

# Global epidemic, regional responses: Violence against women in the EU and the Caribbean

*Violence against Women/Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean*

Dr Halimah DeShong

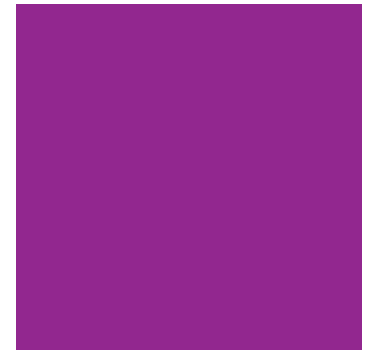
Head

Institute for Gender & Development

Studies: Nita Barrow Unit

The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill  
Campus

# Overview



- Naming and Framing Violence against Women & Gender-based Violence
  - State, Media and civil society
  - Research
- State and regional responses to VAW/GBV in the Caribbean

# NAMING VAW & GBV

## Intimate Partner Violence

- Domestic violence
- Intimate partner violence
- Gender based violence
- Marital violence
- Spousal abuse
- Wife beating
- Violence against women vs. fighting – This often racialised
- Violence vs. hitting


## Non-Partner Sexual Violence

- Rape
- Marital rape/ forced sex?
- Unwanted sex
- Sexual coercion
- Incest
- Child sexual abuse
- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment
- Street harassment
- Naming individuals - batterer, perpetrator, abuser, victim, survivor, complainant

# Conceptual Issues in Defining VAW & GBV

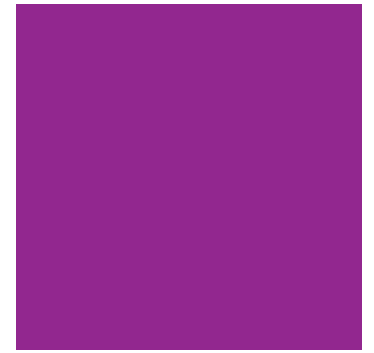


- VAW and GBV is often used synonymously, given women's overrepresentation as victims of sexual violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) (Gill and Mason-Bish 2013)
- The role of gender and its usefulness as a feminist analytical concept for interrogating this form of violence is often not fully explored



# The Potential of Anti-Decolonial Gender Analysis in VAW/GBV Work

# Qualitative Interview-Based Research & Media Analysis



- Rationalisations around infidelity and expectations of deference
- Externalising violence as a disembodied and detached from one's core self
- Violence among intimate partner regarded as less than ordinary violence
- Mobilises colonialist framings of gender

# Caribbean Online Newspaper

- ***[The defendant] told police his wife was being unfaithful, but had no recollection of the killing, according to the State's case. He said she used to entertain men at his home when he had gone to work and it had reached a stage where he could take it no more, so he killed her by drowning and buried her with trash.***
- A failure to see the broader systems of domination within which IPV is sustained
- Online news sources reinforce colonialist notions of respectability, appropriate sexual behaviour of women and women's putative proclivity to succumb to the lures of the public.

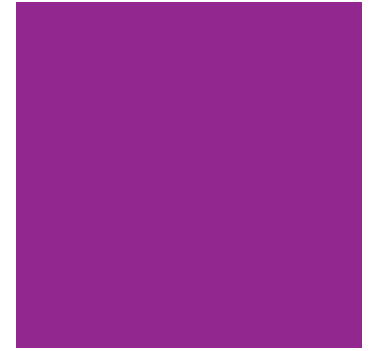




# State and Regional Responses to VAW/GBV



# Feminist Organising in the Caribbean to Address VAW/GBV



- VAW/GBV is the single most significant issue around which feminist have and continue to organise in the Caribbean
- Instrumental in legislative and policy change at the national and regional levels
- Significantly networked into global feminist movement and agenda to address VAW and GBV
- Changes to the sexual offences legislation in Trinidad and Tobago in the late 1980s was in large part due to feminist activism

# Feminist Organising in the Caribbean to Address VAW/GBV



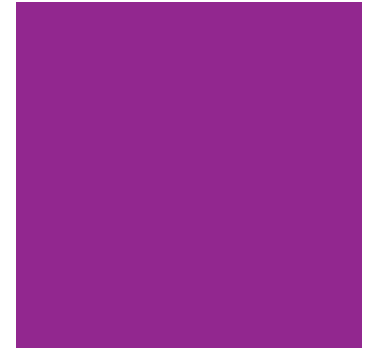
- Feminist activist in the Caribbean simultaneously critique and work alongside the state on VAW/GBV.
- CAFRA and CARIWA are examples of regional feminist networks that were instrumental in leading on research and activism that lead to changes in legislation and policies.
- CAFRA worked with governments and development agencies in conducting sensitivity police officers
- At the national level, women's and feminist organisations provide key essential services for survivors of GBV

# Feminist Organising in the Caribbean to Address VAW/GBV

- Example of actions at the national level
  - Belize – Productive Organisation for Women in Action (POWA)
  - Guyana – Red Thread – Multiracial Women’s Organisation

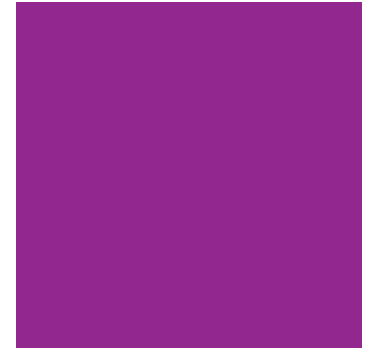


# State and Regional Responses



- Regional and Sub-regional law making
  - CARICOM Model legislation on issues affecting women – DV Acts, Sexual Offences Legislation, Sexual Harassment Legislation
  - Family Courts
- Policy Responses
  - National Gender-based Violence Action Plans
  - Shelters
  - Programming run by state gender machineries

# State, Regional & Community Responses



- Treaty obligations
- Policing
- Healthcare
- Prevalence surveys
- Informal networks and community response

# Police Officer



- *Domestic violence, I mean it don't really happen all of a sudden just like that. Domestic violence is like something that's been building, building, building . . . So I think it's somewhat different compared to the [other crimes]. Cause I don't think, it's just like at the spur of the moment. Something has to be happening in the home that would cause one of the party to reach to that point, because its love you know, and for you to move from love to hate, it has to be, it definitely has to be something that has been building, building over that period of time.*



# Case Study: Antigua & Barbuda

Feminist Activism and Strengthen State  
and Societal Responses to Address VAW &  
GBV