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PRESS RELEASE

16 Days of Activism — November – December 2014

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) St Augustine expresses its solidarity with the global call for 16 days of activism, November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to December 10 (Human Rights Day). The theme for 2014 is From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let’s Challenge Militarism and End Gender-Based Violence!

This theme, when reflected upon its context in Trinidad and Tobago, forces us to confront one of the biggest threats to our security, the growing use and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The growing availability of small arms and light weapons has produced an increased normalization of violence within our national community. Additionally, the many cases of Gender Based Violence and Violence Against Women have an elevated risk of becoming fatal with the use of small and light weapons.

Undeniably there have been gains by women in the area of security over the years in Trinidad and Tobago. Statutory law does to some extent reflect the status position held by women in relation to men, at least on the level of the state. In 1975 Stephanie Daly attorney at Law observed:

‘In Trinidad the legal position of women had improved to the extent that it was a shorter task to explore the areas where women's legal rights were less than those of men than to examine what rights they did have.’

In 1982 she further observed that

‘It is clear from an examination of the statutory changes made since 1975 that a conscious effort has been made to consider the effect of legislation upon women and to remove the lingering discriminatory provisions. At present, therefore, in Trinidad men and women enjoy equality in law to a great degree.’

In 2014, as we come to the end of another year’s activities around the 16 Days of activism the IGDS is calling on us all to reflect upon the legal rights of women in Trinidad and Tobago. Most notably, the ways in which our legal rights remain disconnected from the lived reality of many women. Violence Against Women is the longest standing policy issue for which women’s movements have rallied and forced governments to act. However, a constant challenge to action around violence against women has been the need to address the ways in which new technologies have modified or intensified old threats of violence against women and the context in which emerging and new threats proliferate.

The IGDS will continue to work with the wider community towards understanding this issue. We remain committed to ending violence against women and all forms of gender based violence.