PRESS RELEASE

STATEMENT ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

17th February, 2016

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies, The UWI says women and children are not inconsequential, disposable nor natural victims. Similarly men are not natural predators. None should be cast in such sexist roles.

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is prevalent in the Caribbean. In a survey of 15,695 students 10 to 18 years old, Halcon and colleagues (2003) found that 34.1% of children in 9 Caribbean countries were sexually active. 47.6% of females and 31.9% of males described their first intercourse as forced or somewhat coerced and attributed blame to family members or persons known to their family. In 2010 in Trinidad and Tobago, of all sexual offences recorded, only forty-nine 49% led to arrests or charges. From 2011-2013, in 48.5%, 51% and 50% respectively, of the cases reported, persons were neither arrested nor charged. According to the Judiciary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Annual Report 2012-2013, eleven thousand three hundred and eighty two (11,382) new domestic violence cases were filed in the Magistrates Court during that year.
Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) are not exclusively personal matters, nor manifestations of household dysfunction. They are also larger development issues that must be managed as public policy priorities. How we understand, frame and represent these issues is germane to how we plan and manage them. Beyond our management, there is critical need for fundamental collective ownership and revisiting of our individual assumptions about the factors that facilitate these forms of violence. It is only through this owning, that we will be forced to move beyond our fixation with apportioning moral blame, towards dismantling those gender systems that accommodate such violence. Societies do not only grow during periods of peace. The productive, deliberate use of conflict and crises are invaluable moments for advancement.

We at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) consistent with our mission to advance social justice, promote gender-responsive human relations and development in the wider society, remain committed to women’s right to a life free from violence. We recognize the need to build a collective consciousness around such issues and will always support strongly, processes committed to the elimination of all forms of violence.