



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

INSTITUTE FOR GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, ST AUGUSTINE UNIT

STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

The Break the Silence Campaign - Statement Rape of School Girls by Teacher and Security Guard

ST. AUGUSTINE, Trinidad and Tobago. Wednesday 23 December, 2022

The BTS campaign is appalled at this heinous incident. We continue our call for age-appropriate gender and sexuality training in schools and of sexual abuse awareness training for all teachers and school personnel. Therefore, we support the Concerned Parents Movement's call for introducing sex education into the school curriculum in 2023.

This was one of our most important recommendations coming out of our in-depth research study on Child Sexual Abuse in Trinidad and Tobago and it continues to be urgent. We noted that structured education of students about sex and sexuality is important to provide young people with an understanding of their bodies and sexualities and empower them to make informed decisions about their social and sexual lives. They should be informed as to how to deal with sexual abuse and incest. Teachers also need to be educated. Many young persons obtain their sex education from similarly uninformed peers, predators and the mass media, including television, cinema and social media. Teachers and principals, we interviewed in Trinidad and Tobago, however, acknowledge that despite the normality of early sexual activity among youth in schools and the prevalence of youth disclosing sexual abuse and incest in the school setting, there is no specific or standardized training available on how to conduct sexuality education for children and young people. Parents also asked for workshops on how to speak to their children about sex so clearly, parents themselves acknowledge their own difficulties in addressing this critical issue with their children.

Earlier research on university students found that no one spoke to boys and young men about sex, they reported learning from peers and “Blue Movies’ and girls perhaps upon menstruation, but one young woman said she was spoken to at age 18 (Roberts, Reddock Douglas and Reid, 2009)¹.

Our recommendations were shared with policymakers at the time and included the following:

- Sexuality education and ways of teaching about gender and sexualities, including the recognition and management of CSA and incest, and the underlying legal framework, must be compulsory components of all teacher education programmes at the relevant universities in Trinidad and Tobago. For teachers, principals and guidance officers who have already been trained; compulsory follow-up workshops are proposed;
- If necessary, specially trained teachers could be introduced to work with a number of schools as some teachers have religious predispositions against this or simply don’t feel comfortable;
- Curricula for sexuality and HIV education must be developed for all children, teachers, parents and other stakeholders involved in the education of children. It must include awareness and prevention of CSA and incest, CSA and incest as a risk factor for HIV/STI;
- Gender-informed HFLE/Life Skills and sexuality education programmes must include gender-based violence and sexual abuse components; and
- Children must be taught more about their rights as outlined in the **Convention of the Rights of a Child**.

I congratulate the Concerned Parents Movement on taking this important stand. We can no longer bury our heads in the sand. Education must inform and empower.

Rhoda Reddock

On behalf of the Break the Silence Campaign

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¹ [Sex, Power and Taboo: Gender and HIV in the Caribbean and Beyond: Dorothy Roberts, Rhoda Reddock, Dianne Douglas, Sandra Reid: 9789766373498: Amazon.com: Books](#)