PRESS RELEASE

Important study on Work/Life Balance and Ageing in Trinidad and Tobago

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) and the Social Work Unit, Department of Behavioural Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences of The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago, have embarked on a three-year research project, titled: Work/Life Balance and Ageing in Trinidad: Studying the Productivity and Wellbeing of Working Men and Women, funded by the Research Development Impact Fund of the University of the West Indies.

This project examines the experiences of selected groups and individuals (working people aged 40-65) in terms of their work and family life commitments. The study considers how work/life balance is offset or aggravated by the longer life expectancy of the population. Do working people depend on the retired population of ageing parents and extended family for childcare? Are they additionally burdened with caring for ageing people in their lives? These are some of the questions the study will address.

Work/Life Balance is the maintenance of supportive and healthy work and family environments which enable working people to balance work and personal responsibilities. Increasingly, people approach retirement age with more and more responsibilities for elder care and childcare. Yet ageing is usually associated with negative stereotypes such as dependency, vulnerability, and
diminishing capabilities. This study will offer new ways to understand increased stresses and challenges for working people who are ageing and have increased responsibilities.

The study uses different research strategies including qualitative and quantitative methods to explore challenges and experiences for men and women in the workforce, for households and other stakeholders such as the aged, policy makers and social workers. The study will include a range of participants and represent diverse communities across geographical areas, family structures, age and sex. The methods of research include talking circles, surveys of existing facilities for childcare and aged populations and interviews with selected working women and men.

The IGDS and Social Work team is collaborating with the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Retired Persons (TTARP), United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), International Labour Organization, Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean (ILO/DWT), Women’s Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD), Women Working for Social Progress (Working Women), corporate sector representatives, and regional and international scholars in the field of ageing.

Principal Investigators of the project include Professor Patricia Mohammed, Project Leader; Ms. Cheryl-Ann Boodram (Social Work Unit); Dr. Angelique V. Nixon, Dr. Paula Morgan, and Ms. Deborah McFee (IGDS). Research Assistants for the project include graduate Ms. Renee Maria Cozier and current Ph.D graduate student Ms. Sommer Hunte of the IGDS.

The main aim of this study is to make a positive impact on the lives of the working men and women and ageing populations in Trinidad and Tobago, sensitising these populations to options for support, coping strategies and social work interventions aimed at reducing work/life balance stressors. The project runs from May 1, 2015 to April 30, 2018.

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