

## **INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN 2017**

### **STATEMENT OF HELP & SHELTER**

In 2017, International Day for the Elimination of all forms of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW) is observed under the theme “Leave no one behind: end violence against women and girls”, and it is in this vein that we remember the approximately 180 women and girls who lost their lives (over the past ten years) due to acts of violence perpetrated by husbands, boyfriends, intimate partners others. Most recently a young teacher and mother who was battered and left on the roadside in an unconscious state before succumbing to injuries sustained and the alleged police involvement in circumstances surrounding her death.

We also acknowledge those who survived similar attacks and wish them a speedy recovery and the hope of empowerment to live a life free of violence among whom is a police officer who encountered a violent attack by a colleague.

We also salute those taking a stand against violence and the threat of violence by breaking the silence and speaking out.

Turning to the issue of sexual violence. It has been observed the attention given internationally to sexual assault and harassment in recent months and we applaud those with the courage to speak out and the authorities for taking appropriate action. However, we should not lose sight of the many occurrences within our own country and the victims, many of whom continue to suffer in silence in their homes, schools, workplaces, religious institutions among others either because of the failure of the system in protecting them or responding appropriately to their cries for help and the threats that suppress their voice because the perpetrators have status, influence and or connections.

We strongly condemn any authority who seeks to re-victimize those affected by sexual violence or to silence them, particularly the youth of our nation. Perpetrators should never be protected.

On a positive note, we complement the JURIST project, CCJ and the Canadian government responsible for the establishment of the first sexual offences court in the Caribbean and the launch of the model guidelines for the management of sexual offences. We call for commitment of all sectors involved in ensuring that these guidelines are followed and survivors received the justice that has been denied over the years along with the full and effective implementation of said guidelines and urge that the review of the national plan of action for the implementation of the Sexual and Domestic Violence Act be treated with urgency. The support of Help & Shelter is assured in both instances.

Help & Shelter wishes to acknowledge the United Nations Trust Fund to end violence against women for the current support of our public education work in schools; the support afforded by the Government of Guyana for our work in providing counseling and shelter for affected women and children; our networking partners for their continued support. Credit is also due to the magistracy for their use of our court support counseling service through referrals which fosters engagement with males who benefit tremendously from our male engagement sessions and to the many citizens of our country who through our hotline seek to report the violations of children, we say thank you for your concern and continued vigilance.

Finally, as a society we must all lend a hand or voice in the prevention of every form of violence, we cannot have an attitude of silence and allow the abuse of women and children to thrive, only speaking out when it's convenient by which time the damage is already done, we must be proactive in our efforts of eliminating violence. Acts of sexual and domestic violence is no longer personal, it affects everyone. A life free of violence is everyone's right.

#Loveandrespect #serveandprotect

