CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago (CCoTT) is a volunteer non-governmental organization focused on Advocacy and Public Awareness on and for the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

**MISSION**
Ensure the Convention mandates are upheld, and the recommendations highlighted in the Closing Observations are implemented in the context of Trinidad and Tobago.

**VISION**
A sensitized, knowledgeable and educated citizenry, on the convention and its mandates who will hold all stakeholders accountable for its comprehensive implementation.

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  Monitoring Government’s action on Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Collaboration for Impact, Know your Status get Tested

Let’s Talk TT is an initiative of the British High Commission and the EU Delegation to Trinidad and Tobago. It was developed to create a neutral platform where pressing concerns related to gender-based violence and gender equality can be discussed, in an effort to raise awareness and create healthy dialogue on the issues. The theme for 2018, #Let’sTalkTT: MenSpeak was focused on providing a platform to discuss the male perspective on gender inequalities and stereotypes.

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Let’s TALK TT -Men Speak continued

by Crystal Roberts, CCoTT Member

The fact that women are disproportionately affected by Gender-Based Violence (GBV), since one in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime, worldwide, members of the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago (CCoTT) engaged in the discussion through a series of media segments on the topic of Male Violence in an effort to create a balanced perspective. Gender-based violence is an issue that has far reaching consequences as it affects the health, security and autonomy of its victims which in turn affects an entire society. CCoTT in its contribution reiterated the fact that ending gender-based violence should not be seen as a male versus female phenomenon but as a societal issue which requires a collaborative effort between both parties around a common issue. Gender based violence is still shrouded in a culture of silence in Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the world. CCoTT as in previous discussions sought to amplify their voices and seize the opportunity to solidify the view that the power of a collective voice through collaboration is what it takes to advocate and lead campaigns towards ending GBV and achieving gender equality. The amplification of CCoTT’s voice though, by no means was an attempt to silence the voice of the men. CCoTT did not forget that this initiative was a platform for men to speak and the importance of listening to what they have to say if we are to continue to raise awareness and develop solutions to ending GBV. Further, CCoTT applauded the fact that men were speaking up about the issue. Representatives from organizations such as the Citizen Security Program and The Single Fathers Association of Trinidad and Tobago all gave meaningful insights during the conversations. Let’s Talk TT is one such initiative which continues to bring together civil society and other individuals from diverse backgrounds to contribute to the ongoing conversation on GBV and gender equality. As the conversations progresses, CCoTT remains committed to shaping the trajectory towards achieving a gender equal society.

We must all work together to end violence against women

Amïlcar Sanatan, Instructor, UWI Department of Geography and Terry Ince, Convener, CEDAW Committee of T&T

Violence against women (VAW) continues to afflict Caribbean societies and undermine national development. This has costs on the psychic and social well-being of victims as well as social and public health sectors and the economy. According to UN Women Caribbean, 1 in 3 women will experience a form of gender-based violence. Violence against women - including domestic violence, intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault and public street harassment - is fundamentally violation of their human rights. Notably, through activist agitation and the growing number of parliamentary voices to reduce violence against women, there is legislation that empowers the state to address the problem of violence against women. However, the shortcomings in implementation, low prosecution rates, and discontinued legal proceedings by victims who are sometimes pressured into dropping charges for a few reasons limit the achievements of the legislation.

In Trinidad and Tobago, where violence and crime are prevalent, it is necessary that the state and social groups make specialized interventions to address the problem of violence against women. While public awareness campaigns share information and challenge the ideas that promote violence against women in society, it is equally important that we assign the resources for community security and social services to eliminate violence against women. International instruments, such as the CEDAW convention provide guidance and a framework for building appropriate
societal infrastructures to promote balance and equality and to circumvent the dynamics that indirectly or directly allow for violence against women and girls. CEDAW – the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women – is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Trinidad and Tobago became a signatory to the convention in 1985 and ratified it in 1990. Since then this country has made important advances in protections for women, girls and families in areas such as education, health and safety, family court, maternity and human trafficking.

It was welcome news when in March 2018, the green paper on the Gender Policy was laid in cabinet and this past Tuesday November 27, the Gender Equality Protocol for Judicial Officers was launched by the Judiciary, which would provide for justice through a gender lens. Beyond the legal/judicial framework, however, we must recognize the role we all should play, so that as a country we achieve substantive equality for Men and Women, Boys and Girls. Public and Private sector, Civil Society and Citizens must stand up and speak out against violence in all forms and against women and girls.

Trinidad and Tobago enjoys an active women’s movement that, when mobilized, can affect change, so we must continue to collaborate around common issues, form more allies and move the needle forward.

Men too must see themselves as a critical stakeholder working with the women’s movement and feminist leaders to advance gender equality. During these 16 Days of Activism, therefore, we encourage men to speak out, speak up and challenge those men who perform acts of violence against women.

Men’s organizations in South Africa, Brazil and India, for example, have joined the #HearMeToo campaign to add their voices to the struggle to end violence against women and advance a wider dialogue on accountability. The #LetsTalkTT: Men Speak campaign of the European Union Delegation and the British High Commission here in Trinidad and Tobago is one such effort among many to create conversations with men that mobilise them to public action. Progress is being made, but as a society we must stay engaged, involved and remain vigilant to ensure that we continue moving in the direction of a humane equitable society.

Local groups address discrimination against women

PAULA LINDO
Eden Community
The CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) Committee of T&T (CCoTT) held a working session on December 5 to examine the five specific recommendations made to the Government following the 2016 CEDAW review in Geneva. (CCoTT) convener Terry Issac said the five recommendations were wide-ranging and comprehensive. The working session brought together state and non-state representatives, women’s human rights defenders, policymakers and influencers and concerned citizens, including representatives from the Ministry of the Attorney General Office and Legal Affairs (MOA), International Human Rights Unit, Office of the Prime Minister Gender Affairs Division (OPM/GAD), Ministry of National Security Anti-Trafficking Unit, T&T Police Service Victim and Witness Support (VWS) Unit, Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CADV) with the keynote delivered by the Chair of the Equal Opportunity Commission. During the session, reports were made as to the progress of State agencies towards implementation of the recommendations since they were made in 2016. The first recommendation was that the State ensure that all cases of gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls be thoroughly and effectively investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and adequately punished and that the Central Registry on Domestic Violence has up-to-date statistical data on cases focusing on all forms of gender-based violence against women. Since 2006, a Central Registry has been established, but statistical data is only collected for cases involving domestic violence. Attempts are being made to change the data collection form to include all cases of gender-based violence against women. Victims rights brochures have been created in multiple languages and made available with the support of the Anti-Trafficking Unit. The second recommendation was that the State undertake a needs assessment to establish the demand for shelters by women who are victims of violence and ensure that shelters are accessible and sufficiently resourced throughout the State. Director of the Gender Affairs Division Antoinette Jack-Martin indicated that three shelters, one male and two feminine, are needed. Discussion took place as to what is the capacity of the article continued on page 6

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More discussion on gender based violence to come in 2019

CCoTT in Action

1. Presented at CSW62 in New York / importance of advocacy, activism and managing backlash
2. Parliament House Roundtable discussion at CHOGM – Women’s Forum on the invitation of ActionAid – “the importance of including women in state Labour and industry decision making”
3. Sub-committee meetings with House and JSC Leadership
4. participant - 10th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality – Gender Responsive Climate Action
5. Contribution - Ministry of Labour initiative on Sexual Harassment policy
6. Inaugural Fund raiser – August
7. Regional outreach
8. Internal CEDAW convention training – Begins
9. Public awareness and sensitization locally CEDAW/C/TTO//CO/4-7 #17
10. Collaboration - Office of the Prime Minister Gender Affairs Division on the Concluding Observation National Action Plan CEDAW/C//TTO//CO/4-7 9c
11. Began work on the inventory of laws discriminatory towards women (need funding) CEDAW/C//TTO//CO/4-7 10c
12. Contribution - Office of the Prime Minister Gender Affairs Division action on the issue of the Gender Policy CEDAW/C//TTO//CO/4-7 11c
13. Began work on the inventory of laws discriminatory towards women (need funding) CEDAW/C//TTO//CO/4-7 11d
14. Collaboration - CSOs to bring pressure on the state to amend the marriage acts CEDAW/C//TTO//CO/4-7 - 19c (resulted in change in law to make 18 years the legal age of marriage) (2017)
15. Collaboration - Office of the Prime Minister Gender Affairs Division action on the issue of the Gender Policy CEDAW/C//TTO//CO/4-7 11e
16. Lecturer on CEDAW to effect change – Women’s Human Rights Institute at the University of Toronto
17. Collaboration - EU and BHC on “Let’s Talk TT- Men Speak” campaign
18. GBV programme- Dec 6 to address the 5 recommendations highlighted in CEDAW/C//TTO//CO/4-7 21a-e

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