



WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH

November 2005 Vol. 1 Issue 8

14 South Avenue, Kingston 10, Jamaica, West Indies
Tel: (876) 926-0882 Fax: (876) 929-7079 Email: wmwjam@hotmail.com

Together against Violence against Women

Sexual Harassment is sexual discrimination and a violation of human rights. This is the essence of the problem being explored in consultations with women and men across Jamaica. **WMW** is collaborating with the **Bureau of Women's Affairs** and **Friedrich Ebert Stiftung** to measure the public's response to proposed legislation on sexual harassment. We've dedicated this issue to looking at sexual harassment in a Jamaican context. Flip the page to learn more

November is an important month—we mark **International Day for the**

Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW). At a special **Service of Remembrance** on Sunday, November 27, 10:30am at the Universal Centre of Truth located at Little Theatre, Tom Redcam Avenue, **WMW** will show solidarity for the **Elimination of Violence against Women and Children in Jamaica.** During the Service we will pay respect to those who died through violence in 2005, as well as to the thousands of women and children who manage to survive sexual and other forms of violence, every day of their lives.

WMW will have a display booth.

This month we are also participating in "Chat Rooms" at **Buff Bay High School** in Portland on how women are portrayed in the media. (Hosted by the **Ministry of Education.**) **WMW**



IDEVAW 2004 Remembrance Service.

We want to challenge the abuse of power and authority in domestic relations and the violent abuse of our women and children. We invite our readers to join us and bring friends and colleagues to the service.

On November 25th the Bureau of Women's Affairs will host a youth expo "**Educating Minds to Eliminate Gender-based Violence**" at Emancipation Park.

October's Highlights

WMW braved the rainy weather in October to talk about Sexual Harassment with six form students at **St. Andrews High School** and adolescent mothers at the **Women's Centre** in Kingston.

WMW also had fun examining Media, Gender and Sexuality with members of the **Mustard Seed Women's Group** and guidance counselors at **MICO College.** **WMW**

The gender training for our second group of Male Leaders started off with a bang. Every two weeks twenty-five men from five parishes gather together—the discussion gets so heated that the room feels like it will explode with ideas! Participants come from **RAGE Jamaica, 3-C's Mandela Terrace, Kingston Action Forum, S-Corner Clinic, Police Youth Clubs, Hope for Children, Y.O.U.** and more. The training is proving to be an interesting and enlightening adventure for all of us!



Exploring Media, Gender & Sexuality at MICO College

Men Speak Out About Sexual Harassment

WMW asks men for their views on sexual harassment:

"It may be seen as a small problem now, but unless something is done about it, it will become a much bigger problem." - *Car Washer*

"Women need to take sexual harassment more seriously; report it to the police. This can prevent it going further—maybe rape, even murder." - *Youth Club Member*



"Sexual Harassment exists but it is not a problem as the magnitude has not reached crisis proportions. We need re-socialization through education." - *UWI Student*

"Community meetings should be held to educate persons and make them more aware." - *Gardener*

An exposed penis, being pinned against a wall, a touch on the breast, a feel of the bottom ... When you haven't asked for any of these, when you are left feeling uncomfortable and ashamed, it is, without a doubt, sexual harassment. And it is something we need to challenge. Which is why this month WMW is:

Unmasking Sexual Harassment

It must be clear—sexual harassment also constitutes the sexually-charged remarks hurled at you whilst walking on the road. It is the way a man may use his eyes to undress you in the office. It may even be coiled in the awkwardly lingering, suggestive handshake. In essence, sexual harassment is a range of behaviours, from the subtle to the overt.

Most importantly, sexual harassment is more than an act; it is the way in which the act is experienced. It is any sexual advance that is unwanted and intrusive; that leaves one feeling offended and threatened.

In the barrage of debates, this is possibly the single most overlooked point: sexual harassment is about the way the victim feels. All of the above may be welcomed and enjoyed, but, if not, it is sexual harassment.

Although men are also victims of sexual harassment, in the Jamaican context females suffer far more. In most cases, sexual harassment relates to men exercising power over women. This inappropriate use of power seeks to undermine, isolate, and degrade women, directly reflecting society's gender values.

The truth is, many women blame themselves, ignore it and hope it goes away, or are cripplingly terrified to speak up. Consequentially, we cease to act in our own defence.

Generally women ask themselves these questions after an episode of sexual harassment.*

- Did the person really have something sexual in mind?

- Did I do something to elicit the behaviour?
- Would anyone believe me if I were to report the behaviour?
- Will there be retaliation if I do report the situation?

In a society where we sometimes blame women for being raped, we easily disregard sexually suggestive remarks and touches as not worth taking seriously. Also, our violence-stricken communities have left many of us in a constant state of anxiety. It is no wonder then that many women fear speaking out against the perpetrator, as violence is not an unheard of reaction. Similarly, an unstable economic climate leaves many victims quivering at the possible loss of livelihood.

In 1992, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), acknowledged that sexual harassment in the workplace is

a form of discrimination that "seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men", and may cause "health and safety problems."

Currently, there is no law in Jamaica to protect women or men from sexual harassment whether in public places or in institutions. Recourse dealing with incidents of assault, battery, indecent assault and wrongful dismissal are not sufficient for addressing the problem.

"We need this law to be put in place because we recognize sexual harassment as a form of violence against women. As a country we have signed and ratified agreements to prevent discrimination and eliminate all forms of violence against women.

"Sexual harassment is unwanted and intrusive and leaves one feeling offended and threatened."

We need to protect our women under the law, [otherwise], our women may suffer in silence,” says Faith Webster of the Bureau of Women’s Affairs (BWA).

In August 2004, the BWA proposed a framework for a legal recourse for sexual harassment to the Hon. Dr. Paul Robertson, Minister of Development. The proposed policy makes acts of sexual harassment in the workplace, in places such as children’s homes and educational institutions, unlawful—and offers an avenue for redress.

Sexual harassment in public places was not included. Webster says the BWA has “been advised by the legal experts that there are other acts, such as the Offences Against the Person Act that protect persons on the street. What we have to do is ensure these laws are used.”

Under the draft policy, employers, landlords and other persons in positions of authority have a duty and a general responsibility to keep the workplace free from sexual harassment. These persons will be required to issue a clear policy statement against sexual harassment and to establish an internal mechanism for addressing complaints of sexual harassment. They will

In a society where we sometimes blame women for being raped, we easily disregard sexually suggestive remarks and touches as not worth taking seriously.

be made liable where, having been informed of allegations of sexual harassment, they fail to take immediate and appropriate action to correct the situation.

In January 2005 the BWA conducted a survey in 44 state and non-state organizations to

find out if any sexual harassment code was in place. Only five had any specific policies—the UWI, Air Jamaica, Cable & Wireless, NCB, Sandals Resorts. And 98% of the organizations surveyed were in favour of a law on sexual harassment.

Webster believes that a law would go a far way in empowering women because “women will feel freer to report sexual harassment. They will know they have some recourse.”

But the sexual harassment policy is not yet law. The BWA with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Women’s Media Watch, is holding focus groups to get feedback on the policy and the proposed legislation. So far two regional focus groups have been held where both women and men are united in their call for legislation. Hope lies in our willingness to reclaim our inherent power—to speak up and fight back.

We must take action immediately so that persons will no longer experience the trauma of sexual harassment.

Co-Written by Joleen Grant, Sandra Latibeaudiere & Kinisha O’Neil Correia

* Meeks and Lynch (1983)



M.A.N. Network Says: Its Time We do Something about Sexual Harassment

WMW asked members of the gender-trained M.A.N. Network for their views on sexual harassment. There was consensus on the severity of the problem and the need for legal sanctions against it.

“Sexual harassment is definitely a problem, it happens in schools, churches, workplaces, all major national institutions ... we need to raise awareness, but it is not given a place on the national agenda—there might not be the political will to discuss the issue.”

–Ainsley, Programme Coordinator

“Sexual harassment often takes the form of a power play at the workplace, but not always—it can also occur with people who are employed at the same level.”

–Luke, Accountant

“We need legislation—we cannot continue to approach sexual harassment in a haphazard way. Many youth, women and men work under serious pressure. The harasser often makes sexual innuendos and sexual jokes to try to trivialize the harassment, but the employee feels extreme shame and fear.”

–Dave Noel, Sociologist

“Sometimes it is hard for a woman to say ‘no’ especially if she needs the work. Every workplace needs a code of discipline that addresses sexual harassment.”

–Solomon, Project Manager



Members of the M.A.N. Network.

“People need to have the confidence to stand up, speak out against sexual harassment—and we need to speak out against the abusers—that is the most important thing ... we need a national policy and penalties ...”

–Patrick, Lecturer

“A law should be put in place where, if a guy continually harasses a female there, should be a penalty: he should pay a fine.”

–Ali, Reproductive Health Trainer

“Part of the reason men continue to harass women is because women sometimes don’t say anything, they don’t know how to deal with it. There should be a law so you can report sexual harassment. If men saw headlines of a man being arrested for touching a woman’s bottom, for instance, they would stop doing it.”

–Michael, Peer Counselor

“We have to start with the children—there are kids who can recite dancehall lyrics before they can read and write. Many of these lyrics are abusive towards women. I don’t believe in censorship, but music that denigrates women should be strictly for private situations.”

–Mbala, Musician and poet

“We need public education! And, in extreme cases, like an ultimatum from a boss for an employee to have sex with him, there should be penalties.”

–Lanny, Men’s Crisis Centre

“Sexual harassment continues because the female has little or no say and is at a disadvantage. We need sexual harassment laws with teeth—custodial penalties would really send men a message.”

–Samuel, Police Officer

WMW PROFILE

Afolashade

Afolashade has been a vibrant member of WMW for over 4 years and has been actively involved in the Women's Movement in Jamaica for most of her life.



She is a founding member of Sistren Theatre Collective, where she has worked since its inception in 1977.

Afolashade believes her work with women has helped both herself and those she connects with, tremendously. She says: "Women are oppressed in many areas of life. My feminist perspective and professional training as an actress/popular theatre animator, has allowed me to enable women to deal with their problems through drama, art and other cultural forms.

As a member of WMW I get involved in planning and implementing programmes to raise awareness and motivate members of the public. I'm privileged to facilitate workshops with women from varied educational and social backgrounds. This work has given focus to my own life."

Afolashade has a diploma in Social Development from the Coady Institute, St. Xavier University, in Nova Scotia, Canada. In her spare time she crochets, watches movies, reads novels and writes short stories. WMW

WMW CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2005

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
6	7	8	9 Sexual Harassment Seminar	10 Sexual Harassment Seminar	11 National Gender Policy	12 Gender & Trade Seminar
13 Vigil	14	15	16 -Mico College -Re-Claim JA	17 Carimac	18 Buff Bay - Jamaica Day	19 - Workday -Male Leaders
20 -Members Training -Ending Crime	21	22	23	24	25 IDEVAW	26
27 Church Service	28	29	30 Reproductive Rights	1 Carimac Presentations	2	3 JCC Seminar

Engagements

Get involved!!

Nov 5 2:30-5pm WMW Office
WMW Business Meeting

Nov 11 9am-3pm Terra Nova
National Gender Policy
Bureau of Women's Affairs hosts Consultation

Nov 12 9am-2pm Alhambra Inn
Gender & Trade Seminar
An exploration of Trade Liberalization—
Sponsored by FES.

Nov 13 5-8pm Breezy Castle Centre
Candlelight Vigil
Sasha-Kaye Movement for Change holds this vigil for victims of violence.

Nov 16 6pm Island Life Auditorium
Re-Claim Jamaica & End Violence
Phone-In Programme—Hosted by PIOJ.

Nov 19 9am WMW Office
Doc Centre Workday
Come help us put our Doc Centre in order!

Nov 20 10:30am Hope Gardens
Ending Crime and Violence
Hosted by the Jamaica Foundation for "Headucation" & Social Change.

IDEVAW
To mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women :

Nov 25 11am-5pm Emancipation Park
Educating Minds
WMW will have a booth at this public event sponsored by the Bureau of Women's Affairs.

Nov 27 10am
Church Service
Remembering women's lives lost to violence.

Nov 30 8:30am-5pm Ja Pegasus
Gender & Reproductive Rights
Seminar—Sponsored by the National Family Planning Board.

Training

Join us!!

Nov 5 & 19 9am-3:30pm Alhambra Inn
Male Leaders Training
Training in gender awareness.

Nov 5 & 20 2-5pm WMW Office
Members I.T. Training
Publisher training for members.

Nov 9 & 10 9am-3pm Mandeville & Kingston
Sexual Harassment Forum
In collaboration with FES and BWA.

Nov 16 10am-12pm Mico College
Media, Gender & Sexuality
Working with Trainee Guidance Counselors.

Nov 18 Min. of Education Buff Bay Portland
Jamaica Day Chat Rooms
Exploring the Media portrayal of women.

Dec 3 8:30am-4pm Alhambra Inn
JCC Church leaders
Looking at Gender Based Violence.

Thursdays & Fridays 10am-12pm UWI
CARIMAC Gender Course
WMW Members teach *Gender, Media & Development*

SPECIAL THANKS

Research and Networking :
Ava-Gail Gardiner, Joy Walcott-Francis, Kareen Wilson, Kinisha O'Neil-Correia, Mazie McIntosh, Sandra Latibeaudiere
Training :
Cebert Hines, Dawnette Hinds-Furzer, Erynn Lyster, Evadney Crooks, Hilary Nicholson, Hylton Grace, Jessica Diaz, Joy, Judith Wedderburn, Keishagay Jackson, Kinisha, Mazie, Patricia Donald, Sandra, Stephen-Claude Hyatt