



DoGA: Supporting victims of GBSV

The Directorate of Gender Affairs (DoGA) in Antigua and Barbuda emerged as a pioneer in the Caribbean when it launched the region's first Support and Referral Centre (SARC) for victims of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV), and human trafficking on June 23, 2017.

The Directorate, which falls under the Ministry of Social Transformation and Human Resource Development, headed by the Honourable Minister Samantha Marshall, established the SARC with support from the United Nations Trust Fund Project to End Violence Against Women and Girls, and UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean. The initiative is part of the Directorate's National Strategic Action Plan to combat gender-based and sexual violence.

Ms. Farmala Jacobs, Executive Director (Ag), Directorate of Gender Affairs stated that the SARC (which is often referred to as a Sexual Assault Referral Centre in other jurisdictions) is a special facility where victims of GBSV and human trafficking can receive immediate help and support through an integrated, client-centered approach in one location.

"Specially trained members of the Support and Response Team (SART) provide all SARC services. The advocates, counsellors, legal aid professionals, police officers and medical health professionals who make up the SART are governed by a framework of protocols that define the roles and responsibilities of the SART, and dictate the standards and guiding principles of the Centre. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) confirms the partnerships between the Directorate and other supporting agencies" she said.

Ms. Jacobs explained that clients initially undergo an intake and assessment after which they can choose to receive medical, legal, or counselling services based on their needs. The fully resourced Centre offers safety planning, protection orders, emergency accommodations, court advocacy, dignity kits, and a support group. Clients can receive assistance from a SARC advocate who provides support throughout the process in English or Spanish either at the Centre or via a

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(left to right) **Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Valarie Smith; DoGA Resident Counsellor, T'Mira Looby; Acting Executive Director, Farmala Jacobs; Hon. Minister of Social Transformation & Human Resource Development, Samantha Marshall; UN Women MCO Caribbean Representative, Alison McLean; Pastor Kelvin Pelle at the SARC launch**

In this Issue

Dear Reader,

Welcome to another informative issue of *JURIST News*.

In this issue, we are pleased to feature the region's first Support and Referral Centre (SARC) established by the Directorate of Gender Affairs (DoGA) in Antigua and Barbuda. The Centre is "safe space" for victims of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and provides them with much-needed support services that meet their specific needs.

Over 150 appellate and trial judges, magistrates, court registrars, court administrators and other judicial officers from throughout the Caribbean met in Willemstad, Curaçao for the 5th biennial Conference of the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO). The Conference was hosted by the Judiciary of the Joint Court of Justice of Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten and Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba and sponsored in part by the JURIST Project.

The topics on the programme reflected the conference theme – "Innovative, Independent, Responsive – Delivering Justice in a Modern Court" and included gender sensitive adjudication, judicial mindfulness, standards and behaviour for social media, and transparency and accountability in the court office. The JURIST Project also took the opportunity at the Conference to launch its *Model Guidelines for Sexual Offence Cases in the Caribbean Region*.

Details of these initiatives and more are available in this issue for your reading pleasure. As always, we take this opportunity to remind you that we welcome and appreciate feedback from our readers. We encourage contributions, information or material that we can include in future issues of the Newsletter.

- *The JURIST Project Team*



The child friendly room at the SARC

About DoGA

As the primary agency for gender and development in Antigua and Barbuda, the mandate of the DoGA is to empower women and promote gender equality. DoGA seeks to facilitate development and bring positive change to Antigua and Barbuda by sensitizing society on the issue of gender and the key role it plays in national development.

It provides guidance and leadership on gender and development to other government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society, and faith-based organisations by:

- Compiling and disseminating information on gender issues and development
- Creating and interpreting gender-based policies and establishing performance standards

VISION

DoGA is committed to building a country in which women and men enjoy their full rights as individuals and are equal partners in shaping the economic, political, social and cultural development of the country.

MISSION

DoGA's goal is to be the leading agency in responding to all forms of gender inequality in Antigua and Barbuda, and advocating for its elimination. Its aim to do this through sensitization and awareness campaigns, gender mainstreaming programmes, drafting policy, and facilitating community-based action.



UN Women MCO Caribbean Representative, Alison McLean (left) and DoGA Resident Counsellor, T'Mira Looby examine a sample dignity kit at the SARC launch

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24-Hour Crisis Hotline. The SARC also provides referrals for clients with partner agencies.

“The Centre features individual spaces for intake, case management, and referrals; police interviews; one-on-one counselling; medical examinations; bathroom and shower facilities; and an administrative office,” she added.

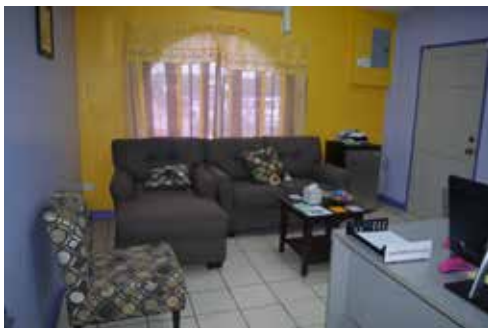
The administrative office functions as a data collection hub and houses the National Gender-Based and Sexual Violence Electronic database. This database is another flagship programme of the DoGA which allows for robust case management including tracking a case through the legal process, attaching new information, and conducting follow-ups with clients. Data analysis capabilities are also offered as the system was designed as part of the SARC's goal to usher in a more modern approach to the treatment and investigation of GBSV cases in Antigua and Barbuda.

The SARC also includes a child-friendly space

where staff supervise clients' children while they access services. In addition to immediate client care, the SARC offers a series of mindfulness and empowerment programmes and activities, including yoga and expressive art therapy, which are designed to encourage clients' holistic healing and recovery. All SARC services and programmes are offered free of charge.

Since its doors opened, Ms. Jacobs noted that 110 clients (103 women, and 7 men) have accessed the SARC services. Thirty-three clients have received ongoing counselling through the SARC counselling program. She continued: “Clients have called the SARC a “Safe Space” and continuously express how comfortable they feel when accessing services.”

According to Ms. Jacobs, launching the SARC represents a major step towards improving services for victims in Antigua and Barbuda and provides an opportunity for government and non-government agencies to work together in partnership to best serve the community.



Counselling Room



Examination Room

JURIST Project launches Model Sexual Offence Guidelines

The Judicial Reform and Institutional Strengthening (JURIST) Project launched its Model Guidelines for Sexual Offence Cases in the Caribbean Region at the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officer's (CAJO) 5th Biennial Conference which was held in Curaçao from September 28 – 30, 2017.

The Guidelines are intended to provide internationally accepted best practices for the management of sexual offence cases, and offer a rights-based approach to the treatment of complainants and vulnerable witnesses, including children, involved in sexual assault cases.

Speaking at the launch, the Honourable Mme. Justice Rajnauth-Lee, Judge at the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) explained that even though the CARICOM region has made progress in promoting gender equality, sexual violence perpetrated against women, girls and boys remains a significant problem. The region, she said, experiences high levels of sexual violence - the majority of which is underreported and ineffectively dealt with by the justice system.

She noted there have been improvements in the justice system's response to sexual assaults and the survivors of sexual violence who seek redress from the courts. "However, a 2016 Baseline Study, commissioned by the JURIST Project and undertaken by UN Women, found that the justice system's management of sexual offences and its treatment of complainants and witnesses remains uneven, uncoordinated (in relation to the relationship between justice sector actors who work along the justice chain with sexual offences) and continues to lead to the re-victimisation of survivors who seek protection and redress," the CCJ Judge said.

Justice Rajnauth-Lee stated that the Guidelines will provide guidance to justice sector stakeholders involved in the reporting, investigation, prosecution and adjudication of sexual offences.

Dr. Penny Reddie, Project Director, JURIST hailed the



Dr. Penny Reddie (standing), JURIST Project Director, addresses participants at the launch of the Model Sexual Offence Guidelines at CAJO. Looking on are Ms. Diana Shaw (center), Legal Consultant and The Honourable Mme. Justice Maureen Rajnauth Lee, Judge at the CCJ



The Honourable Mme. Justice Maureen Rajnauth Lee (right), Judge at the CCJ presents a copy of the Guidelines to the Honourable Sir Marston Gibson, Chief Justice of Barbados

development of the Guidelines as a major milestone in the life of the Project. "These Guidelines are the result of hard work, dedication, and commitment to improve the management of sexual offences cases and treatment of survivors of sexual offences throughout the region" she noted.

It is hoped that the Guidelines will be adopted by all countries in the region and that its implementation will result in:

- speedy adjudication of cases and reduction of case backlogs over time;
- improved responses to survivors that will enable their full participation in the justice system, increase offender accountability and reduce secondary

victimisation;

- a trained and skilled cadre of cross-sectional professionals including judges, court personnel, police and attorneys to efficiently respond to sexual assault cases, survivors and witnesses; and
- increased public confidence in the justice system as it relates to the handling of sexual assault cases.

Launches of the Guidelines will take place in Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica and St. Lucia during the next few months.

The *Model Guidelines for Sexual Offence Cases in the Caribbean Region* is available on the JURIST Project website at:

<http://www.juristproject.org/publication/model-guidelines>.

Diversity key to building an effective judiciary

Judges and magistrates from around the Commonwealth met in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania from September 24-28, 2017 for the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association (CMJA) Conference, where independence and diversity were highlighted as key to an effective judiciary.

The Conference, under the theme "Building an effective, accountable and inclusive judiciary," was opened by Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Samia Hassan, Vice-President of United Republic of Tanzania, who announced that a judiciary fund had been established in Tanzania to provide its courts with better resources.

District Judge Shamim Qureshi, Director of Programmes of the CMJA, said: "This has been our largest regional conference to date. We tackled current issues affecting the Commonwealth judiciary. In particular, we discussed mechanisms to promote greater judicial effectiveness and inclusiveness, addressed the



A cross section of the participants at the CMJA Conference

gender imbalance in appointments to the Bench and dealt with hostile public attacks on the judiciary."

Approximately 360 participants from 41 jurisdictions attended, including representatives from the Commonwealth Secretariat, making it a record attendance for a regional conference of the CMJA.

Chief Justice Bart Katureebe of Uganda in a keynote

speech, said there should be greater public engagement between judges and the public, and judiciaries should have a gender strategy. He also pointed out that the court system must have sufficient funds to operate as an equal arm of the state.

Justice Lynne Leitch of Canada spoke about "challenges to building inclusiveness and diversity in the modern judiciary" saying "there was a greater need for judges to embrace diversity in order to maintain public confidence."

The Right Honourable Haroun Ali Suleiman, Minister of Constitutional and Legal Affairs of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar closed the conference and announced the next CMJA Conference will be held under the theme "Becoming Stronger Together" in Brisbane, Australia from September 9-14, 2018.

Further details on the Conference can be found at www.cmja.org

The 5th Biennial CAJO Conference in Curaçao

The 5th Biennial Conference of the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO) concluded on Saturday, September 30, 2017 at the Renaissance Resort and Casino in Willemstad, Curaçao.

Hosted by the Judiciary of the Joint Court of Justice of Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten and Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, it was the first time the Conference has been held outside of the Anglophone Caribbean. The Conference was sponsored in part by the Judicial Reform and Institutional Strengthening (JURIST) Project.

Under the theme “Innovative, Independent, Responsive – Delivering Justice in a Modern Court,” the Conference attracted over 150 judicial officers from the Anglophone Caribbean, Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, Canada and the United States.

The opening keynote address entitled “Justice Delayed is Justice Denied,” was delivered by the Honourable Mr. Justice Denys Barrow, Judge at the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ).

Professor Ernst Hirsch Ballin, distinguished University Professor at Tilburg University, also delivered a well-received address on “The Fragility of Trust. The importance of judicial stability in national and international political turmoil.”

He noted in his presentation that “strengthening trust is a question of a professional and if necessary courageous attitude. It is also a question of paying attention to people, especially to those who need to be protected, including vulnerable law-seeking people.”

Also included in this year’s Conference programme was the launch of the JURIST Project’s Sexual Offences Guidelines meant to provide a framework for dealing with sexual offences (especially where children are involved) and for handling sexual offence cases and victims.

Other “hot button” topics discussed at the Conference included cybercrime, judges’ use of social media and judicial gender sensitivity.

The effects of the Hurricanes Irma and Maria on many of the region’s nations were also of concern to many of the attendees. CAJO Chairman and CCJ Judge, the Honourable Mr. Justice Adrian Saunders, urged attendees to contribute generously to the various fund-raising initiatives throughout the region and indicated that CAJO would be collecting funds at the conference to donate to the Honourable Chief Justices Eunice Saleh of the Joint Antillean Court and Dame Janice Pereira of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court.

At the close of the Conference, CAJO elected a new 13 - member management committee. The Conference also recognized the sterling contribution of the region’s registrars, magistrates, parish court judges and court administrators to the development of Caribbean jurisprudence and the efficiency of regional justice systems. It also called for an enhancement of the status of magistrates and supported the suggestion that they be referred to as parish court or district judges.



Professor Ernst Hirsh Ballin (standing), University Professor at Tilburg University delivers an address while The Honourable Mr. Justice Winston Anderson (centre), Judge and the Right Honourable Sir Dennis Byron, President, both of the CCJ look on



Participants at the 5th Biennial CAJO Conference



The items from the Caribbean Association of Women Judges' (CAWJ) silent auction on display

The Conference resolution further stated that these judicial officers should enjoy full immunity from suit in the execution of their duties performed in good faith. Additionally, the Association called for improvements in and strengthening of court and case management systems to meet the current and future needs of the justice system and urged that appropriate resources be

directed to personnel and court infrastructure to meet these needs.

The next CAJO Conference will be held in Belize in 2019.

The full resolution is available on CAJO’s website at www.thecaajo.org

