



Submission of the Caribbean Sport and Development Agency

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to the Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children

in reference to 2021 Annual Thematic Report: *Gender dimension of the sale and sexual exploitation of children and the importance of integrating a human rights-based and non-binary approach to combating and eradicating sale and sexual exploitation of children*

In response to the call for inputs into the 2021 Annual Thematic Report, [the Caribbean Sport and Development Agency](#) is pleased to present the following information that specifically addresses, within the context of the Caribbean, the questions raised in the call.

1. What forms of existing societal norms, practices/behaviours (cultural, social, traditional or other) may explicitly or implicitly involve and/or manifest sale and sexual exploitation of children?
 - **Exploitation of Secondary School Student Athletes:**
 - The exploitation of secondary school students, particularly in the sport of football remains a traditional practice sanctioned by the leadership of schools and Ministries of Education across several Caribbean countries.
 - These practices often involve the transfer of students (mainly boys aged 15 - 17) into a secondary school for the main purpose of representing that school (mainly in the sport of football, but also in cricket, athletics and other sports) with little or no concern for the academic and social development of the students.
 - In some cases, students are transferred to schools that are very far from their homes and although the schools may provide some financial assistance to the boys during the (football) season, this support usually disappears when the season is over.
 - The boys and their families are often lured by the 'privilege' of being associated with 'prestige' schools and/or the possibility of securing sport (football) scholarships or the dream of playing professional sport (football). Only very few students may actually benefit from these limited opportunities.
 - This exploitive practice treats with adolescent student athletes as commodities, increasing their vulnerability to various forms of abuse.
 - **Football Agents:**
 - There is a growing sport agency business in the Caribbean that includes individuals (agents) who arrange opportunities for young footballers to attend (international) trials for professional football clubs/academies.
 - Young footballers from low-incomes families are often grateful for the opportunity, but face the risk of being abandoned and left stranded in a foreign country if they are unsuccessful at the trials.
 - This practice increases the vulnerability of these young footballers to various forms of abuse.

2. How is gender and gender identity incorporated in existing legislative and policy frameworks on the eradication and prevention of the sale and sexual exploitation of children?
 - a. Please provide information on relevant legislation or policy on the implementation of integrating gender dimension in the prevention and eradication of sale and sexual exploitation of children, online and offline.
 - b. What are the existing gaps and challenges in incorporating the gender dimension in legislations, policies and practices?
- The status of legislative and policy frameworks supporting the eradication and prevention of the sale and sexual exploitation of children varies across the Caribbean. A UNICEF Situational Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019) provides updates on the status of various legislative and policy frameworks by country¹. Notably, the major challenge in the region has been the lack of implementation even where legislative and policy frameworks exist.
3. Please provide contextual information on any existing good practices, policies or legislation tackling sale and sexual exploitation of children that include a gender dimension that takes into account different gender identities.
 - Regional Strategy:
 - The Caribbean Community ([CARICOM](#)) has been working on a Draft Strategy for the Prevention of Violence Against Children, but there is no evidence on the CARICOM website of any progress on the strategy. A brief on the Strategy is available.²
 - Policies:
 - Guyana, Anguilla and St Kitts and Nevis have developed National Sport Policies that substantially address safeguarding and protection of children in sport from all forms of neglect and abuse.
 - Anguilla has further developed inter-agency child protection protocols that provide guidance for identifying, reporting, case management, etc.
 - None of these policy documents make specific reference to non-binary gender identities per se.
 - The Guyana National Sport Policy makes strong references to women and girls, while the other documents adopt a global/neutral gender position (child/children).
 - Safeguarding Education:
 - Several organizations in the Caribbean region have developed and implemented safeguarding/child protection in sport courses targeting coaches and teachers who work with children in sport:
 - The Caribbean Sport and Development Agency
 - Cricket West Indies (supported by UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Office)
 - Sacred Sport Foundation (St Lucia)
 - Concacaf
 - It should be noted that although Concacaf has only recently embarked on their safeguarding journey, their commitment, capacity and reach (41 countries) makes them a key stakeholder in strengthening the safeguarding of children in sport in the Caribbean (and Central and North America).
 - Safeguarding Webinars:

- The onset of the Covid19 Pandemic has also seen an upsurge in safeguarding webinars hosted by a range of sport sector stakeholders in the Caribbean region, with some external experts/partners:
 - National Olympic Committees
 - Government Departments of Sport
 - National Governing Bodies for Sport
 - Regional Governing Bodies for Sport
 - Local Universities
 - Sport for Development Organizations
 - Sport Foundations
4. What institutional, regional and national legal frameworks are in place to integrate gender dimension in the prevention, prohibition and protection of children from all forms of sale, sexual abuse and exploitation?
 - Though it is not a legal framework, the UNICEF-led 'Break the Silence: End Child Sexual Abuse' campaign found good regional support from government and non-government stakeholders across the Caribbean. The campaign sought to enhance the education system to aid in empowering children with the knowledge to make better decisions regarding their bodies and their sexuality.
 - Some Caribbean countries have Gender Policies or are in the process of developing/reviewing Gender policies. Interestingly, the Gender Policy of Trinidad and Tobago specifically ignores any non-binary sexual orientations³.
 5. What forms and manifestations do gender dimensions take in the context of the eradication and prevention of the sale and sexual exploitation of children, boys in particular, including online, and which ones are the most prevalent. Please provide information about the causes and manifestations of gender dimension, and how it affects the eradication and prevention of sale and sexual exploitation of children.
 6. Please indicate any specific measures aimed at reducing vulnerability of children to sale and sexual exploitation in a gender-and disability-responsive, as well as age-and child-sensitive manner.

The following measures are specific to Trinidad and Tobago:

- Establishing a Children's Ombudsman;
- Reviewing and enhancing the youth justice system, including creating a purpose built center for female child offenders;
- Resourcing the Family Court;
- Strengthening Student Support Services;
- Ensuring funding for the National Children's Registry
- Introducing of a cost-per-child system for children in Community Residences;
- Establishing a Child Protection and Family Violence Police Unit;
- Reforming legislation to clearly define 'reasonable punishment', raise the age of marriage, and include access to education to immigrant children and children living with HIV/AIDS;

- Establishing preventative measures for the protection of children through national parenting programmes, public sensitization, positive school disciplinary methods, and expansion of community health services
 - In 2013 a National Child Protection Task Force comprising a team of experts in the area of Child Care and Protection from the education, national security, health and medical, legal, non-governmental and State sectors, was established to carry out an in-depth situation analysis of the factors which cause and increase risks of crimes against children. The Task Force made proposals and recommendations on how legislation, State agencies, nongovernmental organizations and all stakeholders, including parents, can better protect children.
 - The Office of the Prime Minister (Trinidad and Tobago) recently (April 2021) launched the Child Abuse Awareness Quick Course to provide parents and caregivers with the necessary tools to identify abuse and how to properly report specific types of abuse. This course was done in observance of Child Abuse Awareness month and the hope is to create a more rigorous Part 2 to enable certification in Child Protection.
7. What measures and safeguards can be put in place to identify the protection needs of vulnerable children in order to prevent, prohibit and protect them from all forms of sale and sexual exploitation, including examples of child-friendly, independent, timely and effective reporting and complaints mechanisms made available without discrimination in child-friendly spaces at community, national, and regional level.

Some measures may include:

- Implementation of the [SafeStamp programme](#) (or similar programme to better regulate the sector) that includes a registry of all individuals and organizations working with children (in sport) who meet basic (safeguarding) criteria.
- Recommended SafeStamp Criteria For Individuals (coaches/teachers/volunteers):
 - Coaching/teaching certification
 - Safeguarding children in sport certification
 - Police record of good character (police background check)
 - Self Declaration
- Recommended SafeStamp Criteria for Organizations working with children in sport:
 - Safeguarding Policy
 - Code of Conduct
 - Designated Safeguarding Lead
 - Trained Coaches/volunteers (registered on SafeStamp Registry)
 - System in place for Reporting/Responding
- Introduction of mandatory safeguarding education for all individuals working with children in sport and physical education.
- Increasing access of reporting mechanisms. Currently persons are asked to contact the Children's Authority and/or the police. Individuals do not always feel comfortable reporting to these institutions and privacy is not always adopted.
- Schools need to be better equipped with child-friendly spaces for reporting/seeking help.

- Schools also need to be staffed with designated safeguarding personnel to support the reporting/responding/management of cases.
 - The education system across the region needs to evolve to include relevant education on sex and sexuality, gender dimensions and identification and prevention of (sexual) harm (including cyber-bullying and other forms of online abuse).
8. Please indicate any other areas of concern and provide any additional information which is relevant in the context of gender dimension and eradication of sale and sexual exploitation of children.
- A general lack of designated leadership in the sector. E.g. Major sport organizations in the region do not have designated safeguarding personnel.
 - A general lack of resourcing for implementation of policy/plans.
 - Huge gaps remain in the collection of data around the abuse of children, including boys and children who identify outside of the gender binary, in sport in the region.
 - There is some progress in the strengthening of safeguarding capacity in the region, but not enough effort aimed at strengthening systems for preventing/reporting/responding.
 - There is very limited capacity for supporting victims and survivors.
 - Data indicate that boys in the Caribbean are less likely to attend or complete secondary and tertiary levels of education, men and boys have an increased likelihood of being both victims and perpetrators of violent crime, and sectors of young men are being de-linked from families.
 - Lack of proper education, positive family life experiences, socialization with peers and so on, may contribute to a dysfunctional adult life and increase the risk of sexual exploitation of young men.
 - Another area of concern is mental health in the age of social media. Children and youths seek identity through social media and with the vast increase of cyber bullying (body image, explicit sexual content, peer pressure that now expands to a global community), mental health and mental development is now jeopardized.
9. In what context do external environment factors exacerbate the prevalence and/or magnitude of sale and sexual exploitation of children. Do the vulnerabilities of the surrounding environment play a significant role in terms of rural/urban; war/conflict zones, different forms of migration, emergency contexts (e.g. natural & manmade disaster, climate change, COVID-19) and religious context.
- Although the Caribbean has a long history of illegal migration, usually to the USA and Canada, there has also been a fair amount of illegal migration within the region. In recent times, there has been an influx of Venezuelan refugees in the Caribbean – fleeing the very challenging social and economic hardships in that country. Trinidad has been an easy access point, with refugees arriving every day via various illegal ports of entry. There is strong evidence of human trafficking associated with the Venezuelan refugees, with unscrupulous persons taking

advantage of the humanitarian crisis. This situation has placed many Venezuelan refugee children at risk of sale and sexual exploitation.

- 1 UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean*, Bridgetown, Barbados, 2019. Available at https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1896/file/ECA_Sitan.pdf
- 2 CARICOM, *Draft Strategy For The Prevention Of Violence Against Children In The Caribbean Community, Guyana*, 2019. Available at <http://www.iin.oea.org/pdf-iin/materiales-presentaciones/Prevention%20of%20Violence%20Against%20Chldren.pdf>
- 3 Office of the Prime Minister, Trinidad and Tobago. (2020). The National Child Policy. Retrieved from <http://opm-gca.gov.tt/National-Child-Policy>