Gender Based Violence Prevention in Trinidad and Tobago

Girls married before age 18 are 2X as likely to report being the victim of marital violence.* #GBV

OVERVIEW:
In the Caribbean region, the global health organization Population Services International (PSI) operates through its affiliate hub, PSI/Caribbean (PSI/C). Since 2005, PSI/C - a non-profit social marketing organization - has been working to measurably contribute to the development of favourable environments that facilitate healthy lives among the people of the Caribbean to promote healthier behaviours as well as greater availability of and access to key health information, products and services, especially for low income and high-risk populations.

Headquartered in Trinidad and locally integrated in twelve countries across the region and internationally connected through PSI’s global network, PSI/C is able to develop highly innovative and effective social marketing programs around priority health issues in the Caribbean.

PSI/C began its work focusing on HIV prevention - promoting condom use and availability. The organization has since expanded its activities into addressing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) more broadly and continues to grow with the health challenges faced by the region, looking at ways to assist in addressing growing health priorities in non-communicable disease prevention.

Globally, PSI has been engaging philanthropic individuals to pilot innovative health projects for girls and women to grow the evidence base and take programs to scale. One such partnership is with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Initial pilot projects are being implemented in India, Uganda and Trinidad and Tobago. In Trinidad and Tobago the pilot project is a gender based violence prevention (GBV) program that was initiated in early 2014.

THE SITUATION:
In many parts of Trinidad and Tobago, an imbalance of power exists between men and women both in public and private spaces. Different value is placed on women and girls, and on men and boys. These unhealthy gender relations shape the trajectory of GBV in the country, and cultivate an environment for GBV to flourish.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the number of reported cases of violence against girls and women is staggering. Three of the top ten countries with the highest incidence of rape are Caribbean countries—the Bahamas, Jamaica and Barbados. Trinidad and Tobago is not far behind.¹

Interpersonal violence (including GBV and rape) ranks fifth out of 44 disease areas, accounting for 5.4% of the total years of lives lost due to premature deaths – demonstrating the extent to which gender based violence is a public health issue.

THE APPROACH:
Gender inequality and negative gender norms are the root causes of GBV. Eliminating GBV means transforming attitudes and engaging influencers. In Trinidad and Tobago, PSI/C will work with local partners, community members and policy makers on a comprehensive response as outlined below:

1. At the individual level, we will increase access to quality, comprehensive services and support for women and girls experiencing violence.

2. At the family level, we will work with men, boys and mother’s in-law to address harmful traditional practices and to change negative gender norms.

3. At the community level, we will engage community members on prevention and support services for survivors - making women and girls an active part of the solution.

4. At the institutional level, we will develop guidelines for comprehensive screening, treatment and care for women and girls, including the establishment of support programs for social assistance, housing, education and work placement.

5. At the societal level, we will raise public awareness and advocacy efforts for legal reform and law enforcement that will help shift societal paradigms.

OUTPUTS:
1. Conduct an assessment to identify risk factors for GBV; understand community knowledge, attitudes and practice; understand traditional, religious beliefs and practices; identify community based protection mechanisms and map the availability of existing GBV facility-based services.

2. Build relationships with existing service providers and identify needs to strengthen their capacity. Support will include:
   - Guidelines and standard operating procedures to ensure comprehensive screening, treatment and care. Care includes supporting rape survivors in clinics and referring them to psychological and legal assistance.
   - Ensuring that shelters and safe houses provide girls and women with a safe space to escape from their abusers and have immediate access to health providers.

3. Expand PSI's existing youth program, Youth At Risk (YAR) to include a GBV after-school youth empowerment program. The program will use elements of sports, arts and culture to engage adolescent girls and boys in three high-risk communities with a focus on reinforcing positive gender relations and addressing harmful traditional practices.

4. Conduct comprehensive interventions in select communities with a high prevalence of GBV and engage locally recognized leaders to be ambassadors for change. This will be done through awareness raising campaigns, community discussion forums, interpersonal and behavior change communication, and outreach sessions to transform negative gender norms and make referrals to support and treatment services for girls and women. The activities include identifying model couples and model fathers, specifically to influence boys and men in PSI’s network with gender transformative messages to build a more positive environment for girls, women and families.

5. Design and execute a national media campaign to promote GBV services and to increase public awareness about GBV prevention.

6. Partner with government task forces involved in judicial reform and law enforcement to ensure advocacy efforts are collaborative and aligned to provide the most impactful GBV prevention and care services to women and girls in Trinidad and Tobago.

7. Leverage Indrani’s Light Foundation and PSI’s expertise in communications and social media to create a virtual support network of survivors that will be linked locally, regionally and internationally through an online forum. The San Francisco based Indrani’s Light Foundation, is a nonprofit organization with international scope and is dedicated to providing solutions to Gender Based Violence.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
PSI/Caribbean
30 O’Connor Street
Woodbrook, Port-of-Spain
Trinidad, West Indies
Phone: + 1-868-628-7318 / 2497
Fax: + 1-868-622-1783
info@psicaribbean.org

ONLINE TOUCH POINTS:
www.psicaribbean.org
www.facebook.com/psicaribbean

Partner Logos: