

The Desk @CVC

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Caribbean Vulnerable
Communities Coalition (CVC)

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@cvccoalition

The ED's Desk

By @ivancruickshank

Welcome to the first issue of **The Desk at CVC!**

The content of the bi-monthly newsletter is intended to update you on important initiatives being carried out by the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC) and to solicit feedback on matters pertinent to HIV, human rights and marginalized populations.

In this issue, you will learn more about the Shared Incidents Database (SID) and the Community Paralegal programmes here at CVC, as well as activities being conducted by our partners across the Caribbean.

I would like to focus the attention of this edition of the ED's Desk on some of the issue facing children across the region. CVC takes seriously the commitments to invest in our children and to enable the full realization of their rights. We must eliminate child labour and end all forms of discrimination that confront them. Their protection, growth and health are essential to their future.

The church, government and civil society run the risk of doing a disservice to our children by harbouring distrust for their mental ability, maturity, awareness and aptitude to process and make sense of the world around them. We must recognize the capacity of our children to support their own development and give them some credit and space to grow up. If children are really our future, then we cannot allow them to venture into that future blindfolded, but well-resourced. The entire society has a responsibility to prepare them in the best ways possible.

I therefore encourage all of us, to rise above the challenges we as adults face and recognize that our children are our most precious gifts and we must put them first. I therefore use this opportunity to call on the Government, parents, guardians and educators to make every child our primary consideration.



CVC Partners Tap into Revolutionary SID

The game-changing Shared Incident Database (SID) has been gaining traction among our regional partners. Funded through the Robert Carr Network Fund (RCNF) and the Global Fund (GF) SID is the first Caribbean wide web-based civil society-led human rights monitoring mechanism in the region.

Launched in 2016, the aim of SID is to support upward and onward reporting to be filtered to Ministries, Department and Agencies, as well as international and regional human rights mechanisms. It will also improve opportunities for strategic litigation.

SID enhances the capacity of key populations and civil society organizations to document breaches of rights and enables data sharing to support redress or engagement in policy, public health and legal decision-making. Technical assistance is provided to civil CSOs to build capacity in the community monitoring of legal rights and the use of SID. The database facilitates comprehensive data collection through standardized intake procedure and allows for analysis and exchange of information on rights violations.

The Database provide a framework for understanding the pattern of incidence of rights violation at both the country and population levels. Currently, 1425 cases have been documented in the shared database with 28 user members from Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname, Belize, Dominican Republic, Haiti, St. Lucia and Barbados. Analysis of entries for 2017, showed that 40 percent of the reported cases took place at the community level, followed by the home with 27 percent. At the country level, Guyana (41%) had the most entries, Jamaica second (28%) followed by Suriname (26%).

There are varied data access levels within an organization profile and clients' identifiable details are only visible at an organizational level. At an organizational, national and regional level the database generates non-identifiable aggregated data with geographic identifiers. The database is linked to redress opportunities such as Cari-bono, a network of lawyers around the Caribbean offering pro-bono services to cases documented

The SID is managed by a steering committee comprising CSOs from across the region as well as non-voting technical partners such as the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and University of the West Indies Rights Advocacy Project (URAP). Voting members CVC, Jamaican Network of Seropositives (JN+), Jamaica AIDS Support for Life (JASL), Equality for All Foundation (EFAJ), Guyana Sex Work Coalition (GSWC) and Guyana Trans United (GTU)

If your organization is interested in registering to become a member of the Shared Incident Database, or in any related training opportunities, please contact the Marlon Thompson, SID Coordinator at cvcobservatory@gmail.com.

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CVC and the Faculty of Law, University of the West Indies Rights Advocacy Project (U-RAP) have developed a Legal Literacy Trainers' Manual for CSOs working with Inadequately Served Populations (ISP) in the English-speaking Caribbean.

ISPs refer to groups that face a higher HIV risk compared to the general population, and who also have less access to information and services.

The manual provides information on the legal tools and human rights mechanisms that can be used to secure access to justice, and equality in public and private life. It aims to raise awareness of the limitations and discriminatory nature of laws relevant to ISPs and to build their capacity to effectively advocate for change.

For access, click <http://www.cvccoalition.org/content/legal-literacy-trainers-manual>

Community Paralegals to Support SID

Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition has recruited Community Paralegals to support clients who have documented cases of human rights violations in the Shared Incident Database (SID) and link them to redress mechanisms. The community paralegals support the empowerment of key populations to know their rights, investigate cases and provide follow-up, accompany clients to authorities such as the police, the court, health and social services, among other actions.

CSOs that are registered SID users can make direct contact with the community paralegal for case management support. Community paralegals can make referrals to the CariBono: Pro-Bono Lawyer Panel for clients who are seeking redress and whose cases merit litigation. Interventions are to be undertaken at no cost. The clients can receive general information, have a legal problem clarified, be informed of their legal options, and receive referrals to pro-bono lawyers or other service agencies. It is expected that the community paralegals will improve access to justice for key populations

Community Paralegals is operational in four of the five countries (Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago), with the recruitment in Suriname to be completed in the next month. A listing of the community paralegals in each country and their contact information is provided below.

Country	Name	Email	CSO-Affiliation
Belize	Elisa Castellanos	ecas.nevaeh@gmail.com	Tikkun Olam Belize
	Louigie Gomez	gomezlouigie@gmail.com	Belize Family Life Association
Guyana	Avinash Persaud	avinash_persaudgy@yahoo.com	Comforting Hearts
	Cracey Fernandes	guyanalsexworkcoalition@yahoo.com	Guyana Sex Work Coalition
	Joel Simpson	manager@sasod.org.gy	Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination
Jamaica	Nicolette Bryan	bryan.nicolette@gmail.com	WE-Change
	JFJ Legal Department	complaints@jamaicansforjustice.org	Jamaicans for Justice
Trinidad	Kerwyn Jordan	kerwynjordan@msn.com	Friends for Life

IDAHOT2018: SRH & Family Planning

The CVC Executive Director, Ivan Cruickshank is urging governments to take the lead in reducing stigma and discrimination in the administering of sexual and reproductive health strategies. Mr. Cruickshank was speaking at an International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT) Forum hosted by the Jamaica Family Planning Association, FAMPLAN. The function was held at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus on May 17, 2018.

"We ask of Governments to respect the family as it exists in reality and not embrace a myopic view which suggests those outside of the ideal are outcasts. A fundamental truth is we are not trying to create another structure for the family. It is what it already is," said Mr. Cruickshank.

In congratulating FAMPLAN for seizing on the relevance of sexual and reproductive health and the family planning needs of the Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender and Intersex, LGBTI, communities, Mr. Cruickshank noted that there is steadfast resolution to achieving the national development goal of a healthy and stable population by 2030.

Mr. Cruickshank: "Whether you're straight, homosexual, bisexual or a person of trans experience, sex is a part of who we are and it is important to address the sexual and reproductive health and family planning needs of every single Jamaican."

Desk Profile: Joel Simpson Community Paralegal, Guyana

CVC features Joel Simpson, one of the Community Paralegals based in Guyana.

Joel Simpson is the Managing Director of the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD), a human rights organization leading change, educating and serving communities to end discrimination based on sexuality and gender in Guyana. SASOD has been providing informal legal services to members of the KP community over the years. However, since the inception of the Community Paralegal programme through funding under the Regional CVC/COIN Grant provided by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFTAM), Simpson and his team have been able to provide a broader range of structured paralegal services to key population communities in Guyana.

Simpson has provided training in Legal Literacy, Human Rights and Advocacy in various fora to KP community members. He has facilitated the comprehensive documentation of rights violations using the Shared Incident Database (SID), and connected clients to redress mechanisms including counselling, health and other social services.

As Community Paralegal, Joel Simpson has established an effective referral system with the Guyanese members of CariBono: Caribbean Lawyering for Social Justice, who provide free legal support through SASOD as the secretariat of the Guyana Equality Forum (GEF) which functions as the country liaison between client intakes from civil society groups and the pro-bono lawyers network.



Desk Note: Jason Jones Case



CVC congratulates Jason Jones and his legal team for their valiant efforts in having the Trinidad and Tobago High Court declare that the criminalization of buggery as “unconstitutional, illegal, null, void, invalid, and of no effect”. It has always been the considered view of CVC that any such arrangement in law infringes on the basic principles of human rights and justice. The ruling signifies an increasing recognition by our courts in the Caribbean of the need to safeguard human dignity and the basic rights of everyone.



Upcoming Dates: June 2nd is International Sex Worker's Day

CVC supports the call for the decriminalization of sex work around the region to reduce incidents of rights violations and unfair treatment faced by members of the sex worker community.