PRESS RELEASE

Break the Silence Youth Poster Contest Launch in commemoration of Universal Children's Day (20 November 2016) and the United Nations 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (25 November – 10 December 2016)

Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), St. Augustine Unit announces the formal launch of an annual outreach initiative titled "Break the Silence Youth Poster Contest: Raising Awareness about Gender, Child Sexual Abuse and Implications for HIV in Trinidad and Tobago". This initiative is a collaboration of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, The University of the West Indies (The UWI), St. Augustine Campus and The U.S. Embassy, Port of Spain with support from the PEPFAR Small Grants Program.

The Break the Silence (BTS) Youth Poster Contest initiative launch will coincide with the United Nations 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, recognized in Trinidad and Tobago and across the globe. This is a time to raise awareness about the link between child sexual abuse, gender and HIV and to create strong communities to support children and families in Trinidad and Tobago.

Press interviews will be arranged to further discuss the initiative and related causes with: Initiative Director, Professor Rhoda Reddock, Deputy Principal and Professor of Gender and Social Change at The UWI, St. Augustine Campus; Dr. Sandra Reid, Deputy Dean (Clinical), and Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry, Faculty of Medical Sciences, The UWI, St. Augustine Campus; Dr. Gabrielle Hosein, Lecturer and Head of Department, IGDS, The UWI, St. Augustine Campus; and U.S. Ambassador John L. Estrada.

Break the Silence Website: http://sta.uwi.edu/igds/breakthesilence
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About The Break the Silence Poster Contest Initiative

In an attempt to push forward the BTS Campaign (see full description below) and its main goal to strengthen prevention and response approaches to child sexual abuse and implications for HIV risk among youth, IGDS has partnered with The U.S. Embassy, Trinidad and Tobago to implement youth poster contests in four secondary schools throughout Trinidad during the months January through April 2017. In order to ensure that targeted youth gain a comprehensive understanding about the intersection between gender, child sexual abuse (CSA) and high risk behaviour that leads to HIV, IGDS will create a teacher training toolkit and hold a full-day training for participating secondary school teachers from the schools who agree to implement the poster contest in their classrooms.

The Teacher Training Toolkit will provide child-friendly guidelines and tools for secondary school art and social science teachers on how to successfully implement gender-sensitive training and child-friendly poster contests in their classrooms to raise awareness and de-silence discussions about the intersection between gender, CSA and HIV. The purpose of the teacher training workshop will be to raise teachers’ awareness about the intersection of gender, CSA and HIV, and build their capacity on how to use the relevant guidelines and tools included in the toolkit to implement poster contests in their classrooms.

To provide incentives for youth to participate and engage in the poster contest, IGDS will provide cash prizes for the top four poster contest winners. With the permission of the schools, the winning artwork of all four contests and the 12 finalists (top three finalists from each of four schools that participate) will be displayed. One option would be to frame and hang these posters in school hallways for one year to raise awareness among all teachers and youth at the participating schools. As part of the initiative, all 16 prize winners and finalists will be recognized at an awards ceremony at The UWI, St. Augustine Campus in April 2017 in commemoration of Child Abuse Awareness Month.

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About the Break the Silence Campaign

The Break the Silence (BTS) Campaign has three specific objectives: 1) to increase public awareness about issues related to gender, CSA and implications for HIV; 2) to increase public awareness about existing resources for preventing and responding to CSA and HIV; and 3) to influence leaders and service providers to increase their commitment to gender sensitive, evidence and human rights based polices and interventions that prevent and address CSA and its implications for HIV. The campaign symbol — a blue teddy bear with a plaster on its heart — has been highlighted throughout Trinidad and Tobago and is being made available for use by communities specifically for this cause. In 2012, UNICEF adopted the BTS Campaign symbol and collaborated with its partners to roll-out the initiative in several countries and territories across the region.

With successful mobilization and outreach, BTS Campaign community champions have emerged throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Between 2010 and 2015 BTS campaign advocacy and outreach was achieved through the development and distribution of a number of outputs, including posters and information cards that feature information about CSA and implications for HIV, as well as existing national and community resources; branded merchandise such as buttons, magnets, lapel pins and T-shirts, community signs and painted walls and digital billboards. Other notable multi-media outputs of the BTS campaign have included 1) a documentary that discusses the BTS Model; 2) five webisodes (mini 5-minute films designed for the Web) that discuss key issues related to gender, CSA and implications for HIV; 3) a radio programme created by community members that raises awareness of the link between gender, CSA and HIV; and 4) a BTS website and social media pages that feature links, articles and tools related to gender, CSA and implications for HIV, as well as ongoing BTS campaign outreach activities. The BTS campaign has implemented marches/demonstrations in various communities, flash mobs in public places, and advocacy events promoting awareness about the link between gender, CSA and HIV by primary, secondary and tertiary students throughout the country. Out of these actions two Break the Silence Support Networks were created where communities have created a ground swell of support and activism to take the BTS campaign to their various publics and to sustain the message through the formation and coordination of BTS events and activities. Members of the Network represent a diverse mix of people who are passionate, committed and driven, and include community workers, NGOs, CBOs, service providers, sponsors, individuals and activists. It is a collaborative initiative, which brings together members’ experience and expertise to the mission. IGDS continues to provide BTS Network members with support and resources when available. The Break the Silence Campaign also continues to collaborate with numerous committed individuals, community groups and organizations across Trinidad and Tobago. It has also gained support from Trinidad and Tobago citizens in many areas of society.

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About IGDS

The mission of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, formerly the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, is to produce and disseminate knowledge to transform gender relations in the Caribbean in support of The UWI's mission to enhance regional and international development. At the St. Augustine Unit, we offer disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses in Gender across faculties within The University of the West Indies at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The Institute offers two undergraduate minors and four graduate programmes: a Minor in Gender Studies; a Minor in Gender and Development; a Diploma in Gender and Development, an MSc in Gender and Development; an MPhil in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies and a PhD in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies. The IGDS initiates collaborative research projects that address the relationship of gender to all areas of society and pursues a programme of outreach activities that includes seminars, workshops and networking events.

Related Ongoing Research at the IGDS

In 2008 the IGDS St. Augustine Unit embarked on a comprehensive research programme looking at Gender, Sexuality and the Implications for HIV/AIDS. In support of this programme, the action-research project: Breaking the Silence: A Multisectoral Approach to Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse and Incest in Trinidad and Tobago produced research findings and recommendations.

For more information: http://sta.uwi.edu/igds/gendersexualityhiv aids.asp

For further information:

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