Combating GBV in the Caribbean & its Impact on Women and Girls with Disabilities

View from GBV activist

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Lifeline Dominica

The root causes for GBV….

against women and girls with disabilities are the same as for all women in the Caribbean

- Poverty
- Heritage of Slavery
- Rape Culture

PLUS

- Lack of a voiced outcry
- Lack of public indignation
- Discrimination

Prevention = Legislation + Implementation + change of attitude

The Dominican Government has ratified the CRPD but not yet implemented it. The radical Sexual Offences Amendment Act in 2016 which introduced Mandatory Reporting, outlawed Grooming and Voyeurism and clarified that rape is sex without consent what ever the circumstances.

The Act was amended by inserting a new section 36A which says that *"the convicted sexual offender should receive either 2/3 or the maximum sentence if* ***the complainant has a physical disability or mental disorder."*** 2016 SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT (AMENDMENT 14)

Post Maria, UNFPA funded 27 education sessions on Gender Based Violence Awareness

Investigation system traumatizing and prosecution system broken

Dominica has sexual offences legislation and has other bills pertaining to juveniles in the making. However it does not have a Family Court and still has the archaic Preliminary Inquiry and Confrontation system which is left over from colonial days and is skewed in favour of protecting the perps reputation.

Social services is disgracefully under resourced and does not have a system for integrated investigation.

Story about Downs syndrome adult deemed unable to give evidence but able to consent to "**Exercise**"

Dominican Gaps

Lifeline Victim Supporters include some from the Dominican Association of People with Disabilities. We have some way to go in providing accessible services however we aim for no individual to be excluded from receiving support in reporting due to their disability.

Story about the Police not investigating case of Deaf girl who was raped as they had no way to take her statement.

We need to train interpreters to be part of our team of Victim Supporters . In this day and age this could be by Zoom or What's app. So the interpreters do not need to be physically in the same country. Any volunteers?

What do we need to do?

We need to remind those providing GBV support services that:

- People with disabilities are especially at risk of abuse and exploitation .
- Communication is already a problem if you are a survivor
- Dependency on the abuser is acute if you cannot live independently.
- Some pedophiles are intrigued by an individual's disability.
- Incest is extra covert when the child has special needs
- Parents who look like heroes could be abusers
- **BELIEVE THE VICTIM**

We need to provide refresher courses for those on the frontline,
Especially nurses, doctors, teachers and civil society
We need to help survivors heal .
Healing starts with sharing your story

Contact Details

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Lifeline Ministries can be found on **www. lifelinedominica.org**

Thursday evening **Women's Empowerment Group** on Zoom

In collaboration with the Dominica Association of People with Disability and Dominica Planed Parenthood Association.