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# BREAKING THE SILENCE: A MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH TO PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Project Partners: Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Caribbean Health Research Council, Arts in Action, The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Trinidad and Tobago.

## Executive Summary & Knowledge Products

of the Research Project

Breaking the Silence (BTS): A Multisectoral Approach to Preventing and Addressing CSA / Incest and Implications for HIV

Break the Silence is an action research project on issues surrounding Child Sexual Abuse, of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, the University of the West Indies in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition Against Domestic Violence and in partnership with UNICEF and the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women.



# Break the Silence

end child sexual abuse



Break the Silence participants at the Trinidad Service Provider Seminar in 2010

## Executive Summary

In January 2008 the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (managed by UNIFEM), UNICEF, and the Centre for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS)<sup>1</sup> at the University Of West Indies, St. Augustine campus signed a joint partnership to advance this action research project. The Project seeks to break the silence on the taboo subject of child sexual abuse (CSA)/incest and its implications for HIV throughout Trinidad and Tobago by empowering children, parents, communities, policy makers and service providers who work in child protection, HIV/AIDS and women's rights. The project uses the following strategies:

- 1) **Building partnerships** between research institutions, HIV/AIDS, women's and children's non-governmental organizations (NGOs), service providers, relevant governmental institutions and policy makers;
- 2) **Action-oriented research** aimed at understanding the links between gender, CSA/incest and HIV transmission, and reducing the vulnerability of youth to CSA/incest and HIV;
- 3) **Developing the capacity** of service providers (education, health, NGO, governmental, police, community) to address CSA/incest and implications for HIV;
- 4) **Raising awareness** among policy makers and service providers to influence new institutional policies and protocols and a national policy that will address CSA/incest and implications for HIV.

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<sup>1</sup> CGDS, Now IGDS, Institute for Gender and Development Studies



Break the Silence participants of Charlotteville, Tobago with a banner and kites that they made during workshops in 2010

**The long-term goal of the Project** is to reduce the prevalence of child sexual abuse (CSA)/incest and its implication for risky sexual behaviour and HIV. (To achieve this goal, the Project will produce new research findings and a best practice research model, which will begin to be disseminated during the third year (Phase III) of the Project.)

**The short-term objectives of the Project are to:**

1. Generate new knowledge and understanding of CSA/incest and the implications for HIV
2. Empower women, men, girls and boys to understand and address CSA/incest and its implications on the spread of HIV through action research
3. Encourage service providers to revise (or) enhance policies and procedures related to CSA/incest, which conform to international human rights standards

**Phase IV activities of this initiative will begin in June 2011.**



Break the Silence symbol, Tag line — Break the Silence: end child sexual abuse



Break the Silence participants at the Trinidad Service Provider Seminar in 2010

## Project Background and Rationale

### Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is significant not only as a violation of children's rights and the personal integrity of girls and boys, but also because it has been shown to enhance risk for HIV infection and other adverse outcomes. The main factors which have been put forward as contributing to the spread of HIV infection among women and girls in the Caribbean are: 1) poverty, particularly within female headed households; 2) early onset of sexual activity, which often is associated with gender socialization practices, and crimes of child abuse predominantly against the girl child; and 3) transactional sex and/or intergenerational sex where girls enter into risky sexual activity with older men often linked to poverty and peer pressure (ECLAC/LC/CAR/L.58, 2005). Furthermore, the social context for rape and other forms of sexual abuse against young women and girls in the Caribbean involves several inter-connecting factors such as: gender inequality; social norms based on patriarchal values; domestic violence, the economic dependence of many women on men and, the status of children.

While there is the problem of under-reporting, there is no doubt that CSA is a significant problem in Trinidad and Tobago. In a six-month period in 2006, some 165 cases of CSA were reported to the police, of which 85% related to violations of girls (16% were cases of incest). Despite the extent of the problem, there is very little sustained advocacy around the issue to which young girls are particularly vulnerable. To some extent this is a consequence of limited understanding on prevalence and impact, as this form of sexual violation remains taboo and therefore hidden.

Child sexual abuse has been known to originate in several spaces including the home, homes of relatives and family friends, schools, religious institutions and community locations. This project focuses primarily on CSA in the home, which may be carried out by relatives, primarily male relatives – fathers, stepfathers, older brothers, cousins etc. Commonly referred to as incest, preliminary explorations using newspaper sources, information from schools, social workers and other research suggest that this comprises a significant component of CSA in

Trinidad and Tobago and the region. This project, therefore, aims to focus on child sexual abuse with a special emphasis on incest and its impact on HIV infection.

While there have been positive developments in addressing both sexual violence and HIV and AIDS in the Caribbean, these actions remain largely disconnected, both conceptually and programmatically. Little if any cross-referencing exists between the end violence against women movements (driven by women's rights activism) and HIV and AIDS policy makers and service providers. In spite of the scaling up of access to HIV preventative strategies, care, treatment and support mechanisms for Persons Living with HIV, the linkages between HIV transmission and sexual abuse have not yet been made. This project presents an opportunity to bridge the divide in responses to sexual violence, child sexual abuse and HIV and AIDS.

## Summary of Phase I, II & III

From January 2008 to April 2011, UNICEF and UN Trust Fund provided approximately 500,000 USD to assist IGDS in implementing activities of this action-research project that aims to reduce the prevalence of child sexual abuse (CSA)/incest and its implications for HIV throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The need to create such a Project stemmed from Stakeholders Meetings held in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2004 aimed at identifying issues related to gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. CSA, as well as the linkages between CSA/incest and HIV, was identified as a prevalent phenomenon, which had received little critical academic examination. Understanding CSA/incest and its implications for HIV is important for a number of reasons:

- Increased data on CSA/incest prevalence and implications for HIV can be used to increase societal awareness and decrease taboo on the two issues;
- Information on associated factors can be used for the development of effective CSA/incest education and prevention programmes and policies, which will allow for early identification and timely interventions to reduce the associated physical and psychological trauma and subsequent psychopathology, including risky sexual behaviours;
- By decreasing the incidence and prevalence of CSA/incest through culturally appropriate programmes, the immediate risk of HIV exposure among survivors will also be reduced (For more information see: *Appendix A: Links Between Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, and HIV Transmission*).



Break the Silence participants at a Tobago Service Provider Seminar in 2010

## Knowledge Products

One of the most significant and clear outcomes of this project has been its contribution to the generation of new gender-sensitive knowledge and understanding of child sexual abuse, a topic that is underemphasized in Trinidad & Tobago. The project has produced numerous high quality products, which have been utilized at both academic, and community levels. The following presents a summary of these knowledge products:

### **1. Literature Review on Child Sexual Abuse, with an emphasis on incest in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean**

This comprehensive report was produced in an effort to establish a baseline on CSA in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the Region. The review highlights the main areas where work exists related to CSA/incest, and the scope and breadth of this work, including strengths and limitations. Organized by theme, this Report also focuses on the general and specific impacts of CSA/incest in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean, as well as various responses of critical stakeholders including the family, community, civil society and the State to the issue. The Report further provides profiles of CSA/incest survivors and perpetrators, as well as discussion on CSA/incest risk factors. Key themes the author discusses include: definitions of CSA/incest, risk factors related to CSA/incest, characteristics of intact sexually abusive families, mother-blame in the situation of CSA/incest, CSA accommodation syndrome, cultural descriptors, children as perpetrators of sexual violence, sexual abuse of girls and women with disabilities, homeless women, CSA and drug dependence in adult women, situations of child sexual abuse in two Caribbean territories, and the institutional and legal framework surrounding CSA/incest throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The Literature Review played an important role in providing the project team with a critique of the research and work that had been conducted thus far, including key questions that have been raised, and aims to identify areas of research that are still required.

## **2. Legal Review of Laws Related to Child Sexual Abuse/Incest in Trinidad and Tobago**

This review was another critical baseline measure for this intervention project and a critical input for the development of service provider training manuals. It provided readers with an understanding of the existing laws that service providers follow when forming policies/procedures for CSA/incest. The report specifically reviewed the existing criminal law on child sexual abuse as well as the reforms proposed by the Children Bill 2009. It also examined the legislative framework governing child protection, including the new framework set out in the Children's Authority Act 2000, as amended by the Children's Authority (Amendment) Act 2008, but not yet implemented.

## **3. Study of Service Provision Related to Child Sexual Abuse/Incest in Trinidad and Tobago**

This study embarked on exploring the protocols, policies and practices of service provision related to CSA in Trinidad and Tobago by gathering information from 1) agency directors/managers and 2) individuals involved in frontline service delivery – referred to as direct service providers. The project research team developed two research instruments and gathered a purposive sample that was representative of service provision in three communities in which community-based activities unfolded in Year 2 of the Research Project. Sixty-eight interviews were conducted, of which 28 were with senior administrators at agencies and 40 were with frontline workers. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from the interviews. Of the 28 agencies that participated, 36% were government agencies providing services on a national level, 29% were government agencies providing services on a community level, 21% NGO, 11% FBO, and 3% CBO. The majority of the Agencies (70%) had been in operation for more than ten years. These agencies were located throughout Trinidad and Tobago with 46% involved in national level service provision, 32% serving Tobago, 11% serving North-East Trinidad, 4% serving South Trinidad, 4% serving Aranguez El/Socorro and 3% serving the City of San Fernando.

## **4. Findings Report from Ethnographic Case Studies of Three Communities in Trinidad and Tobago**

The specific objectives of these ethnographic case studies were to gain an understanding of community member's perceptions and attitudes to CSA/incest as well as their understanding of the meaning and significance of CSA/incest. The ethnographic studies also aimed to sensitize community members to the issue of CSA/incest and the relationship to HIV/AIDS, thus preparing them for the action-oriented prevention intervention. Data for the studies was collected through qualitative ethnographic methods including observation, social mapping, key informant interviews and informal interviews in the field. Themes that the Project team developed to guide researchers inquiry, discovery and exploration of relationships included



Break the Silence participants at the first Soap Opera Workshop in Toco, Trinidad

of family types, child care patterns, substance abuse and religious beliefs on sexual beliefs and practices; ideological contradictions, rationalizations, myths and stereotypes; and the attitude to perpetrators known in the community. Researchers explored these themes in the last 6 weeks of the study through structured interviews with a wide range of community members. Preliminary findings from this study were presented at the Caribbean Studies Association Annual Conference in Kingston Jamaica in June 2009. The Final Report was disseminated to relevant stakeholders, and IGDS, UWI libraries in St. Augustine, Trinidad; Cave Hill, Barbados; and Mona, Jamaica.

## 5. Service Provider Policy Training Manual

This training manual was produced and disseminated to approximately 30 service providers of CSA/incest and HIV services in Trinidad and 55 service providers of CSA/incest and HIV services in Tobago. Along with providing participants of the workshop with a summary of findings from the Study of Service Provision in Trinidad and Tobago conducted in 2008, this critical training manual also included readings and activities related to gender sensitization, and on how to create organizational policies and protocols. This knowledge product will be further utilized by service providers to conduct their own training sessions for staff and will be utilized to further enhance their responses to CSA.

## 6. Protocols for Child Sexual Abuse/Incest Service Delivery in Trinidad and Tobago

This knowledge product was produced at two national workshops (1 in Trinidad and 1 in Tobago) with approximately 30 service providers of CSA/incest and HIV services in Trinidad and 55 service providers of CSA/ incest and HIV services in Tobago. Along with receiving a summary of findings from the Study of Service Provision in Trinidad



and Tobago conducted in 2008 and providing feedback, workshop participants created protocols for five key areas related to CSA/incest service delivery, including reporting, Interviewing, investigation, referrals, training and service provider self care. The purpose of this exercise was to develop uniform, high quality, children-friendly seamless service for victims of CSA/incest in Trinidad and Tobago. The protocols were distributed to all workshop participants in order for them to adopt and integrate them into their agencies, as well as relevant policymakers throughout the country. They are also available upon request at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, UWI, St. Augustine campus.

## 7. Break the Silence Radio Soap Opera

Yet another significant output of this project was a seven-episode radio soap opera. It was developed as part of a community skills-building workshop aimed at raising awareness about child sexual abuse (CSA)/incest and gender, and implications for HIV. The soap opera was developed in collaboration with community members from a Project target community, who participated in writing the script, acting in the soap opera, and recording and editing it. The soap opera will be aired on a national and community radio station several times in 2011, and a teaching guide featuring issues and talking points that arise from the episodes will be created to accompany it. At the end of each episode, an expert service provider will facilitate a live interactive session discussing issues raised by the programme where callers can call in to ask questions. The soap opera will also be copied onto 200 CDs to distribute to stakeholders involved in the soap opera creation, including NGOs and schools, as well as participants at a Regional Conference. Finally, copies of the CD will be made available to IGDS, UWI libraries in St. Augustine, Trinidad; Cave Hill, Barbados; and Mona, Jamaica.



Break the Silence flyer for generating interest in the creation of the soap opera.

## 8. Break the Silence Posters and Postcards



One of the most memorable knowledge products of this project was the posters and postcards that feature the Break the Silence Project symbol and community and/or national counselling and HIV resources throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The symbol – a blue teddy bear with a plaster over its heart - was created by the Project Team (in collaboration with communities) to brand the intervention with a visual symbol that persons can associate with CSA/incest and implications for HIV awareness. Posters were distributed widely to participants of the service provider study findings and draft policy workshops, participants of Project education and skills building workshops, as well as to the following agencies in select communities throughout the country:

- primary and secondary schools;
- health centres;
- community centres;
- hospitals;
- police stations; and
- religious institutions.

Break the Silence National Campaign Poster (17 x 11 inches)



Break the Silence National Campaign Folded Card Handouts Front Back and Inside

## 9. Break the Silence Community Signs



These signs feature the Project symbol and highlight a national CSA/incest and HIV counselling 24-hour hotline. The symbol – a blue teddy bear with a bandage over its heart – was created by the Project Team to brand the intervention with a visual symbol that persons can associate with CSA/incest and implications for HIV awareness. The community signs were posted in the three Project target communities, as well as ten central locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Break the Silence Community Signs (48 x 36 inches)

## 10. Break the Silence Digital Billboards

The digital billboard features the Project symbol and highlights a national CSA/incest and HIV counselling 24-hour hotline. The symbol – a blue teddy bear with a bandage over its heart – was created by the Project Team to brand the intervention with a visual symbol that persons can associate with CSA/incest and implications for HIV awareness. The billboard was posted on a major highway in Trinidad in June 2010, and September – December 2010, and will be posted again in April 2011 to commemorate Child Sexual Abuse Month.



Break the Silence Digital Billboards made possible in 2010 by Motion Media Advertising in November 2010 and April 2011.

## 11. Newspaper Articles and Clippings

In March 2010 and May 2010, *UWI Today* published a total of three articles describing different elements of the Project, and related issues of gender, CSA/incest and implications for HIV that reached a national audience. *UWI Today* is the official campus newspaper of the University of West Indies, St. Augustine and is distributed as a supplement to a national newspaper once a month. Several other project articles will be produced and circulated through this means in 2011 as well.

### **UWI Today, November 2009**

Breaking the Silence – 16 Days of Activism

[http://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/archive/november\\_2009/article4.asp](http://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/archive/november_2009/article4.asp)

### **UWI Today, April 2010**

Blue teddy bear logo launched

[http://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/archive/april\\_2010/article6.asp](http://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/archive/april_2010/article6.asp)

UWI Today, March 2010

How we are breaking the silence

[http://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/archive/march\\_2010/article12.asp](http://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/archive/march_2010/article12.asp)

In November 2010 and in April 2011, All the major newspapers covered the Universal Children's Day March and the Break the Walls of Silence April Campaigning events, respectively. Some links

### **The Student Press April 2011**

<http://www.thestudentpressdigital.com/>

<http://www.newsday.co.tt/day/1,49329.html#foto>

<http://www.newsday.co.tt/day/1,49328.html#foto>

<http://guardian.co.tt/news/2011/04/10/indarsingh-five-cent-signal-other-unions>





Break the Silence participants paint a banner at the Charlotteville Health Fair and Arts Workshops, and at the closing ceremony in Charlotteville, Tobago, 2010

## 12. Documentary Film and Accompanying Educational Booklet

This documentary discusses the Project research and intervention model, as well as major themes that emerged from the research. It also features video footage of the Break the Silence education and skills building workshops, so viewers can get a better sense of how the model was implemented. The documentary and booklet will be featured at the regional conference scheduled in April 2011 and will be distributed to schools and libraries throughout the country for use in CSA/incest and HIV prevention efforts.

### **Samples of work by Dion Boucaud, Free Spirit Media**

Break the Silence Introductory 4 min video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFnXs-eG0is>

Break the Silence video on the Justice for Children March, Universal Children's Day, November 2010

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oei3x4op9wk>

## 13. Webisodes

These mini 5-minute films designed for the Web discuss key issues related to gender, CSA/incest and implications for HIV that emerged from the research such as parenting issues, gender sensitisation and sexuality and the link between CSA/incest and HIV. The themes discussed in each Webisode will correlate with the themes of each episode of the soap opera and its accompanying booklet.

## 14. Policy Briefs

This knowledge product was developed based on an analysis of research findings from all data collected for the action-research project: Breaking the Silence: A Multisectoral Approach to Preventing and Addressing Child Sexual Abuse/Incest in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as recommendations developed at a high-level policy round table with 42 senior policymakers and stakeholders in from Trinidad and Tobago in April 2011. The briefs include a problem statement, background to the problem, current status and policy recommendations for five key issues related to CSA/incest in Trinidad and Tobago: service delivery, gender, education, legislation and HIV. These briefs were distributed to all participants of the Regional Conference: Understanding and Preventing Child Sexual Abuse and HIV Risk: Presentation of Research Findings and an Intervention Model, held at the University of West Indies, St. Augustine campus from 4-6 May 2011. They will also be made available on the Project Website in May 2011

via <http://sta.uwi.edu/conferences/11/breakthesilence/>

## 15. Break the Silence: end child sexual abuse Website

The screenshot shows the website for the 'Break the Silence' project. At the top, it identifies 'THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES ST AUGUSTINE CAMPUS, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'. The main header is 'IGDS INSTITUTE FOR GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES'. A search bar is located in the top right. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with items like Home, About the Project, Research, Key Events, Media Campaign, Service Providers, Activists, Victims and Friends of Victims, Resources, facebook cause, Flicker, and Useful Links. The main content area features a large blue bear logo with a bandage on its chest, next to the text 'Break the Silence: end child sexual abuse'. To the right of the logo is a small image of a map of Trinidad and Tobago with the text 'REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2011'. Below this, there are six columns of categorized links: 'Activism' (Outreach Tables, Walks or Marches, Parenting Groups, Womens Community Groups, Counselling Centres, Walls), 'Events' (BTS Conference May 2011, Walls April 2011, Justice for Children March Nov 2010), 'Brand Items' (Lapel Pins, Buttons, T-shirts, Posters, Hand Outs, Banners, Where to order), 'Online Tools' (Educational Booklet, Methodologies, Media Packs), 'Resource Information' (ChildLine, Etc), and 'Media' (Radio Soap Opera, 2011, Documentary Film, 2011, Webisodes, 2011, Introductory Video, 2010). The footer contains contact details for The University of the West Indies and a row of international flags.

Screen image of the website being developed.

This Break the Silence Website will be featured on the IGDS Website, as a sub-website of The University of the West Indies website. It is being designed specifically to post links, articles, tools related to:

- the research on gender, CSA/incest and implications for HIV;
- the Project community intervention model;
- the documentary film, webisodes, soap opera material;
- the policy and service delivery recommendations that emerge from the research findings;
- and the media campaign model, tools and information for activists.

## **16. Break the Silence: end child sexual abuse Social Media and other links**

To date, the Break the Silence: end child sexual abuse media campaign has gained a huge following as a cause on facebook and on the Break the Silence: end CSA facebook page.

### **Campaign Facebook Cause:**

<http://www.causes.com/causes/523954-break-the-silence-end-child-sexual-abuse>

### **Campaign Facebook Page:**

<http://www.facebook.com/breakthesilenceendCSA>

The Break the Silence Regional Conference, 2011 titled, **Understanding and Preventing Child Sexual Abuse and HIV Risk: Presentation of Research Findings and an Intervention Model "** has an independent website for all conference related material.

### **Conference Website:**

<http://sta.uwi.edu/conferences/11/breakthesilence/>