effective implementation and enforcement of child-friendly policies and laws to prevent CSA, and to bring perpetrators to justice
3. Intensified programming in schools and communities to help children better protect themselves against sexual abuse
4. Increased advocacy to promote a culture of zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse
5. Enhanced media and public awareness and social mobilisation against CSA
6. The development of programmes to educate and support parents with their responsibilities to protect their children against all forms of abuse
7. Increased and better allocation of human, technical and financial resources to help combat sexual violence against children
8. Development of national and regional civil society networks to help tackle CSA
9. Improved and increased services for children and families affected by CSA
10. The adoption of a more holistic and integrated approach to addressing the problem of sexual violence against children
11. Enhanced monitoring and evaluation so as to assess performance and progress and to encourage the adoption of best practices in preventing CSA
12. Development of more effective data collection tools and mechanisms so as to facilitate more well-targeted child sex abuse policies and actions in general, as well as for the re-fashioning of initiatives to target special needs groups such as children with disabilities, or with particular cultural or religious needs.
SUMMARY OF SESSIONS, PRESENTATIONS AND WORKING GROUPS

Sexual Violence against Girls and Boys in the Caribbean: 
Painting the Picture

“Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean: An Overview”  
(Ms. Nadine Perrault – Senior Advisor, Child Protection, 
UNICEF, The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office, Panama)

Ms. Perrault presented an overview and synthesis of CSA in the Caribbean addressing issues of definitions and characteristics. She observed that CSA occurs across all social and economic environments, including homes, schools and other institutions, as well as on the streets; it also occurs across all age groups within these environments. She reported that CSA is rampant and is of great concern in every CARICOM country, where statistics show that the first sexual experience of young girls is frequently forced (42.8% of girls younger than 12). This abuse, which often begins when the child is less than 10 years old, continues throughout adolescence. Children with disabilities are noted to experience higher levels of sexual abuse. Intra-familiar abuse is also a major problem, with incest seeming to be endemic. Most children are abused by trusted and known adults – particularly adult men. While most reported victims are girls, across the region there is a general rise of child sexual abuse against boys.

Access to justice is usually affected by several factors, including the defence of reasonable or honest belief (consent); requirement that the child’s evidence be corroborated; exclusion of the public from hearings on CSA (limited cases); video-recordings used only in few countries; protection and removal orders for children who are sexually abused; and no special (sensitive) procedures for CSA.

There are also various challenges which impact negatively on CSA policies and programmes. These include the absence in some countries of national protocols for the prevention of child abuse and protocols or guidelines for reporting such abuse; 24-hour hotlines for reporting; shelters or places of safety for children; and an obligation to report CSA. Agencies and services for this kind of abuse are often severely under-resourced and/or in need of better allocation of resources. Training programmes are at times done on an ad hoc basis and services tend to be fragmented while data collection mechanisms are poor.
“Perceptions and Attitudes to CSA in the Eastern Caribbean”
(Professor Adele Jones and Dr Ena Trotman-Jemmot – UNICEF-BECO, Action for Children; University of Huddersfield)

Prof. Jones and Dr Trotman-Jemmot’s presentation provided a summary of findings of research conducted in 2009 for the path-breaking study on CSA in the Caribbean. This mixed method study involved over 1400 men and women from six (6) countries and incorporated interviews with survivors of CSA. The presentation examined such issues as how people defined CSA; how childhood is understood; attitudes about children’s status; opinions about what behaviours and social conditions contribute to CSA; people’s experiences and personal knowledge of the abuse; its impact and effects; and views about the forms of action needed to combat CSA. The study revealed that it is a serious, extensive and escalating problem in the region and produces severe consequences at individual, family and societal levels.

The main forms of CSA outlined were intra-familial abuse (including incest), non-family abuse, and transactional sexual abuse. They were evident across all communities, levels of education, social class, professional categories, and religious groups. Among the worrying trends identified were cell phone pornography; internet abuse; issues linked to tourism; changing nature of family; abuse of boys; transactional sex between children; sexual aggression by

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<th>Recommendations for Rectifying Issues of CSA in the Caribbean:</th>
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<td>1. Ratification of human rights instruments, comprehensive legislative reform (civil and penal) to pay attention to the gender dimensions of CSA</td>
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<td>2. Child-friendly/child-sensitive justice system</td>
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<td>3. Prevention mechanisms (child helpline, protocols, codes of conduct, reporting mechanisms)</td>
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<td>4. National policy or plan on the prevention and elimination of violence against children</td>
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<td>5. Adequate complaint mechanisms</td>
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<td>6. Data collection management systems</td>
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<td>7. Adequate services and programmes (accessible, available, adaptable and of good quality)</td>
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<td>8. Adequate human and financial resources (ratio social workers/child population, training, codes of ethics, etc.)</td>
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<td>9. Increased resources for agencies/institutions responsible for the protection of children</td>
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<td>10. Strengthened coordination, reporting, procedures and management</td>
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<td>11. Greater public awareness and social mobilisation</td>
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girls; the link between CSA and natural disasters; over sexualisation of children and its normalisation; and young children engaging in, or imitating sexual acts.

It was noted that girls are most vulnerable to sexual abuse and that this abuse usually starts while they are young, often under ten years old. Boys were also being abused but there was an additional stigma and shame linked to perceptions of manhood and masculinity attached to boys revealing that they had been abused. Men were responsible for most of the sexual abuse of children but others, including mothers, contributed to the problem through complicity, silence, denial, and failure to take appropriate action.

The presenters urged that CSA be seen as an entire society problem requiring a public health and systems approach to developing effective prevention and treatment solutions. These included improved legislation, policy, protocols, systems and practice; leadership and interventions within churches; targeted action on transactional sexual abuse; gender-based attitude and behaviour change; support to victims and survivors; treatment for men and children with harmful sexual behaviour; youth participation and advocacy; efficient and effective criminal justice system; inter-professional training; men against sexual exploitation and violence programmes; empowering women and mothers; child-friendly criminal justice procedures, and family/parent strengthening and responsibility.

### Enabling Factors to the Problem of CSA in the Caribbean:

1. officials who by inaction, denial and evasion are collusive
2. women who are disempowered and complicit for various reasons
3. men and youth with sexually harmful attitudes and behaviours
4. environmental issues including cultural sanctioning of sex ‘trading’, social acceptance, consumerism, poverty, community violence
5. gender socialisation, gender inequality and gender-based violence
6. lack of awareness of the seriousness of effects
7. lack of collective outrage and community action
8. ineffective systems, laws and policies
9. male privilege, reputation and status placed above child protection
10. how childhood is viewed
11. children’s disempowerment
CSA in the Caribbean: Data Collection, Quality, Uses and Availability

“Sexual Violence against Girls and Boys: The International Data Conundrum”
(Ms. Claudia Cappa, Ph.D. – Statistics and Monitoring Specialist, Division of Policy and Strategy, UNICEF New York)

Dr Cappa’s presentation examined the issues and challenges with respect to data collection, its quality, uses, and availability for the purpose of addressing CSA in the Caribbean. It focused on four main questions, namely:

- why do we need data on child sexual abuse
- what data do we need
- what data do we have
- how should we get the data we need

Data was regarded as being critical to the development of effective interventions at every level including prevention strategies and treatment. It enables a comprehensive picture to be developed in terms of understanding the nature and magnitude of violence against children and CSA risk and protective factors, including information about the underlying attitudes. It is also critical for monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

Data on child abuse globally revealed that:

- 25-50% of children are subject to physical abuse; 5-20% to sexual abuse
- 18% of girls and 8% of boys experience child sexual abuse based on studies between 1980 and 2008
- prevalence of sexual abuse ranges from 5% to more than 30%
- nearly half of all sexual assaults against females occur when they are children

However, the real magnitude of the problem of CSA remains largely unknown due in part to under-reporting, difficulties related to measurement, and insufficient investments in the collection of high quality and ethically sound data in most countries. Various studies and efforts have been undertaken or are on the way, to seek to get better data. However, these are plagued by a number of problems including quality issues, ethical concerns, inappropriate definitions and research designs, the absence of a clear framework and the ad hoc or one-off nature of some studies. Consequently, there remain important gaps and weaknesses in the data for CSA regionally and globally.
“Breaking the Cycle: Addressing the Intersections between Violence against Women and Violence against Children”

(Dr. Gerry Eijkemans - PAHO/WHO Representative, The Bahamas, and Turks and Caicos Islands)

This presentation was based on a regional comparative study of violence against women and the manner in which it intersected with violence against children. The study included a number of Caribbean and Latin American countries including Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Bolivia, Columbia, The Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, and Peru. The goals of the comparative analysis were to:

- increase access to quality data and the use of regional data on violence against women and children (VAWC) for advocacy, planning and evidence-based policy development
- raise awareness of VAWC as a public health problem and violation of human rights issue
- examine ways in which future data collection efforts could be improved – (data quality and comparability)

Obstacles to undertaking comparative analyses included issues of timeframes, the use of diverse denominators for presenting data on help seeking and consequences, attitudes about wife beating etc., as well as the different manner in which countries classified forced sex. One of the main findings of the analysis was that there was often a history of physical and sexual violence in childhood among the abused women ages 15 to 49, and this violence was then also manifested against the children in their households. These children were subjected to hitting, beating, spanking and slapping as forms of punishment. Based on the findings of the comparative study the researchers concluded that:

- violence against women is closely associated with exposure to violence during childhood
- exposure to violence against one’s mother/stepmother and direct experiences of physical and sexual abuse in childhood increase the risk of women experiencing violence later in life
- children living in households where intimate partner violence occurs are punished with harsher disciplinary practices
- increased risk of violence later in life is only one of the many negative health and social consequences experienced by children of women who experience abuse
They recommended in terms of the policy implications of the findings that:

- greater effort must be made to address violence against women and violence against children in an integrated way

- prenatal and paediatric health services should consider screening women for intimate partner violence and the possibility of offering parenting classes to both parents

- health services providing care to women who experience violence should assess the well-being of children and take steps to provide them with appropriate care

- services providing care to children who are victims of abuse should take steps to assess possible intimate partner violence at home and take appropriate action

**Strengthening the Legal Framework: Improving Access to Justice**

“Legal Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean: The Legislative and Policy Reform Implications”

(Ms. Jacqueline Sealy-Burke – Director, Legal Aid and Counselling Clinic, Grenada)

Ms Sealy-Burke’s presentation began by pointing to the need to utilise both criminal law and civil law in making effective responses to the challenges of CSA. Criminal law was deemed important for reinforcing notions of accountability and punishment, while civil law could be drawn on to protect and rehabilitate children. In the context of criminal law in the region there were some problems highlighted that relate to the substantive law (the black letter law) and others that were more procedural in nature. Problems linked to the substantive law included limitation requirements, retention of inappropriate defences, inherent gender biases, and unnecessary restriction in the scope of some offences.

From the perspective of procedural law, the challenges related to lack of child-friendly procedures, corroboration warnings, delays (preliminary inquiries vs. committal hearings), “cheque book” settlements, inadequate use of bail hearings, and policing and prosecutorial responses. In the context of civil law in the region, there were some problems that relate to the lack of specific child-protection legislation, infrequent use of domestic violence legislation on behalf of children, and uncertainty of the law in relation to a minor’s access to reproductive health care and services.
Various legislative and policy reforms were recommended to enhance child protection. Recommended legislative reforms include the removal of limitation periods, removal of inappropriate defences, making all relevant offences gender neutral, addressing sentencing, removing the corroboration requirement, codifying the law on the irrelevance of the victim’s sexual history, and removal of the preliminary inquiry. Recommended policy reforms include improving capacity building through training, creating specialised units, facilitating more coordinated systematic responses, and sustaining the implementation process.

“The Role of the Judiciary in Enforcing the Protection of Women and Children”

(Mr. Charles Leacock, Q.C. – Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbados)

This presentation examined the UN Convention on the Elimination of the All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the role of the judiciary in enforcing the protection of women and children and the punishment of serious violations of abuse and neglect. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child received focus, as did the obligations imposed on State Parties; for Barbados, namely – protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation and to fully participate in family, social and cultural life.

The presentation called for international condemnation of Female Genital Mutilation, citing cases from the United Kingdom, where the Home Office in England estimated some 100-140 million women and girls worldwide are currently living with the consequences of Female Genital Mutilation.

The presentation also examined the Caribbean reality of sexual abuse of children through instrumental approaches including culture, inadequate laws and lax enforcement of domestic violence orders and religion. Several recommendations were put forward including:

- full accession and ratification of the CEDAW and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by all States
- render compellable and competent all witnesses in gender violence cases
- medical and psychological evaluation should be mandatory in all gender violence cases
- female genital mutilation should be criminalised and outlawed in all countries
Integrated Responses to the Management and Prevention of CSA: Multi-Sectoral Approaches to Gender-Based Violence

“The Role of the Health System in the Management and Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse”

(Dr. Jasmine Ramcharan – Consultant Paediatrician and Lecturer in Paedics, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago)

Dr. Ramcharan focussed on the different ways in which the health system was critical to making an effective and timely response to the challenges of preventing and managing CSA. She argued that the role of the health system in child protection went beyond the mere provision of medical services. It also included working collaboratively with other child protection agencies and partners in order to create an integrated child protection system, thereby producing better results for children in terms of identifying, assessing, treating and preventing CSA. In this way, physicians, nurses and other medical personnel could play a major role in the child protection system in every community.

The presentation also examined in detail the various ways in which the health system, institutions and personnel could undertake risk assessment, identification and treatment of CSA using best practices and procedures. It was recommended that best results could be achieved through:

- a child-centred multidisciplinary approach
- standardised protocols (examination of documentation)
- sensitisation of health care workers
- liaison with education, police, legal, social services
- establishment of places of safety
- on-going training for all categories of staff
- “training of trainers” in the management of CSA (having a cadre of trained personnel)
- advent of a Children’s Authority
- setting up of child assessment centres which are child-friendly and non-threatening, and which offer all services under one roof as well as emphasise the preservation of confidentiality

“The Role of the Education System”

(Ms. Judith Alpuche – Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation, Belize)

In her discussion Ms. Alpuche argued that the education system was a critical component of the child protection system, even though schools and other education institutions at times did not view themselves in
this manner. Schools and education institutions have an important role to play in the prevention and detection of abuse, as well as in areas of intervention and therapeutic responses. She noted that in the area of prevention it was important to utilise the curriculum to provide key information, skills and attitudes to children, in order to safeguard against sexual abuse. Information on children’s rights, definitions of child abuse and ways children can learn to protect themselves may all be imparted through the curriculum. In this regard the Health and Family Life curriculum was critical. Schools were encouraged to support and develop initiatives which linked at-risk children to services such as truancy programmes and school feeding programmes. Parent and Teacher Associations were suggested as vehicles for sharing parenting education in general and providing information on child abuse.

Schools were also encouraged to develop and adhere to policies for screening teachers and other persons who come in contact with children. The fact that children spend so much time within the educational setting provided great scope for detection of child sexual abuse; it is therefore important for schools to develop policies and provide an enabling environment that made children feel safe enough to disclose instances of abuse. As part of this initiative schools need to be more child friendly, corporal punishment should be abolished, and schools should abolish policies that penalise sexually active children.

Mandatory reporting provisions also need to be developed for schools. In the area of intervention, teachers, educators and school mental health professionals need to be trained to function as interdisciplinary teams. There should be special emphasis on monitoring of child sexual abuse for hard-to-reach or rural areas and generally, educators need to be provided with more training and support to achieve the desired outcomes.

Efforts are already on the way in Belize to implement many of the above recommendations, including better coordination between school and social services, curriculum reforms in HFLE, development of mandatory reporting laws and child protection protocols, as well as the development of early detection systems in primary schools.

“The Role of the Social Welfare System”

(Ms. Joan Crawford – Director, Child Care Board, Barbados)

Ms. Crawford analysed the role of the social welfare system in the management and prevention of CSA and gave an overview of the agencies involved within this system and their roles in responding to the scourge. She also discussed some of the challenges encountered with providing that response.

She argued that the social welfare system is not a single entity, but rather a group of services designed to promote the well-being of children by ensuring safety, achieving permanency, and strengthening families to successfully care for their children. In essence, the social welfare system provides a safety net for vulnerable children and families and includes the government’s child protection agency, by
whatever name it is called. In Barbados this includes the Child Care Board, as well as law enforcement, the legal and judicial system, health care providers including mental health providers, substitute care providers or foster parents, and community supports including the educational system.

Ms. Crawford noted that in order for this multi-disciplinary system to work harmoniously for the benefit of children who have been abused, all agencies and their representatives must internalise and apply the concept that the management of CSA, like all forms of child abuse and neglect, is an integrated one. As such all resources must be harnessed collaboratively if the child is to receive optimum care and the level of risk reduced while protection is increased. She concluded that the management of CSA requires that all agencies and professionals:

- be alert and knowledgeable to potential indicators of abuse or neglect
- be alert to the risks that individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children
- share and analyse information so that an assessment can be made of the child’s needs and circumstances
- contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare
- take part in regularly reviewing the outcomes for the child against specific plans
- work co-operatively with parents, unless this is inconsistent with ensuring the child’s safety

The Fight against Child Sexual Abuse – a Collaborative Effort

“Working with Families and Communities in CSA as Part of a Child Protection System”
(Mrs. Kim Simplis-Barrow – Special Envoy for Women and Children, Belize)

Mrs Simplis-Barrow contended that families and communities as a whole have a responsibility for the well-being of children. They are the first line of protection in the fight against CSA. In many Caribbean countries, including Belize, this responsibility is enshrined in law. Belize’s mandatory reporting legislation legally obligates parents and guardians to report suspected child abuse and considers their delay or inaction to be an offence. A moral responsibility is placed on members of the public to do the same.

Statistics in Belize show that children are being violated not by strangers, but by people they know. Even worse, they are being violated by those who have a legal and moral obligation to protect them. In 2011, reports of CSA named fathers and stepfathers as the alleged perpetrators in over 50% of the cases. Likewise in reported cases
of commercial sexual exploitation of children, mothers were shown to be complicit in the majority of cases of exploitation of their daughters. This situation makes it abundantly clear that any successful attempt at fighting the scourge of sexual abuse and exploitation means that families and communities on a whole must be engaged. They must be educated about CSA and their roles and responsibilities in protecting their children.

Good parenting education programmes that promote positive parent-child interactions are a must in any comprehensive framework of response to CSA. Parents need to be provided with the information to form the basis of such talks; therefore, child abuse prevention information needs to be widely available. Public education campaigns are a must and should shine a light on those violations that everyone knows about, but no one wants to talk about. These campaigns should aim at challenging the gender dynamics, cultural norms and values that fuel CSA and exploitation. Communities need to understand and accept that CSA and exploitation are not neighbourhood scandal or fodder for juicy gossip that casts the child victim as promiscuous, but is a violation that may have life-long negative effects, and that in the majority of cases, imperfect laws notwithstanding, it constitutes a serious criminal offense.

The children themselves cannot be forgotten. They need to be empowered with information to assist in their own protection. Women and mothers also constitute another key group in the fight against CSA. Women are oftentimes complicit in these situations. They can be perpetrators as well, but oftentimes are in a facilitating role. If fathers and stepfathers are perpetrators, then the mothers are often somewhere in the mix. Women need to be supported and empowered to play the important role of protector in these situations.

A critical component of the conference was working group discussions about the various aspects of child sexual abuse. These group meetings focused on four main areas:

- Legal, Policy and Regulatory Systems
- Systems and Institutional Reform
- Societal Behavioural Change
- Gender and Child Sexual Abuse

Participants were challenged to thoroughly examine the various themes and topics and to develop solutions in the form of clear time-bound (by the end of 2015, or before if possible) implementable strategies and actions. The outcomes of these deliberations are reflected in the tables below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>MEASURABLE INDICATORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Improve legal protection for children against CSA and enhance capacity to prosecute offenders through review of substantive laws</td>
<td>Action (1) Reconcile age limits to bring coherence, and consistency within civil, criminal and social arenas by: 1. increasing to 18 years of age the legal protections from all forms of sexual abuse 2. review the age of consent and reconcile through drafting to better rationalise and standardise ages between the various Acts</td>
<td>- The primary national child protection agency/agencies (e.g. children services/child care boards)  - Legal departments/Attorney General’s office  - International agencies</td>
<td>- Child Act is passed in national Parliaments - Appropriate agencies complete internal policies and regulations to implement the law.</td>
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<td>Action (2) Draw on Domestic Violence legislation more in relation to the protection of children (e.g. consider removal of alleged perpetrators rather than children, wherever possible)</td>
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<td>Action (3) Remove all gender bias from legislation and ensure that no sexual offences are gender specific</td>
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<td>Action (4) Expand on types of offences as well as definitions of existing offences. (Need to include new offences, e.g. cyber crimes and expand on definition of sexual abuse)</td>
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<td>Action (5) Provide defences consistent with best practices. (Abolish old defences such as the “honest belief principle”, and remove statute of limitation)</td>
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Legal, Policy and Regulatory Systems

(The main issues, challenges, strategies and way forward with respect to CSA as they relate to the framework for law and policy reforms and the administration of justice.)

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<tr>
<td>Action (6) Clarify and increase weight of sentences by:</td>
<td>• clarifying the appropriate use of the charge of “sex with a minor and rape of a child” • clarifying sentences for rape and other sexual offences by review of disparities in sentences • clarifying minimum and maximum sentences to send a strong signal on abhorrence of sexual abuse • increasing sentencing time • codifying the use of victim impact statements</td>
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<td>Action (7) Improve bail conditions:</td>
<td>• ensure there are conditions that prohibit the offender from being near the alleged victim</td>
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<td>Action (8) Provide clear direction on children as sex offenders:</td>
<td>• the law should provide for special consideration</td>
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<td>Action (9) Codification of laws:</td>
<td>• Codify the age of consent to sexual and reproductive health • Provide for mandatory reporting of abuse, defining who is the reporter and to whom reports should be made, and provide sanctions etc.</td>
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<td>Action (10) Ensure adherence to the principle of Law Reform:</td>
<td>• harmonise legislation vis-a-vis the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant international standards</td>
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### Legal, Policy and Regulatory Systems

(The main issues, challenges, strategies and way forward with respect to CSA as they relate to the framework for law and policy reforms and the administration of justice.)

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</table>
| (2) Improve legal protection for children against CSA and enhance capacity to prosecute offenders through review of Procedural Law | Action (1) Update corroboration requirements:  
- Remove corroboration requirements in sex offences cases; remove time limits; and address delays  
- Codify law to eliminate the admission of evidence on sexual history of complainants  
Action (2) Remove preliminary inquiries and institute paper committals  
Action (3) Improve institutional case management involving child victims to expedite the case:  
- Ensure the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) prioritises all cases involving children  
- Provide appropriate support for victims at all stages  
Action (4) Provide for child-friendly courts and procedures:  
- Examine further, through a technical committee, the options available for prosecuting offenders of CSA  
- Provide for more child-friendly settings, bearing in mind children’s needs and the trauma of coming to court; court officials and physical settings should be adjusted to make less intimidating, and provide for evidence procedures, such as video link, and screens  
- Investigative practices and court proceedings should employ child-friendly tone and use of language  
- Seek to find a balance between the principle of compellability of witness and the best interest of the child | - The primary national child protection agency/agencies (e.g. children services/child care boards)  
- Legal departments/Attorney General’s office  
- International agencies | - Child Act is passed in national Parliaments  
- Appropriate agencies complete internal policies and regulations to implement the law. |
**Legal, Policy and Regulatory Systems**

(The main issues, challenges, strategies and way forward with respect to CSA as they relate to the framework for law and policy reforms and the administration of justice.)

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</table>
| 2. Enhance protection for children against CSA, and improve responses to CSA through review of policies | Action (1) Strengthen capacity building, training and protocols:  
- Make capacity building an ongoing process involving training of all stakeholders  
- Ensure that training devised for police and prosecutors under the state accountability project (UN Women) is rolled out in all countries across the region  
- Create protocols for effective inter-agency collaboration. Existing protocols should be built on and shared among jurisdictions  
- Establish minimum qualifications and training for judicial officers/key stakeholders  
- Ensure that supporting infrastructure is put in place (foster care, core places of safety, specialised units, etc)  
- Ensure there are sufficient resources and staff  
- Coordinate court proceedings and share information  
- Train in both legal and non-legal areas  
- Provide adequate compensatory packages | - Ministries and departments with responsibility for child protection  
- International agencies | - No. of critical child protection personnel (police, social workers etc) trained and certified  
- No. of child protection/child abuse management protocols established |
## Systems and Institutional Reform

(The main issues, challenges, strategies and way forward in relation to CSA as they impact on mandatory reporting protocols, systems alignment, institutional capacity strengthening, technology, human resources etc.)

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<tr>
<td>1. Through legal and institutional reforms, strengthen inclusive child protection systems for prevention and child-friendly reporting and enforcement mechanisms to CSA</td>
<td>Align and harmonise administrative procedures and mechanisms to ensure multi-disciplinary responses to CSA equitability (i.e. Mandatory Reporting Act/Regulation/Child Protection Act) Develop a national inclusive child protection framework, policy and protocols for the prevention, early identification, reporting and intervention to address CSA Establish a multi-disciplinary forum/committee to ensure the cooperation and coordination, development, monitoring and review of the inclusive child-protection policy and programmes within and across government agencies Ensure the child-protection roles and responsibilities of each agency and their expected alignment with each other are fully articulated within policy and protocols</td>
<td>- The primary national child protection agency (e.g. children services/child care boards - International agencies - National government leadership</td>
<td>% improvement in timeliness and responsiveness % improvement in accessibility/increase in persons accessing child sexual abuse services % of staff trained and certified</td>
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<td>2. Strengthening the capacity for responding to all CSA allegations by first responder and/or child protection agency</td>
<td>Develop comprehensive procedures for the mandatory reporting of CSA, stipulating who is mandated to report it based on the principle of the best interest of the child Ensure the mandatory reporting systems include automatic therapeutic assessment and intervention following investigations Establish a multi-disciplinary team (or Child Protection Agency) to strengthen responsive and timely investigation and case management into CSA cases (i.e. prosecutors, social workers, police, etc.)</td>
<td>- The primary national child protection agency (e.g. children services/child care boards - International agencies - National government leadership</td>
<td>% improvement in timeliness and responsiveness % improvement in accessibility/increase in persons accessing child sexual abuse services % of staff trained and certified</td>
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### Systems and Institutional Reform

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| **3. Strengthen institutional capacity and ensure a requisite level of human and financial resources allocated to the inclusive child protection system to effectively respond CSA** | Allocate technical, financial and other resources to ensure an effective multi-disciplinary response. Institutionalise training for CSA for all key professionals (i.e. in teacher training colleges, police academy, legal practitioner, schools/universities, etc.). Develop mechanisms to ensure timely and quality child-friendly follow-up to CSA complaints by reducing opportunities for the potentially high attrition rate between first report of CSA | - The primary national child protection agency (e.g. children services/child care boards)
- International agencies
- National government leadership | % improvement in timeliness and responsiveness
% improvement in accessibility/increase in persons accessing child sexual abuse services
% of staff trained and certified
% of national/ministerial/department budget targeting child sexual abuse/child abuse |
| **4. Establish mechanisms for up-to-date, disaggregated, reliable and ethically sound data for continuous improvement of programmes, systems and responses for the prevention of CSA** | Develop and strengthen national and regional CSA data collection systems, harmonised between multi-disciplinary stakeholders. Identify harmonised regional and national indicators | No. of training workshops conducted
No. of child protection workers trained and certified
Codification and harmonisation of national/regional indicators for CSA | No. and frequency of high quality national and regional CSA statistical and analytical reports produced |
Societal and Behavioural Change

(The main issues, challenges, strategies and way forward in relation to CSA as they impact on mobilising communities against sexual abuse against girls and boys, the role of the media as well as data collection, sharing and analysis etc.)

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| (1) Carry out comprehensive and in-depth gender-sensitive research to inform a knowledge-based communication for behaviour change strategy with integrated monitoring and evaluation frameworks | **Action 1:** Mobilising communities against sexual abuse against girls and boys (recognising the diversity of communities and their specific needs and histories):  
- Implement creative and innovative gender-sensitive education and training programmes driven by the diverse interest and needs of each community  
- Develop and implement specific strategies aimed at facilitating men’s involvement in awareness-building and training programmes | • The primary national child protection agency (e.g. children services/child care boards)  
• International agencies  
• National statistical offices  
• National government leadership | • Raised profile of CSA in public debate and media  
• Changed opinions among boys and girls, men and women, and general public  
• Change in public and private rhetoric re. CSA |

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</table>
| (2) Work with religious institutions, groups and movements:  
- Work with religious organisations to develop a common language and shared understanding of issues related to CSA  
- Work with religious organisations to develop a protocol to respond to disclosure by survivors and perpetrators – based on agreed minimum standards  
- Encourage religious organisations to develop internal protocols to address CSA among their leaders  
- Religious organisations should work with professionals of relevant agencies to establish support groups for survivors among their membership | **Action 2:** Work with religious institutions, groups and movements:  
- Work with religious organisations to develop a common language and shared understanding of issues related to CSA  
- Work with religious organisations to develop a protocol to respond to disclosure by survivors and perpetrators – based on agreed minimum standards  
- Encourage religious organisations to develop internal protocols to address CSA among their leaders  
- Religious organisations should work with professionals of relevant agencies to establish support groups for survivors among their membership | • The primary national child protection agency (e.g. children services/child care boards)  
• International agencies  
• National statistical offices  
• National government leadership | • Raised profile of CSA in public debate and media  
• Changed opinions among boys and girls, men and women, and general public  
• Change in public and private rhetoric re. CSA |

**Societal and Behavioural Change**

(The main issues, challenges, strategies and way forward in relation to CSA as they impact on mobilising communities against sexual)

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| **Action 3**: More effective use of the Media: | - Collaborate with media to develop informed, ethical and responsible reporting by:  
  (a) Targeting media managers, editors, reporters and photographers in training and awareness-building programmes  
  (b) Utilising UNICEF business and children’s rights principles in training programmes with media managers | | |
| **Action 4**: More effective data collection and use: | - Carry out baseline prevalence data in all countries, using a suitable methodology for this subject matter  
  - Establish national repositories of data and information on CSA to be linked at regional level  
  - Make all data available in a user-friendly manner for use by diverse stakeholders  
  - Adopt varied methods of data collection including ethnographic and qualitative approaches  
  - Bring together (with help of UN Agencies) information on best practices and lessons learned from other campaigns (e.g. HIV) and non-Caribbean contexts | | |
Gender and Child Sexual Abuse
(The main issues, challenges, strategies and way forward in relation to CSA as they relate to making the connection, gender issues, culture, stereotypes, roles, behaviours, attitudes, link with violence against women, and working with men and boys.)

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<tr>
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</table>
| 1. To eliminate all forms of sexual violence against girls and boys | **Action (1)** Targeted public education campaigns utilising traditional and social media to raise awareness and promote a culture of zero tolerance against CSA/violence  
   1. Example - education of specified populations such as schools, faith-based organisations, communities, families, professional associations, medical personnel, police and protective services, sports and leisure organisations, judicial services, the media and the | • The primary national child protection agency (e.g. children services/child care boards  
   • International agencies  
   • National government leadership | • Raised profile of gender dimensions CSA in public debate and media  
   • Changed opinions among boys and girls, men and women and general public  
   • Change in public and private rhetoric about CSA, and the gender implications |
|  | **Action (2)** Lobby political leaders and policy makers to reform laws and related policies | | |
|  | **Action (3)** Mandatory participatory universal sex and sexuality education in schools by trained competent personnel | | |
| 2. To provide comprehensive multi-sectoral effective care and support services for boys and girls affected by CSA/sexual violence | **Action (1)** Create safe spaces for reporting | • The primary national child protection agency (e.g. children services/child care boards  
   • International agencies  
   • National government leadership | • Raised profile of gender dimensions CSA in public debate and media  
   • Changed opinions among boys and girls, men and women and general public  
   • Change in public and private rhetoric about CSA, and the gender implications |
|  | **Action (2)** Make all services including judicial, health, education and social services child friendly | | |
|  | **Action (3)** Institute mandatory reporting with related protocols, to guide judicial officers and care providers | | |
| 3. To collect multi-disciplinary reliable sex disaggregated data and conduct gender analysis (following ethical protocols) to better understand the issues to inform related programming | **Action (1)** Develop and strengthen national and regional CSA data collection systems, harmonised between multi-disciplinary stakeholders | • The primary national child protection agency (e.g. children services/child care boards  
   • International agencies  
   • National government leadership | • No. and frequency of high quality national and regional CSA statistical and analytical reports produced |
|  | **Action (2)** Identify harmonised regional and national indicators | | |
| 4. To promote cultures and behaviours which ensure the protection of the rights of boys and girls | **Action (1)** Launch media and community mobilisation campaigns | • The primary national child protection agency (e.g. children services/child care boards  
   • International agencies  
   • National government leadership | • Raised profile of gender dimensions CSA in public debate and media  
   • Changed opinions among boys and girls, men and women and general public  
   • Change in public and private rhetoric about CSA, and the gender implications |
|  | **Action (2)** Launch education campaigns in schools and churches, etc. | | |

Combating Sexual Violence
Any form of abuse against children represents an indictment on a society and a threat to the future viability of that society. Yet for the most part there remains widespread sexual abuse of children across the Caribbean. It is arguable that despite the enactment of laws and other policy measures, CSA remains as rampant today as it was a decade or more ago. For this reason the conference on combating sexual violence against children was an important and timely achievement, and a reminder that much more needs to be done to eradicate the problem. The conference solidified previous recent efforts by national child protection agencies, governments and CARICOM, aimed at tackling a phenomenon which has severely damaged the lives and prospects of numerous girls and boys.

Obstacles to successful implementation of the conference declaration and plan of action are no doubt many. However, as Ambassador Paul Brummel, the British High Commissioner advised participants, there is also a certainty that these can be effectively tackled through national determination, leadership and enhanced regional coordination. Success will require a greater commitment of financial, technical and human resources, as well as a better understanding of the causes, nature, characteristics and dynamics of CSA in the specific contexts of the region. Likewise, systematic monitoring and evaluation of prevention and therapeutic interventions will be necessary to obtain an accurate picture of which policies, strategies, programmes and actions work, and which ones do not, or need to be modified. Given the chronic and widespread nature of the problem of sexual violence against children in the Caribbean the region’s response must also of necessity, be comprehensive and sustained over the long term.
Appendix 1:
The Bridgetown Declaration and Agenda for Action to Combat Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean

The Bridgetown Declaration and Agenda for Action to Combat Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean

Adopted at:
Conference on Combatting Sexual Violence against Children in the Caribbean
held in Bridgetown, Barbados
20-21 November 2012.

Declaration

We, the participants at the Bridgetown Conference on Combating Sexual Violence Against Children in the Caribbean, representing governments, non-governmental organisations, human rights institutions, the private sector, religious institutions and leaders, researchers and academics, law enforcement, and the legal community, gathered in Bridgetown Barbados 20-21 November 2012, to review progress made since the UN Study on Violence Against Children (UNSVAC) 2006 to identify lessons learnt and key challenges, hereby commit ourselves to the rigorous implementation of the goals and targets contained in this Declaration and Agenda for Action to combat sexual abuse of girls and of boys in the Caribbean and ensure those who have fallen victim to sexual abuse receive the highest quality and fullest possible support and care, in a timely manner, in accordance with the CRC and its Optional Protocols,

Recognising that the sexual abuse of girls and of boys is an individual, family, community, national, regional and global problem, we declare that decisive coordinated action is required at all levels to end this scourge on our societies,

We further recognise that all children deserve to be fully protected from any and all forms of violence including sexual abuse, as this represents a violation of their rights,

We affirm that there can be no excuse and no justification for the sexual abuse of girls and boys. We recognise that many factors including poverty, discrimination, gender biases, illicit use of new technologies and social media, adult responsibility, irresponsibility, harmful cultural and traditional practices, ignorance of the impact of sexual abuse on the victim, and gender power differentials all play a part in driving this phenomenon by increasing children’s, especially girls’, vulnerability to sexual abuse,
We further affirm that the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), to which all CARICOM Member States and associate members are signatories, as well as other relevant human rights instruments, together constitute the standard for protecting children from violence and sexual abuse. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that in undertaking any action the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration and further, that the views of children should be valued and taken into consideration in the formulation and implementation of policies and actions on their behalf.

We further acknowledge and are concerned that efforts to prevent and stop the sexual abuse of children are undermined by a range of factors including deficiencies in the law, lax enforcement of the law, corruption and collusion, theological interpretations, gender norms and power relations, political interference, a culture of secrecy and silence, inadequate public education and sensitisation, lack of political will, poor coordination among child protection agencies, and a lack of multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approaches to identifying and preventing the sexual abuse of children.

We share the grave concern of the Twenty-Third Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD XX111) about the alarming prevalence of sexual abuse of children in the Caribbean Region, and welcome the promises and commitments made by that COHSOD to stop this harmful phenomenon.

We likewise endorse the view expressed in the Declaration of The Young Persons of the Caribbean, in Kingston Jamaica on 15 May 2012, that violence against children is a norm or tradition in the region that is being passed on to generations, and therefore drastic preventive actions need to be adopted.

Taking into account the need to have a comprehensive strategy for preventing and stopping the sexual abuse of the girl child and the boy child, we reaffirm that stopping this gross violation of Human Rights requires a shared responsibility and sustained commitment by all of us. Therefore, we, the participants of this Bridgetown Conference hereby agree to and recommend the following Agenda for Action as a means of accelerating and intensifying efforts against the sexual abuse of both girls and boys in the Caribbean and guaranteeing that the mandatory reporting and follow-up of child sexual abuse by all professionals working with children is fully realised in all our countries by the year 2015.
Agenda for Action against the Sexual Abuse of Children

We call upon Caribbean Governments, with the help of other stakeholders, including civil society (such as non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations and faith-based organisations), the private sector, children and young people and international organisations to:

1. Ratify and implement all key international child protection instruments, including the CRC Optional Protocols (and the CEDAW Protocols), relating to all forms of violence against children;

2. Revise and harmonise national legislations with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international child protection instruments, taking into account the General Comments and the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW Committee;

3. Vigorously pursue the implementation and enforcement of child-friendly policies and laws aimed at preventing the sexual abuse of children and bringing to justice the perpetrators while ensuring that investigations and criminal and other legal proceedings are treated as urgent priorities;

4. Undertake initiatives which promote a cultures of zero tolerance for sexual violence against girls and boys aimed at national and regional decision makers on the range of issues related to the sexual abuse of children;

5. Undertake public awareness-raising and social mobilisation initiatives aimed specifically at all groups within society – boys, girls, men and women, including persons with disabilities, opinion leaders, families, communities – on the various issues related to the sexual abuse of children;

6. Develop, in collaboration with parents and other relevant stakeholders, specially-designed participatory sexual education programmes aimed at enabling boys and girls to better protect and defend themselves against sexual abuse;

7. Develop programmes to educate and support parents to carry out their roles and responsibilities in relation to the protection of their children;

8. Utilise resources to significantly strengthen national and regional frameworks, national statistical offices, mechanisms and procedures for the collection, analysis and dissemination of both qualitative and quantitative data on the sexual abuse of children;

9. Provide adequate human, financial and technical resources to develop and implement a national programme of action against the sexual abuse of children;
10. Enhance inter-ministerial coordination and mechanisms within the context of a national programme of action against the sexual abuse of children in order to better respond to the multi-dimensional and complex nature of preventing and responding to child sexual abuse;

11. Initiate and/or strengthen research aimed at understanding the gendered social and cultural context of child sexual abuse in the Caribbean;

12. Encourage the development of national and regional civil society networks aimed at combating the problem of child sexual abuse;

13. Encourage governments to develop mechanisms to ensure safety and confidentiality of those disclosing and/or reporting cases of child sexual abuse;

14. Encourage governments to strengthen national laws and policies and promote standards to ensure ethical reporting of cases of child sexual abuse;

15. Establish policies, mechanisms and programmes for victims of child sexual abuse and their families to be able to access, free of charge and in a timely manner, high quality social, medical, and psychological services to facilitate the victim’s treatment and re-integration into the family, school and community;

16. Encourage the inclusion of child sexual abuse on the agenda of Ministries of Health, Education, and Justice;

17. Create a holistic framework and approach to combating child sexual abuse on the internet which encourages governments to share information on child sexual abuse using the internet, and by facilitating cross-border investigations and cooperation on all aspects of preventing the sexual abuse of children and the prosecution of perpetrators;

18. Develop and implement awareness-raising strategies of protection measures and the rights of children among persons in such areas as education, health, social protection, and religion, and in the fields of judicial and law enforcement, sports, culture and leisure, who come into contact with children on a regular basis;

19. Implement the XX111 COHSOD call for the creation of safe places in which victims and others affected are free to report and speak out against the sexual abuse of children without fear of recrimination;

20. Consolidate community, national and regional data bases and research on all forms of violence against children for the purpose of supporting advocacy initiatives and informing policy decisions and resource mobilisation to prevent violence against children, and to support the rights of children as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
21. Establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and strategies, with specific indicators for measuring performance and progress, and for the sharing of best practices and lessons learned, in order to better prevent the sexual abuse of children;

22. Adopt measures, such as interagency protocols, to ensure that there is effective coordination and cooperation at the community, national and regional levels among the various child protection entities with key responsibilities for combating sexual violence against children, and for managing the treatment and safe re-integration of victims of sexual violence;

23. Stipulate that every country establish a national hotline/help line utilising telephone and internet technologies to facilitate confidential reporting of cases of child sexual abuse, and to provide advice to callers, including victims of sexual violence;

24. In keeping with their evolving capacity, ensure and encourage the active participation of children in the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive policies, programmes and activities aimed at preventing the sexual abuse of children;

25. Encourage the media to become active partners in the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive policies, programmes and activities aimed at preventing the sexual abuse of children;

26. Establish support services for survivors and aid rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders with a view to breaking the cycle of violence;

27. Encourage the private sector to assist with the provision of funding and other forms of support for civil society (including non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, and faith-based organisations) programmes and activities aimed at combating sexual and other forms of violence against children;

28. Institute the required national legislation and policies specifying the minimum quality standards for the short and long-term treatment of victims of sexual violence, and ensure that these are standardised and harmonised at the regional level.

We, the participants of this Conference on Combating Sexual Violence Against Children in the Caribbean, Bridgetown, Barbados, 20-21 November 2012, respectfully request the Secretary General of CARICOM, Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, to present the results of this forum to the CARICOM Heads of Government for consideration and follow-up action.

Bridgetown, Barbados
21 November 2012
Appendix 2: Conference Agenda

“COMBATTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN THE CARIBBEAN: FROM ISOLATED ACTIONS TO INTEGRATED STRATEGIES”
Hilton Barbados Resort
20-21 November, 2012

DAY ONE
Tuesday, 21 November, 2012

8:30 – 9:00  Registration
9:00 - 10:00  Opening Ceremony

CHAIR – Ms. Joan Crawford (Director – Child Care Board, Barbados)

• Welcome Remarks
  - Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough – UN Resident Coordinator, Barbados and the OECS
  - Ambassador Irwin LaRocque – Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
  - Hon. Stephen Lashley – Minister of Family, Culture, Sports and Youth, Barbados

• Cultural Performance
  - Grantley Prescod Primary School

• Key Note Speaker
  - Mr. Bernt Aasen – Regional Director, UNICEF The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office, Panama

1. Vote of Thanks
  - Ms. Joan French – Regional Programme Director a.i., Caribbean Office, UN Women

10:00 – 10:20  Refreshments
10:20 – 11:45  Session 1 – Panel Discussion on Sexual Violence Against Girls and Boys in the Caribbean: Painting the Picture

CHAIR – Ms. Khin-Sandi Lwin (Representative, UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area)

- Sexual Abuse against Girls and Boys in the Caribbean
  - Ms. Nadine Perrault – Senior Advisor Child Protection, UNICEF The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office, Panama

- Perceptions and Opinions on Children Sexual Abuse in the Eastern Caribbean
  - Dr. Adele Jones – Professor of Childhood Studies, University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom

- Discussion

11:45 – 13:00  Session 2 – Panel Discussion on the Issue of Data

CHAIR – Hon. Alvina Reynolds (Minister of Human and Family Services, Saint Lucia)

- Sexual Violence Against Girls and Boys: The International Data Conundrum
  - Ms. Claudia Cappa, Ph.D. – Statistics and Monitoring Specialist, Division of Policy and Strategy, UNICEF New York

- A comparative analysis of data on violence against women and girls for 12 countries in the Caribbean
  - Dr. Gerry Eijkemans – PAHO/WHO Representative, Bahamas

- Discussion

13:00 – 14:00  Lunch
14:00 – 15:30  Session 3 – Panel Discussion on Strengthening the Legal Framework: Improving Access to Justice

CHAIR – Hon. Frederick Stephenson (Minister of National Mobilisation, St. Vincent and the Grenadines)

• Legal Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean: The Legislative and Policy Reform Implications
  - Ms. Jacqueline Sealy-Burke – Director, Legal Aid and Counselling Clinic, Grenada
  - Mr. Charles Leacock, Q.C. – Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbados

  • Discussion

15:30 – 15:45  Coffee Break

15:45 – 17:30 Session 4 – Panel Discussion on Integrated Responses to the Management and Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse: Multi-Sectoral Approaches to Gender-based Violence

CHAIR – Hon. Claudia Groome-Duke (Secretary of Health and Social Services, Tobago House of Assembly)

• The Role of the Health System
  - Dr. Jasmine Ramcharan – Consultant Paediatrician and Lecturer in Paediatrics, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago

• The Role of the Education System
  – Ms. Judith Alpuche – Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation (MOHDSTPA), Belize

• The Role of the Social Welfare System
  – Ms. Joan Crawford – Director, Child Care Board, Barbados

• Discussion

17:30 – 18:30      Special Event on the Breaking the Silence Initiative

(Cocktail Reception hosted by the Government of Barbados)
DAY TWO
Wednesday, 22 November, 2012

PREVENTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

9:00 – 10:10  Session 5 – Presentation on Working with Families and Communities in Child Sexual Abuse as part of a Child Protection System

CHAIR – Hon. Colin Riley (Ministry of Community Development, Montserrat)

• Working with Families and Communities in Child Sexual Abuse as part of a Child Protection System
  - Mrs. Kim Simplis-Barrow – Special Envoy for Women and Children, Belize

• Discussion

10:10 – 10:30  Coffee Break

10:30 – 13:00  Session 6 – Working Groups

The following working groups will outline actions and targets to be achieved by Caribbean countries to ensure the prevention, and enforcement, of mandatory reporting and effective management of sexual abuse against girls and boys:

• Group I – Legal, Policy and Regulatory Systems
  (Facilitator: Ms. Hazel Thompson Ahye – Legal Consultant, Trinidad and Tobago)
  - Framework for law and policy reforms and Administration of Justice

• Group II – Systems and Institutional Reform
  (Facilitator: Ms. Ena Trotman Jemmott – Development Consultant, Barbados)
  - Mandatory reporting protocols
  - Systems alignment
  - Institutional Capacity Strengthening (Technology, Human Resource, etc)
  - Data collection, Sharing and Analysis
• **Group III – Societal Behavioural Change**  
  *(Facilitator: Professor Rhoda Reddock – Vice Principal, UWI, St. Augustine)*  
  - Mobilising communities against sexual abuse against girls and boys  
  - How to work with faith-based organisations  
  - The role of the media  
  - Data collection, sharing and analysis

• **Group IV – Gender and Child Sexual Abuse**  
  *(Facilitator: Dr. Christine Barrow – Professor Emerita, University of the West Indies, Barbados)*  
  Making the connection  
  - Gender issues (culture, stereotypes, roles, behaviours, attitudes)  
  - The role of women’s organisations and Gender Machinery  
  - The link with violence against women  
  - Working with men and boys

13:00 – 14:00 **Lunch**

14:00 – 15:45 **Session 7 – Plenary**

CHAIR – Dr. Morella Joseph (Programme Manager, Human Resource Development, CARICOM Secretariat)  
- Presentation of Group Reports and Discussion  
- Review of draft “The Bridgetown Declaration and Agenda for Action to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Abuse Against Girls and Boys”

15:45 – 16:00 **Coffee Break**

16:00 – 16:30 **Closing Ceremony**

CHAIR – Professor Rhoda Reddock (Vice Principal, UWI, St. Augustine)  
- Handing over of “The Bridgetown Declaration and Agenda for Action to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Abuse Against Girls and Boys”

• **Concluding Remarks**  
  - **H.E. Paul Brummel** – High Commissioner of United Kingdom on behalf of Development Partners  
  - **Ms. Khin-Sandi Lwin** – Representative, UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area  
  - **Hon. Stephen Lashley** – Minister of Family, Culture, Sports and Youth, Barbados
Appendix 3: Welcome Remarks – Ms Michelle Gyles-McDonnough, UN Resident Coordinator, Barbados and the OECS

Welcome Remarks by
Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough
UN Resident Coordinator and Representative, UNDP Barbados and the OECS

Good Morning and Welcome: We are honoured that you could have joined the UN Team here in Barbados for these next two days to reaffirm our commitment and accelerate our efforts to UNiTE to end violence against women and girls. The UNiTE Campaign, which was launched by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in 2008, is a multi-year effort to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls in all parts of the world by 2015. The Campaign calls on governments, civil society, women’s organisations, young people, the private sector, the media and the entire UN system to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.

By 2015, we aim, as in other parts of the world, to UNiTE to achieve the following five goals:

1. Adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls
2. Adopt and implement multi-sectoral national action plans
3. Strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls
4. Increase public awareness and social mobilisation
5. Address sexual violence in conflict

With only three more years to the 2015 deadline, we all must redouble our efforts and target our actions where it matters most.

Today’s event focuses on rooting out an aspect of violence, shrouded in secrecy and abetted by shame – violence against children in the Caribbean. Today’s meeting builds upon the November 2010 high-level Caribbean launch of the UNiTE Campaign held here in Barbados, the UN Secretary-General’s 2006 Study on Violence against Children, and on regional efforts to reduce violence against children spearheaded by the Office of the UN Secretary-General, UNICEF and other UN agencies, regional institutions like CARICOM and the OECS, and national government initiatives. Today we take the next step in reinforcing country actions and existing regional initiatives, to come away with an integrated, multidisciplinary, regional strategy.
Girls the world over are most affected by sexual abuse. A 2006 World Health Organisation report estimated that in 2002, the prevalence of sexual abuse among boys amounted to approximately 73 million, and among girls, twice that at 150 million. Whereas the trend at the time saw young boys facing greater physical violence, girls were more likely to have suffered sexual abuse by the time they were 15, more likely to have been exposed to sexual and gender-based violence at school by male teachers and classmates, and to have been forced into human trafficking.

The Regional Assessment of Violence Against Children in the Caribbean Region highlights the high prevalence of girls being the reported victims of sexual abuse in relation to boys, tracking the global trend. The Caribbean Report, as one contributing factor, pointed to the cultural and socially entrenched attitudes of entitlement to young girls’ bodies associated with care responsibilities.

All CARICOM countries have signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, committing to putting in place the necessary legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the region’s children from all types of violence. Further, in the Caribbean UNiTE Consensus developed as an outcome of the 2010 launch, Ministers of Government, members of the judiciary and other stakeholders acknowledged the differential vulnerabilities to violence facing girls and boys and “reiterate[d] the need for comprehensive and multi-sectoral responses to end violence against women and children that address prevention, protection, services, access to justice and cultural change.”

There still remains much work to be done in creating legislation to address sexual abuse issues, including child trafficking; strengthening institutional capacity; and enforcement to support current legislation. In reality, and according to the Caribbean Regional Assessment, weak institutional capacity to enforce the laws and inadequate funding for research and public education are among the challenges in identifying and supporting child victims of sexual abuse and enforcing suitable legislation in Caribbean countries.

So too is the problem of under reporting and the inadequate quantitative methods to fully investigate this social problem, as noted in the 2009 Report on Perceptions of, Attitudes to, and Opinions on Child Sexual Abuse in the Eastern Caribbean. Also of importance to all of us here are the social, cultural and economic linkages that allow child sexual abuse to continue to occur, with the resulting implications for the individual, the family, our countries and the region.

It is out of recognition of the myriad challenges we face that The Kingston Declaration was created in May 2012. The Declaration emphasises that “to eliminate violence against children requires a sustained and coordinated effort from all,” and this is why we are
here today. This is the call of the Secretary-General’s campaign to UNiTE to end violence against women and girls around the world.

Through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2012-2016, the UN agencies work individually and collectively to build programmes in the Caribbean that address the economic and human security of the individual. While Caribbean governments retain the primary role for ensuring citizens’ protection from crime and violence, as well as the survival, livelihoods and dignity of their citizens, the UN system, through UNiTE initiatives like this one, and other UN programmes and activities, are able to support Caribbean institutions and increasingly, citizens to address the root causes of crime and violence in Caribbean societies. For example, the UNDP 2012 Caribbean Human Development Report on Citizen Security informs our understanding of citizens’ perceptions of violence and victimisation realities that crime statistics alone may not be able to capture. This new analysis, and the Citizen Security Action Plans that will be developed starting with Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Barbados, and St. Lucia, address both state and non-state actors’ responsibility for and participation in creating the peaceful, crime-free societies that we all envision.

The UNiTE campaign gives all of us – governments, civil society, and UN and other development partners – a platform to support inclusive, integrated strategies to address child sexual abuse and other forms of gender-based violence, to ensure we give meaning to the three pillars of UNiTE in Latin America and the Caribbean which are:

- No more impunity
- No more victims
- It’s everybody’s responsibility

I look forward to the outcomes of the discussions on how to break through the gender dynamics that increase sexual violence; ways to improve current legislation to address all forms of violence against girls and boys; and strategies for a more integrated approach to prevent and manage gender-based violence against children – all of which are key elements of “A Call To Action on Sexual Abuse Against Girls and Boys.” We must act now, together, to secure a Caribbean fit for our children.
Appendix 4: 
Welcome Remarks – Hon. Stephen Lashley, Minister of Family, Culture, Sports and Youth, Barbados

A very pleasant good morning to you all and a special welcome to Barbados, particularly for those of you visiting for the first time. Of course a special welcome to my colleague Ministers. Thank you for coming.

On behalf of the Government of Barbados, it is indeed my privilege and honour to be here this morning and to officially welcome you to this very timely sub-regional conference on Child Sexual Abuse and to advance the cause of the UNiTE campaign, which is the UN Secretary General’s Campaign to End Violence Against Women.

I would like firstly to acknowledge the vision and leadership of UNICEF in forging ahead with this important conference in collaboration with the Barbados Government.

For those of you who would have attended the 23rd COH/SOD in Guyana in July of this year, this conference is a continuation of that dialogue on Children and Youth and the measures which must be taken within the region to advance their cause, promote their optimum development and set them on a path of contributing citizenship.

Barbados, like all of the countries represented here this morning, signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child quite some time ago. As a result, we have formally committed ourselves to the path of ensuring that all children are afforded protection from all forms of abuse and that the necessary supports and preventative strategies for children would be put in place to minimise abuse.

It is unfortunate that child abuse has plagued our respective societies for centuries and it is recognised as one of those scourges that, if left unattended will continue to harm one of the most vulnerable sectors – our children. Time for focussed and collaborative action has come.

Child sexual abuse, which is the focus of our meeting, has gained public attention in the past few decades and has now become one of the most high-profile crimes. Prior to this point it was a rather secretive and socially unspeakable act.

Since the 1970s, the sexual abuse of children and child molestation has increasingly been recognised as deeply damaging to children and therefore unacceptable to society. It has now become the object of significant public attention. Child Sexual Abuse impacts not only the child but the family and society as a whole. As a phenomenon which has touched many lives, the sexual victimisation of children is ethically and morally wrong and its effects extend beyond the childhood.
Child Sexual Abuse is a very serious problem within the region and throughout the world. According to a 2009 report published in the Clinical Psychology Review that examined 65 studies from 22 countries, the global prevalence of child sexual abuse has been estimated at 19.7% for females and 7.9% for males. These numbers are of grave concern.

As we gather here this morning to discuss this multifaceted problem, I encourage frank and open dialogue if we in the region are to stop this cycle of abuse. Furthermore, I urge that our discussions be based on the premise that we are a collective of committed stakeholders, who desire to see the agenda for children move forward, with all stakeholders on the same proverbial page, with one common goal, to help our nations' children who have become victims of abuse.

Many researchers believe that childhood sexual abuse has the potential to damage a child physically, emotionally, and behaviourally for the rest of his or her childhood. They also believe that its effects have been connected to difficulties in adulthood that threaten the family unit and society in general. Therefore, as the dynamics of childhood change, so should the strategies for combating child sexual abuse. This battle must be fought on an integrated platform where practitioners, front line workers, policy makers and Members of Parliament who represent the political will, apply a multi-sectoral response to the management and prevention of child sexual abuse. This response should also include strengthening the existing legal frameworks, in order to improve access to justice for victims of child sexual abuse.

As Ministers with responsibility for Child Protection and as technical officers charged with the responsibility of implementing relevant interventions, we must do whatever is necessary to support our children who are victims of child sexual abuse. I do not need to remind you that children need to know that they can speak openly to a trusted adult and that they will be believed. Children who are victims of sexual abuse also need reassurance that they are not responsible for what has happened to them.

As a society and a community of families, we must offer encouragement to victims by supporting organisations that help them. It is important to understand that troubled families can be helped and that everyone can play a part in the process.

As individuals and as a collective here this morning, we need to make others more aware of sexual abuse and its negative and prolonged impact by arranging for knowledgeable resource persons to sensitise organisations and groups. We need to advocate for the establishment of programmes to educate teachers, parents and students about the problem.

It is also critical that we provide adequate supervision for our children and others to safeguard them from harm. In protecting our children, we are protecting our future.

In conclusion, as we continue to secure our children's future, I urge you all to critically analyse the information that will be presented over the next two days and arrive at solutions that would assist our children in practical ways so that the period called childhood is one that is safe and joyful, and that children will remain our First Call.

I thank you.
Appendix 5:
Key note Address – Mr Bernt Assen, Regional Director, UNICEF, The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office, Panama

Mr. Stephen Lashley, Honourable Minister of Family, Youth, Sports and Culture; Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough, UN Resident Coordinator; Ministers; UN System Colleagues; Ladies and Gentlemen

The UN Secretary General’s campaign to UNiTE for collective action on violence against women has been slowly gathering momentum across the globe. For this year’s central theme for the Caribbean region, the UN System is drawing attention to those most vulnerable and hidden of victims – the children, especially girls. Since we have brought together on one platform a range of actors, many of whom are addressing this issue, I know that there is a danger of “preaching to the converted”. Whatever I have to say on the subject, most of you already know.

Each of you has been working on one dimension or another of this complex issue: adults perpetrating sexual crimes against children. We are all shocked by the headlines in the media reporting an infant being raped by a male family member. You know from your experience that the issue is hidden; that the numbers reported do not reflect the magnitude of the problem. What we know is that about 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 years across the globe have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence. In the Caribbean, 47.6% of girls and 31.9% of boys reported that their first intercourse was forced or coerced by family members or family acquaintances. In a study of adult survivors in the Caribbean, 30% of female respondents from Barbados reported to have been sexually abused during their childhood.

Child sexual abuse occurs in all racial, ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups and affects children of all ages, including infants. Studies show that between 70-80% of the child victims are girls; in 50% of the cases, the perpetrator lives with the victim; and in 75% of the cases, the perpetrator has a direct relationship with the victim, in many cases he is someone the child knows and trusts.

We all know that these experiences are rarely one-time events; they recur and persist over time. Child sexual abuse in its many forms has serious short and long-term physical, psychological and social consequences on the victims, as well as on their families and the community as a whole. Victims suffer from an increased risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, early pregnancy, psychological distress, stigma, discrimination and difficulties at school.

These facts are alarming yet we also know that there is a public and private ambivalence on the issue of child sexual abuse. The glimmer of hope is that tides are shifting. The UN General Assembly Special Session in 2002 declared a commitment to “end impunity for all crimes against children by bringing perpetrators to justice and publicizing the
penalties for such crimes”. These commitments are being echoed in the Caribbean. In June this year, the sub-regional follow up on the UN Violence Against Children study outlined a road map for action for the Caribbean. In July, several of the Ministers present here were at the CARICOM COHSOD 23 on children and youth where you emphasised the need to challenge concertedly and decisively, the deeply entrenched cultural practices and norms that condone violence and the urgent need to expose these atrocities, remove the veil of secrecy and break the silence that shrouds these practices.

COHSOD also recognised the interrelated and mutually reinforcing nature of all forms of abuse – physical, sexual, emotional, mental and neglect – and agreed to focus on plugging the gaps in existing legislation to guarantee mandatory reporting of sexual abuse and enforce full protection for the region’s children. Lastly, the COHSOD recognised the imperative of developing an integrated approach – combining strong responsive and preventive measures that emphasise child care and protection, and those to end impunity.

Ladies and Gentlemen, that is why we are here these two days – to start the process of translating these commitments into concrete actions. Each of us as critical players, whether at the local, national, regional or international levels have been chipping away, at times almost in isolation from other actors. The prescriptions and recipes for successful action are available. We all know that the issue has to be dealt with in-concert – from all the different angles at the same time – consistently, persistently and systematically.

Legislative reform and swift administration of justice, quality integrated services from a responsive police force, social sector services in health, social welfare and education, supportive media action for public awareness, better data collection, analysis and reporting, better surveillance and monitoring systems, better use of technologies and sciences for example in prosecuting, are but some of the critical areas of concerted action for prevention and care.

This evening, we will be launching the regional campaign to break the silence on child sexual abuse – taking the Teddy Bear Campaign developed by the UWI St Augustine campus in partnership with UNICEF to the wider Caribbean. We hope to partner with all of you to mobilise public action.

UNICEF, as the lead UN agency in addressing Child Sexual Abuse, stands ready to support national governments to prepare such integrated plans of action. We hope this conference will be used as a platform for initiating national action. In partnership with the rest of the UN System, we have strived to prepare this conference to fulfill certain fundamentals to:
generate a better understanding of CSA – its causes, drivers, impact, who the perpetrators are, and where CSA occurs

review and consolidate what has been learnt so far about national and regional progress on preventing and responding to the sexual abuse of children

set targets to guide and assess their future action

develop concrete implementable ideas and recommendations to prevent CSA and break the silence around CSA

Ultimately, this platform should be used to renew our collective conviction and determination to act to prevent CSA and bring perpetrators to justice. This has to be based on a greater recognition that preventing CSA must be a collaborative effort and a shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

There are always “nay sayers” in every gathering and society but it is the dreamers with a firm footing on the ground and sleeves rolled up for action who make a difference and effect change for the good. We can dream a future free of child sexual abuse. We can map out the course of action that a peer review mechanism like the CARICOM COHSOD can support and monitor. The integrated actions need unequivocal leadership of national governments.

Let me conclude with a special recognition to the Government of Barbados in taking the lead to co-host this meeting with the UN System and UNICEF in particular. We hope that this unequivocal leadership example is contagious and will gather hurricane force momentum to realise our collective dream.

Thank you.
Appendix 6:
Vote of Thanks – Ms Joan French, Regional Programme Director, Caribbean Office, UN Women

Ministers and Parliamentary Representatives of the Governments of Barbados, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Guyana, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago; Dr. Morella Joseph, Representative of His Excellency Irwin LaRocque, Secretary General of CARICOM; Representatives of the Sister Agencies of the UN System; Members of the Diplomatic Corps; Children; Specially Invited Guests; Members of the Media; Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the United Nations system for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, it is my pleasure to express our appreciation to all of our partners present here. Allow me first to thank the Government of Barbados for hosting this meeting, and in particular the Hon. Stephen Lashley, Minister of the Family, Culture, Sports, and Youth, for taking time to be with us personally, despite his heavy schedule, and for having left no stone unturned to put the human and intellectual resources and experience of his Ministry at the disposal of the organising team. We also thank the Secretary General of CARICOM, Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, for his message, so graciously delivered by his representative, Ms. Morella Joseph. Our thanks go also to Mr. Bernt Aasen, Regional Director of UNICEF, for providing the context as our Keynote Speaker for the occasion.

It is fitting that our cultural presentation today came from children. We thank them and their teachers from Grantley Prescod Primary School for presenting their messages so clearly. To you the participants, coming from different sectors, your presence underscores the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to combating the grave problem of sexual violence which confronts our societies in the region. The collaboration between the various agencies of the United Nations in supporting the organisation of this dialogue on the issue, demonstrates the spirit and intent of the framework for cooperation set out in our regional United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), which lay the foundation for cooperation among the UN system, government and other development partners through complementary programming.

This meeting also represents a significant milestone response to the UN Secretary-General’s UNiTE Campaign against gender-based violence. We also express gratitude to the British High Commission, Excellency Mr. Paul Brummel, for the support you continue to offer to the UNiTE Campaign in the Caribbean. To the United States State Department and the United States Embassy to Bridgetown and the Eastern Caribbean, we also express our appreciation for your support in this collaborative programming in realisation of our common development mandates.
We wish also to recognise the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinators across the Caribbean in this multi-agency initiative, particularly the leadership of Michelle Gyles-McDonnough, UN Resident Coordinator for Barbados and the OECS, who so ably welcomed you on our behalf today. We are grateful for the support of the respective agencies through the inputs of our colleagues in the various United Nations offices in the Caribbean, and at the regional and Headquarters levels. UNDP, UNFPA, PAHO, ILO, UNIC, and UN Women and UNICEF all joined in the effort, but special appreciation is due to the UNICEF Caribbean office for their very sterling coordination of this meeting. On behalf of UN Women I wish to specially record our appreciation for the opportunity to strengthen bonds across age cohorts in the fight against gender-based violence, all too prevalent in the lives of our girls and women.

To our feature speakers and presenters and facilitators from the various sectors of health, education, social development, labour and justice, we thank you for accepting to bring your expertise to bear on our deliberations. The engagement of participants from government, civil society and the non-governmental sector is critical to strengthening the foundation for a robust and more effective response to violence against children in the region. We thank you for making this a priority among your many competing agendas. And finally, without the presence and engagement of the media, our voices will remain within these walls. We thank all the media for your collaboration and participation, and look forward to the multiplying effect of the articles and television and website coverage which you will bring to the Caribbean and global public as collaborators in the efforts to end violence against children.

Last but not least, we thank the Barbados Hilton for providing us with a venue, and for your usual excellent hospitality which we expect will be a wonderful stimulus to the fruitful deliberations over the next two days.
## Appendix 7: List of Participants

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<td>71</td>
<td>Ms Paula Mohamed</td>
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<td>Ms Lara Blanco</td>
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<td>UNICEF New York Headquarters</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>Ms Kimberley Davis</td>
<td>UNICEF TACRO</td>
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<td>Panama</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>Dr Hans Beauvoir</td>
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<td>78</td>
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<td>Bishop In Charge</td>
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<td>Barbados</td>
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<td>86</td>
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<td>High Court Judge</td>
<td>Judiciary</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
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<td>87</td>
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<td>Consultant/Rapporteur</td>
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<td>88</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Embassy of China</td>
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