

LET'S TALK

A BI-ANNUAL PUBLICATION OF WOMEN'S BUREAU

SPECIAL ISSUE

December 2004



CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR MESSAGE BY ROSIE BROWNE, DIRECTOR WOMEN'S BUREAU

I bring you greetings from the Women's Bureau on this joyful season of good cheer. A time when even the atmosphere, is filled with feelings of happiness goodwill and great expectation. It is also a time for giving and receiving, an aged old tradition that comes with the season which for Christians is a celebration of the first coming of Jesus Christ, The One who came to "bring good news to the poor, mend the broken hearted and set the captives free".

As we reflect on the reason for the season, and engage in the sharing of gifts and good tidings of Christmas, it may be a good time to reflect on our dealings with those who may be still in captive, broken hearted and in prison. Is there a way of bringing good cheer to those in need?

Perhaps in this hard economic times many may find that it is very difficult to give material or cash, but your giving need not only be restricted to goods. A listening ear, a moment of your time, a visit, a hot meal, some comforting words may just be what someone is dying to receive. Even as a nation we realize that the year 2004 was particularly difficult because of our economic situation. Economic Recovery Programme, Globalisation, Trade Liberalisation and other global phenomenon impacted negatively on us as a country. But even in the midst of all of this we need to look beyond our economic woes and appreciate the fact that we have survived thus far; thanks to assistance received from friendly governments, donor agencies, our families abroad and most importantly by the many sacrifices we made in giving part of our much needed salaries to stabilize our

country's economy. Despite everything else, one very important thing we must not forget is to give praise and thanks to God for sparing us from the worst in the face of serious disaster through the 2004 hurricane season and earthquake. The season ended with no major hurricane, loss of lives or injury and for this we ought to be grateful to God. Finally as this year comes to a close and we prepare for 2005, let us remind ourselves that we are a resilient people. Indeed a country, under God, a people blessed by the Almighty.

It is in this spirit that we must reach out to each other through this great season of Christmas especially those in greater need than us and pray that the New Year brings success for a productive and improved economy.

Have a blessed season and a fruitful New Year.

**LET'S TALK ABOUT
BUILDING AN AWARENESS OF SEX GENDER
AND GENDER SOCIALIZATION
BY ANGELICA PIERRE-LOUIS, LIFE SKILLS PROJECT COORDINATOR**

In recent times there has been much talk of Gender Mainstreaming, establishment of a Gender Bureau instead of Women's Bureau a need to focus on issues affecting men. On the other hand research indicates that women are victims of many situations which impedes on their ability to contribute more effectively to the development of the country.

It becomes very important to stop now for a while to distinguish between the words 'sex' and 'gender' in an effort to clarify misconceptions.

'SEX' is a biological characteristic determined at conception and fixed to a persons' lifetime being male or female. It is of the same biological difference between men or women in any part of the world irrespective of colour, race or creed. It refers to biological determined differences, such as the reproductive organs and the ability of women to give birth. There are also some other differences between men and women which is biologically determined example physical strength. These differences however are relatively small.

'GENDER SOCIALIZATION' can be stated as the means by which males are taught

to be boys/men and females to be girls/women - their identity, the roles and responsibilities they are expected to play in the family, school and society.

'GENDER' refers to learnt social and power relation and cultural values; differences between men and women which vary across countries and regions. These characteristics can be changed by norms and behaviours such as the socialisation process education, Government policies, the media etc.

Gender stereotyping takes place when for example:

- ◆ The choice of subjects at school is a major factor female students are encouraged to study Home Management while male students Agriculture, Construction related subjects at college level again female students Secretarial, male students Mechanic
- ◆ Men holds property in his name, women expected to endorse
- ◆ Higher percentages of men as top Managers or holders of the highest paying jobs, more women as Secretary or positions where they receive less salary/wage
- ◆ Women as domestic workers, secretaries, nurses and men in construction.
- ◆ Women expected to attend the P.T.A while few men do.
- ◆ Men accepted as having several sexual partners while women are looked down upon if they do.
- ◆ Colour chosen for babies if it's a boy blue, if it's a girl pink
- ◆ Girls play with dolls, boys play with truck or gun
- ◆ Posture and sitting habits; girls taught to seat with legs crossed boys legs wide open
- ◆ Girls do as mum do, stay home cook and wash boys as dad do at home or in the community hang out with friends and come home expecting meals already prepared

A number of workshops with students and teachers of Secondary & Junior Secondary Schools.



**THIS IS A SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE LET'S TALK
NEWSLETTER FOCUSING ON PROJECT
ENTITLED
"INTEGRATION OF LIFE SKILLS WITHIN THE
SCHOOL CURRICULUM: A VEHICLE IN THE
MITIGATION OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE"**

Ms. Mvrtle Prevost – HFLE Coordinator



LET'S TALK ABOUT PROJECT ENTITLED "INTEGRATION OF LIFE SKILLS WITHIN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: A VEHICLE IN THE MITIGATION OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE"

BY ANGELICA PIERRE-LOUIS, PROJECT COORDINATOR

A program of the Women's Bureau targeting first, second and third form students of the secondary schools and Junior secondary Programme with the support of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth Affairs.

WHY THIS PROGRAM

In 2001, the Women's Bureau conducted a study which indicated that domestic violence continues to be a major problem affecting all strata of our Dominican society. The research indicated greater incidents of abuse in relationship within the youthful population (35%).

This along with records of reported cases confirmed the need to target young persons to help curb the problem of domestic violence, other family related issues and the prevalent anti social behaviour among youths.

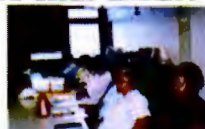
In an effort to address the situation the Women's Bureau sought to focus on secondary schools and junior secondary programme through the implementation of two-year sensitization program.

This programme received the approval of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth Affairs with funding

from the Canada Caribbean Gender Equity Fund.

It is hoped that through the teaching of life skills and gender sensitization the programme can positively influence the attitudes, social behaviour and self esteem of school age youths, thus encouraging them to be at the forefront in the struggle and breaking down the repeated cycle of domestic violence and promoting harmonious relations between the sexes, family and community.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE



Teachers Workshop

A two-fold awareness workshop was successfully conducted by the Bureau for Social Studies and Health and Family Life Teachers of the Secondary and Junior Secondary Schools on the island. The purpose of this workshop was to sensitize teachers on gender issues and to introduce a Manual prepared by the Women's Bureau entitled "Issues Surrounding Domestic Violence" accompanied by a video tape on the drama serial "Wake Up Call". The training and instructional materials provided teachers with practical skills to better equip them on ways to integrate the use of the manual and instruct the

students on gender based violence and other related issues and problems.

Twenty-two (22) teachers representing fourteen (14) Secondary and Junior Secondary Programme and two (2) adolescent Centres attended.

Workshops which has been informed by a value and attitude test administered has been conducted at the following schools:

- ★ Castle Bruce Secondary School
- ★ Goodwill Secondary School
- ★ Roseau, Salybia and Castle Bruce Junior Secondary Programme

reaching more than 800 first form students.

Concern and Comments from Teachers and students in response to workshops

- All schools should be equipped with a free counseling service room for students and their families and individuals seeking support
- Establish social groups at school to include adult guidance to assist students in promoting positive values

- Health and Family Life programme needs to be upgraded to encompass issues surrounding domestic violence
- School to assist students in conflict resolution, address the situation of school drop out and teenage pregnancy
- School to make available more reading material on issues of gender and gender based violence
- School and PTA to reach out to families especially those suffering from difficult situations at home
- Additional training to be made available to assist all teachers in identifying students who may be suffering from domestic violence but are unable to deal with their situation
- Special training for effective peer counseling service should be conducted in all schools
- Gained clearer understanding of issues related to domestic violence and gender (some were being made aware of terms for the first time

- Workshops should be continued at the schools at least once per term or school year

Joint Summer Camp Competition

In an effort to reach out to students during the summer holidays through the project "Integration of Life Skills Within the School Curriculum: A Vehicle in the Mitigation of Gender Based Violence", the Women's Bureau felt it necessary to collaborate with the Youth Development Division Volunteerism Summer Program which engages high school students in community service project/programs.

Summer Camp programme aimed at reducing the rate of HIV/AIDS infection as well as understanding the effects that stigma and discrimination have on those who are affected by the illness.

The Bureau and the Youth Development Division agreed to have participants use their creativity to highlight the issue of gender and HIV/AIDS through Joint District Competitions. "Stigma and discrimination: youth can make a change" was the theme for the two week program which ran from August 9 to 13, 2004.

The objectives of the competition were:

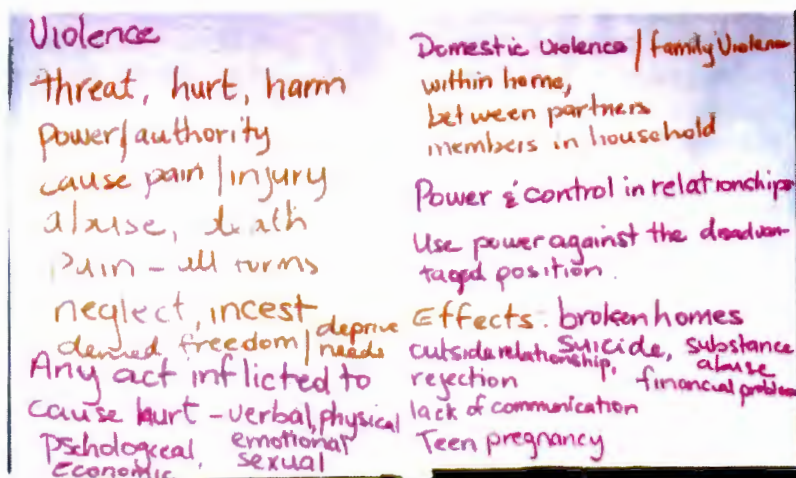
- Provide the necessary life skills thereby equipping the participants to counteract social ills such as, violent behaviour within the home, school and community
- Collectively take a critical look at gender related issues to the dynamics involved, perception, impact and how it related to anti social behaviour of youth
- Help break trend of stigmatization and discrimination faced by persons living with HIV/AIDS
- Use of the Art form to increase the awareness of HIV/AIDS and its implications
- Provide a non-formal forum for young persons to use their creativity in assisting them to make the right choices

The winners of the joint competition came together at a Grand Finale where Thibaud emerged first, followed by Boetica and Coulibistrie. Prizes to the finalist were awarded by

Orange West Indies Ltd., while the award to the facilitator was from Garraway Hotel. Other sponsor were Jays Ltd, AT&T wireless, Josephine Gabriel and Company, United Distributors Ltd, Rubens, Country Style and Purity Bakeries.

Tips to Parents

- Encourage shared responsibilities at home.
- Many of our children are hurting listen to them.
- Create a violent free family and society for our children.



Violence in our society affects everyone and is everybody's business. Let's all try to eradicate this social ill.



WB thanks all its partners in Dominica and abroad who continue to support its work.

**LET'S TALK ABOUT RESEARCH AND DATA AT THE BUREAU
BY ROSELYN PAUL, COORDINATOR FOR RESEARCH AND PROGRAMME
DEVELOPMENT**

Three

(3) major areas of data collection included;

1

Values and Attitude test on Domestic Violence

(part of project reaching out to schools) administered to first to third formers of 8 secondary schools which indicated a number of areas for concern:

- A lack of adequate understanding of the concept of Domestic Violence and related issues.

- A high level of acceptance of abusive behaviour with a high percentage of the students of each form who were of the opinion that it is sometimes excusable or 'looked for' by the victim. This cultural acceptance of abuse by both male and female students seems related to student's deep-seated beliefs/ideologies about, gender relations, gender identity, roles and responsibilities. For example there

is a misconception of head of household; a belief/perception that:

i) The man as boss/head and should be in the position of power and control and that he should exert that control when he thinks that things aren't going his way.

ii) That domestic roles and responsibilities is mainly the domain of the female partner and therefore many boys and girls see failure to uphold this at all times as deserving punishment; many also failed to appreciate housework as work

iii) A man's entitlement to entertainment/leisure is more important than that of a woman; While students saw little difficulty with a man enjoying a game of dominoes, in discussion with them the large majority suggested that the wife is wrong to watch television drama serial if her husband meal was unprepared, despite the high burden of housework

iv) These continued convictions and

prevailing attitudes among our youth is likely to reinforce the situation of the overburden of work by women in the home, resulting conflicts, power play in social relations of gender and possible abuse in relationships.

v) The large number almost half of the students who felt that there was no reason for an abusive husband to seek counselling suggest that they do not really see too much wrong with the beating of a wife, or thought it excusable when the wife does not play her role, such as cooking.

vi) The high number of students of a number of the schools who indicated their willingness to be part of a gang, even when they perceived gang as something negative.

vii) The high percentage both male and female students who supported the perpetrator over the victim.

However there was some positive feedback from students

- Recognition that family violence is a problem in their community and in Dominica as a whole and its impact on children
- Some of the students especially the boys who felt that a man should never hit his lady but should talk to her; a few suggested the man should help.
- The importance attached to better communication
- The value placed on family well being or safety and education over material possession like a car
- The large majority who were unwilling to be part of a gang since they perceived gang as violent oriented and brought negative influence
- A high level of appreciation by many students of the negative impact of domestic violence on the upbringing of children
- Many who selected non-violent solutions/actions

Based on students' response it can be concluded that there are deep-seated beliefs about gender relations and what is considered to be the norm, which will allow for the continued trend of

unequal power in gender and social relations. The cultural acceptance of domestic violence by these young persons indicate that if they are not sufficiently sensitised in order to internalise negativism associated with violence, and to affect positive change, in their lives then the trend of domestic violence and violence in the wider community will surely continue.

2



Ms. Augustus at Community Consultation CEDAW

A number of consultations to inform a CEDAW Report which is being compiled with the assistance of attorney at Law MS. Gloria Augustus

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women is described as an International Bill for Human Rights for Women and entails thirty articles but countries are expected to report on sixteen. The report seeks to find out how well Dominica is complying with the various articles all of which seek for equality and equity for women. Do policies legislation and practices comply? Are there

procedures and customs, which impede rights? According to Ms. Augustus it must be stressed that Seeking for the advancement of women does not mean marginalization of men but creating balance by addressing gender gaps. The information gathered has indicated a high level of compliance by Dominica especially in terms of policies/legislation on the books. However traditions customs and practices and a lack of enforcement of legislation continue to result in areas of gender inequalities in our society.

Based on data there is an apparent need to investigate the different forms of discrimination that exist, information which will back up the basis for action. Now one might ask which discrimination, do we have discrimination in Dominica?

Ms. Augustus defines discrimination in accordance with the Convention as:

Any distinction, exclusion or restriction that affects women's political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other rights, irrespective of marital status, on an equal basis with men.

Based on the definition there are laws and practices which are discriminatory many of which are linked to our traditions and culture. For example gender stereotyping allows for practices which hinder or impedes upon the basic human rights of women.

3

A Situation Analysis of Women and Men in Dominica in four thematic areas: Education, Tourism, Politics, and Finance with support by UNELLAC/UNIFEM

For this purpose secondary data was sourced from the records of relevant institutions and gender analysis was applied with the assistance of local consultant Carla Harris - Pascal.

- ❖ Some issues highlighted include: Male academic underachievement at all levels of the education system reflected in poor performance and lower participation at the secondary and tertiary level and adult literacy programmes
- ❖ High drop out rates of males and discontinued education of teen mothers
- ❖ Sexual bias in subject choices and courses which show continuance of traditional and cultural practices and has implications for the future in terms of gender differentials in type of jobs obtained, level of participation in the labor market as well as in level of income; gender inequality; it questions the ability of women and men to equally avail themselves of available opportunities; these also have implications: gender socialization, gender stereotyping, poverty, antisocial behaviour
- ❖ Increase in trend in the participation of women in local governance with government ensuring that females are appointed where lacking as elected members; however overall there continue to exist lower participation of women in politics and the decision making process at all levels
- ❖ Despite the increased academic successes of women, questions raised as to the level of job positions and opportunities to serve in areas to better influence decisions that affect their lives
- ❖ Sex bias in loans for educational and productive purposes
- ❖ Women's under-representation in the lending sector, that is women do less productive lending; for example women lend less for agriculture and very little for assets such as land and vehicle purchase; data showed a high level of sex bias in productive lending; women more involved in distributive trade, men do greater investments (it was pointed out that there is need for further research in this area)
- ❖ In addition records of the financial institutions studied show Agriculture to be an under funded sector, although agriculture is so relevant to rural development and contribution to the market economy
- ❖ Increased access by women at NDFD where a gender perspective has been integrated
- ❖ Continued traditional sexual divide in tourism related activities although there is a gradual change in trend, Major investment such as vehicle purchase to provide tour services, mainly by men
- ❖ The Tourism Industry affords employment for women and men. However, there are limitations as regards what women especially (and their employers) consider as available opportunities.
- ❖ Further research may be needed in this important area which is viewed as a major

area for economic growth and employment; to better understand how men and women avail themselves of available opportunities

- ❖ In terms of poverty young males and teen mothers are identified indigent or vulnerable groups and need specific targeting; as well as the Carib Territory which form 70% of the poor
- ❖ Trickle down effects of PA programmes. Major part of poverty alleviation programmes are related to capital - intensive construction or road building, women are not skilled in these areas to take up available opportunities for ready cash income. Another is access to credit, poor women and men often do not have the necessary requirements, such as collateral; and the Carib people disadvantaged in this regard

Lets Talk about OTHER MAJOR HAPPENINGS AT THE BUREAU 2004

Skills Training

A Skills Training Project in which a number of rural and suburban women participated. Funded by UNESCO has just come to a close. More than one

hundred women around the island were trained in:

- ❖ Small Appliance Repairs for women of the South
- ❖ Plumbing for Women on the South East
- ❖ Tile Laying by women of Dublanc
- ❖ Local Craft & Creative Arts Women of Paix-Bouche/Dos D'ane and Trafalgar/Wotten Waven
- ❖ Wines, Liquor and Food Preservation, Women of North/North East
- ❖ Personal Development and Basic Entrepreneurial Skills (All groups)

Some of these women are already earning income from this training. Women who are trained in areas such as tile - laying, and plumbing have proven themselves to be very capable. However they need some added assistance and public support if they are to develop more fully so that they can support themselves and their families and contribute more fully to Dominica's development. Remember with the high percentage of single women headed households when we empower women we are helping the children in our families.

A brochure will be published shortly with more

information on what these women can do.



International Women's Day March 8th was one to remember.

A day when Dominican women of all walks of life assembled in solidarity with the cause of women and celebrating the achievements of women under the theme "An empowered woman makes a difference"

The day started with a church service officiated by women, followed by a march to the Riverside where a number of women received awards for their achievements in various fields and contribution to Dominica's development. Our own esteemed women stars Mickel Henderson, Deva Nayoka and Lady Bacco added the spice of entertainment to the programme. Ministers Matthew Walter, Charles Saverin and the mayor of Roseau were among those who addressed the gathering. Produce chemist Mrs. Claudia Bellot delivered the keynote address. Women's, Bureau, DNCW, CAFRA and other interest groups undertook the activity jointly.

Meeting with Policy Makers

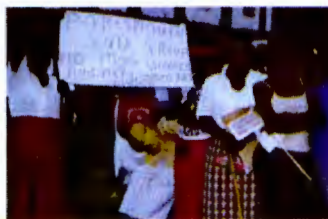
The Women's Bureau has been participating in a Regional programme entitled 'Gender and Governance' being implemented by UN ECLAC. Activities being undertaken by Dominica under this programme included the dissemination of information and dialogue with key stakeholders including policy makers, which would inform the development of a Gender Policy, a second major activity to be undertaken as part of this programme.

Within this framework the Women's Bureau organized two one day meeting the first with policy makers and senior administrators in the public service (Members of Cabinet and Permanent Secretaries) focusing on the theme "Advocacy for policy action towards gender equity in Dominica" and with the following objectives in mind:

- To present information on two reports namely: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Situational Analysis of Women and Men in Dominica in four areas: Finance, Tourism, Politics and Education
- To sensitize Policy Makers on existing gaps/barriers to attaining gender equity in Dominica
- To solicit the commitment of Policy Makers and

Administrators to take necessary action to address identified issues in the reports

The second meeting sought for discussion and input from other sectoral stakeholders. Both meetings were successful and elicited a number of recommendations, which will be reflected in a gender policy. The high turn out of Cabinet members and great participation is indicative of Government support and concern for women and gender issues. Cabinet expressed its commitment to the cause and is expected to take a decision shortly as regards a number of recommendations made.



Day to Reject Violence against Women

The Women's Bureau and Dominica National Council of Women (DNCW) collaborated in a 16-day activism against HIV/AIDS and Violence against women and girls, which was indeed successful. In consonance

with the international theme "For the Health of Women, For the Health of the world, no more violence" a local theme was selected as "Save Dominica Protect our Women and girls from Violence and HIV/AIDS". Activities included All Men's /All Women panels on radio and television, and other media programmes focusing on the theme; a joint district mini- rally encompassing communities from Portsmouth to the Carib Territory held at Marigot; and culminated with an ecumenical service. Support was also given to activities in observance of World AIDS Day and a cash collection from the ecumenical service has since been donated to the AIDS Coordinating Unit towards the just established AIDS Food Bank.

Counselling Services

The Women's Bureau continue to assist women, men and families, by providing "walk in counselling and referral services."

LET'S TALK ABOUT UPCOMING EVENTS

- ❖ Development of a Gender Policy and a number of consultations to include an all men's consultation to integrate all perspectives in the policy development process
- ❖ Continued work in reaching out to youth at schools through workshops, creative

arts, debates and
calypso/drama
competitions

- ❖ International
Women's Day
activities

- ❖ Continued
sensitisation through
our radio
programmes,
community and
sectoral meetings,
newsletters and mini
library

Delices Ladies at affordable

- ❖ Dialogue on the
Convention on the
elimination of all
forms of
Discrimination
Against Women.

sale for you and the visitor
at
affordable
prices.

LET'S TALK ABOUT HAPPENINGS ON THE FIELD BY MYLD RIVIERE-PLENDERLEITH, FIELD OFFICER

prices.

EAST

The Riviere Cyrique Women did plumbing and personal development skills with the women's Bureau, now a high percentage are employed, some are not directly involved with the None Traditional Skills. But, due to the fact that we also did personal developmental skills, they are employed and continue to use their non-traditional skill in their homes, and communities. These women did not stop where the Bureau's training ended. They were enthusiastic and started to do a catering class with Adult Education and now bakes cakes and muffins weekly, for sale in the community.

Ladies of Delices Quilting Group are hand quilting many fine pieces of work which are very unique and attractive.

When looking for a gift for some one local or foreign, you can get some from the

NORTHERN East

At the completion of the skills training programme done by the Women's Bureau in the north east inclusive of Concord to Calibishie on the graduation of five modules, these participants decided to stay together and continue to make things happen, and it is from this decision that the North Eastern Women's Organization (N.E.W.O.) emerged. This group of women has held training for them selves and other women in the area of basic computer skills and flower arrangement. They have also organized a Coconut Museum and are in the production of some Coconut Products.

The Museum is in the heart of Eden, in the Community Resource Centre. If searching for recent scientific information on the coconut plant, you can visit the Wesley Coconut Museum. At the museum, there is coconut craft for

Congratulations to:

Dominica Association of Disabled people on their first ever 'Queen Pageant' and to the emerging winners,

- **Clotilda White**
- **Rosemund Shillingford**
- **Rosemund Christopher**

Hats off to you!

Congratulations to Ms. Rosemund Edwards on her position of F. Secretary. Women striving for excellence.