

**I AM A GIRL BARBADOS (IAAGBB)**

Charity #1103

'Avondale'

Gall Hill

St. John

T: +1 (246) 251-8260

E: iamagirlbarbados@gmail.com

[www.iamagirlbarbados.com](http://www.iamagirlbarbados.com)

**United Nations UPR Third Cycle  
Barbados Submission from *I Am A Girl Barbados*  
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**About Us**

[I Am A Girl Barbados](http://www.iamagirlbarbados.com), usually referred to as ‘the Community’, is a not-for-profit organization that focuses on the comprehensive development of “at-risk” girls aged five (5) to eighteen (18), through forms of traditional and non-traditional programmes, of which they are not accustomed, and heavy emphasis on mentorship through the philosophy ‘*Reach One Teach One*’.

It was founded and officially launched on or around the United Nations recognized period of the International Day of the Girl Child in October 2014, with the mission to inspire, empower and provide opportunities for young girls to lead and create positive change in the world. Generally, we contribute to the overall growth of girls in Barbados, and aid in the development of some, who may have been exposed to domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and violence, in many forms.

Since officially commencing our work in 2014, we have impacted upon more than two hundred (200) girls directly, and fifteen hundred (1,500) youth across Barbados. Based on our mandate, we continue to create opportunities to expand upon our reach, locally and through our membership with the UN Major Groups of Children and Youth.

*Table 1          General Information*

Organization Name	<b>I AM A GIRL BARBADOS</b>
Founder / Director	Alian Ollivierre (Ms.)
Organization Nature	A Community Based Entity Focused on Youth (Girls).
Organization Type	Non-Profit / Non-Governmental / Civil Society
Registration Number   Date	#1103   1 <sup>st</sup> October 2014
Country of Registration	BARBADOS
Registered Address	‘Avondale’, Gall Hill, St. John
Postal Address	P.O. Box 392, The Valley, St. George
Direct Contact	+1 (246) 251-8260
Official E-mail	<a href="mailto:iamagirlbarbados@gmail.com">iamagirlbarbados@gmail.com</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.iamagirlbarbados.com">www.iamagirlbarbados.com</a>
Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/iamagirlbarbados">www.facebook.com/iamagirlbarbados</a>
Twitter	<a href="https://www.twitter.com/iamagirl246">www.twitter.com/iamagirl246</a> (#iamagirl246)
Instagram	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/iamagirlbarbados">www.instagram.com/iamagirlbarbados</a>
Google +	<a href="https://www.plus.google.com/c/iamagirlbarbados">www.plus.google.com/c/iamagirlbarbados</a>
YouTube	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/c/iamagirlbarbados">www.youtube.com/c/iamagirlbarbados</a>

## **Executive Summary**

This report seeks to address issues in relations to children: family, environment and alternative care, discrimination against young women, and by extension young girls in the Barbadian society.

1. **Sexual Abuse:** Institutionalized child molestation, the acceleration of transactional sex and societal tolerance for statutory rape. Calls for Sex offenders' registry and severe sanctions for molesters;
2. **Malicious Communication:** The odious crime of child pornography and victimization culture;
3. **Bullying:** Bullying has transgressed with the use of technological devices, moreover it injustice victims face; and,
4. **Wandering:** Missing girls are treated as criminals for the act of wandering, moreover miniscule investigations are conducted.

## **Introduction**

Through the course of socio-economic development Barbados seeks to ensure the protection and right for all its citizens through the Barbados Constitution from a national perspective. Moreover, at an international level, Barbados has ratified international human rights from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Yet the child protection mandate of the State still has a scope for significant improvements, as it relates to the girl child. Discrimination against these young women has been demonstration through, Sexual Abuse with an extension of societal tolerance for statutory rape and transactional sex; Child pornography; unmindful neglect of wandering and bullying.

I Am A Girl Barbados has recognizes the theme; F32 of Children: Family environment and alternative care, were not thoroughly addressed in neither of the previous UPR recommendations and implementations. These issues of concern will be coherently and concisely expanded in this report.

## **Methodology**

Data was collected through qualitative methodology comprising of direct interaction with impacted persons; a review of applicable secondary data such as protocols and policies; legislative review of the laws related to the relevant framework; and newspaper articles for use of some examples.

## **Normative Framework and Institutional Framework**

- I. Domestic Legislation
  - Barbados Constitution
  - Reformatory and Industrial Schools Act 1926 (Cap 169)
  - Child Protection Act (Cap 146A)
  - Sexual Offences Act (Cap 154)
  - Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act 1992 (Cap. 130A)
  - The Juvenile Offenders Act 1998 (Cap. 138)
- II. International Obligations:
  - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

## **Discussions and Recommendations**

### **1. Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse within the context of molestation has always been a topic of discretion within the Barbadian culture; and Government's attempts to curtail these detestable actions have been partially effective. Matters of institutionalized sexual molestation have been on an up rise and this question the arguments for safe space. In some instances, victims of molestation cases, are placed in alternative care environments and succumb to further molestation.

I Am A Girl Barbados has had reports of sexual favours in exchange for grade increases in our secondary school systems; and in blatant terms, these salient issues are swept under the rug. Plus, if matters are reported the lengthy duration of court trials, exhausts some victims from reaching the justice they desire; case in point 2002 molestation of a 13 year old girl by her male school teacher. The case was thrown out on June 15, 2017 because the victim decided she wanted to no longer press charges and move on with her life. (Barbados Today, <https://www.barbadostoday.bb/2017/06/15/teacher-freed-of-rape-charge/>; Date: 26th June 2017)

Moreover, a case of observation, illustrates, brazen statements from a man in his late twenties, posting on his social media, about his sexual relations with minors ages 13 - 15. This creates societal tolerance for statutory rape in our society. Arguably, the inactive actions of the public, prohibits effective administrative justice.

### **Recommendations:**

Recommendations call for internal investigations from an external party to combat institutionalized rape, within a year's period. Urge the government to consider arbitration in petty cases, to prompt imperative court cases within a year's period.

### **Transactional Sex**

The prevalence of intergenerational sex [1] in Barbados is arguably too high [2]. Additionally, there appears to be a direct correlation between that and transactional sex; sex in exchange for monetary or material gain. This practise is often seen as normative and as such culturally accepted within the country. Through the different workings of the organization it is more than evident that not only are these relationships abusive they breach the right of the child to freely enjoy their life free from adult interference about those rights outlined within the United Nations child policy.

Furthermore, we argue through interaction with many of these cases that they are certain risk factors inclusive of unemployed parents, poverty, peer pressure, neglect and previous sexual abuse that increases the girl's' susceptibility to transactional sex. Correspondingly, in many cases some men knowing of the girls' unfortunate circumstances prey and entice/groom these at-risk girls. It is for this reason that there needs to be a stronger and more aggressive governmental structural response to protect not only the vulnerable but all and take a zero-tolerance approach to the issue.

[1] *Intergenerational sex or “sugar-daddy syndrome” is heterosexual intercourse with a non-marital partner ten or more years older - Prevalence and Risk factors for inter-generational sex: a cross-sectional cluster survey of Barbadian females age 15-19- journal: BioMed Central Women’s Health, Volume 13, 2013 - Published online December 27, 2013; Authors: Nicole Drakes, Clarissa Perks, Alok Kumar, Kim Quimby, Colin Clarke, Rajul Patel, Ian R. Hambleton and R. Clive Landis (Source).*

[2] *Prevalence and Risk factors for inter-generational sex: a cross-sectional cluster survey of Barbadian females age 15-19. This study found that in the aforementioned age range Intergenerational sex was at 29%, higher than what the data previously indicated and in terms of world rates, comparable.*

### **Recommendations:**

Transactional Sex - Within the Royal Barbados Police Force, the establishment of a special task force complete with sensitivity training to deal with reports of transactional sex perpetrators. Additionally, such a task force along with other socio-development ministries and organizations create and monitor a database of victims of such crime providing where necessary the relevant support warranted.

#### **2. Malicious Communication**

UPR 102.49 on discrimination against women was partially supported as it extends to young women in Barbados society involved in acts of malicious communication.

Malicious communication will be define within the context of this report as, “Where a person uses a computer to send a message, letter, is indecent or obscene; is or constitutes a threat; or is menacing in character, and he intends to cause or is reckless as to whether he causes annoyance, inconvenience, distress or anxiety to the recipient or to any other person to whom he intends it or its contents to be electronic communication or article of any description that” (Barbados Constitution: Computer Misused Act, Article 14 [http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/cyb\\_bbs\\_computer\\_misuse\\_2005.pdf](http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/cyb_bbs_computer_misuse_2005.pdf))

A growing concern is the numerous cases of child pornography, and the constant victim blaming on the young women. Over the past decade, countless young women have fallen victim to graphic photography and videos displayed on technological devices, revealing young girls engaging in sexual activities. Images and videos are boldly broadcast and rebroadcast on the various social media sites for viewing of the public. It must be noted, one of the girls in our mentorship programme was a victim of malicious communication, and the stigma she faced was inhumane. Although, legislation states, those accusers of this offense act will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law; these young women are subjected to gender disparity from slut shame with lasting scars of misjudgement.

### **Recommendations:**

I Am A Girl Barbados recognizes that government needs assistance in dealing some of these issues; therefore, we, the *Community*, urge the government to formulate equitable partnerships with impactful organizations within this field to curtail these issues, such as educating the public on victimization through a sequence of programmes over a five (5) to ten (10) year period.

Develop a three (3) stage approach to training for police officers as follows: 1. First Contact - Constables; 2. First Responder - Constables; and, 3. Enforcement - Constables, as it relates to E-Government within a one (1) year period, ahead of penalty implementation.

More focus on E-Government to improve the Royal Barbados Police service for Sanctions and penalties for persons involved in videos and persons engaging rebroadcasting of videos. As the world is adapting to the technological revolution, the relative governmental institutions must act to minimize the gender disparity within a three (3) year pilot.

### **3. Cyberbullying and bullying and its correlations to suicide**

An increased in aggressive and violent behaviour are omnipresent in Barbadian Secondary School System, which is arguably attributed to bullying and by an extension cyberbullying. Traditionally, bullying has portraited the constant salacious gossip and disadvantageous fights among teens, Case in point in February 2017, “at least two parents had requested transfers for their children who were bullied and beaten by their peer” (The Barbados Nation News, 10 February 2017 <http://www.nationnews.com/nationnews/news/93392/bullying>)

In addition, with the technological revolution, bullying has modernized to vicious attacks on social media which reaches a wider audience. These acts result in low self-esteem for victims and in many occasions led to depression, thus resulting in suicidal thoughts and/or suicidal attempts. Reports have illustrated young teens slicing the wrist or leg, in attempts to end the pain. In some other instances victims retaliate, and are sanctioned. There have been cases which occurred whereby victims have been institutionalised at correctional facilities for the same. Additionally, case in point teen was suspended for engaging in a fight after being bullied at a school. (The Barbados Nation News June 26<sup>th</sup> 2017, <http://www.nationnews.com/nationnews/news/98106/mum-upset-child-suspension>, and <https://www.barbadostoday.bb/2017/02/03/teen-found-hanging-at-home-in-brittons-hill/>).

#### **Recommendations:**

Calls for governments to be proactive rather than reactive, by engaging in fruitful relationships with the appropriate civil society organizations to ensure counselling for victims as well as the accusers, starting with a two (2) year pilot.

In addition, allocation of the necessary resources should be given to civil society organisations who directly engage with youth and address aggressive behavioural patterns, along with psychologists, counsellors, and mental health professionals to assist Guidance Counsellors and Social Workers.

### **4. Wandering: The Missing Girls Dilemma**

Within the Barbadian context, a missing girl is often seen as a delinquent child who has left the home of their parent or guardian out of sheer deviance or recklessness. However, within the I am a Girl Barbados organization through first hand experiences we know this to be a different reality. Not only that, but with this misconception produces inappropriate sanctions to deal with the issue.

In the organization, some reasons we found, in many cases anecdotal, can account for some reasons why girls go missing in Barbados; Mental, Physical or and Sexual Abuse in the Home, Peer

Pressure, Bullying, Grooming, Enticing, Neglect, Poverty, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Problems. However, we argue that the justice system often vilifies these young girls without much or little consultation or introspection into their personal lives as there is many a times a situation occurring at home or school that caused them to want to leave. Yet, these girls are charged and placed within institutionalized facilities for a minimum of three (3) years and a maximum of five (5) years and/or until they are ages 16 - 17.

To this end, we therefore challenge the government's' commitment and adoption of the United Nations Child Protection Policy, as these practices infringe largely upon the right of the child to not only survive but to prosper. Furthermore, within the organization more than often it is quite clear that the missing girls after being punished have only been punished, and not rehabilitated, as the rate of repeat offending is high.

### **Recommendations:**

Modification of Legislation - In a study done by the Criminal Justice Unit of Barbados (*Situation Analysis of justice for Children in Barbados, UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean 2015, Author Jacqueline Seay-Burke - Legal Consultant*) it was found that the laws governing the treatment of wandering children were archaic and in need of serious reform, for example, the Juvenile Offenders Act is 1932 and the Industrial Schools Act was established in 1926. As they found and as is seen in the high rates of repeat offending, there needs to be a complete overhaul of the laws and re-alignment with more rehabilitative than castigating measures put in place. In this drafting of new legislation, there should be a sequence of consultations segmented through a multi-stakeholder approach; i.e. mental health professionals, ministries, civil service, civil society, previously convicted wanderers, previously institutionalised youth, for example. Given the wide scope of such a task, a three (3) year time frame may be best.

In the interim, there can be thorough investigations into the cause of a teen's disappearance. As stated earlier, often, there is usually a conscious reason for the girl's actions. To this end, we recommend the establishment of special internal bureau, preferably not social workers, in collaboration with the Law courts to oversee such cases and carry out the relevant research on the girl's life. The findings of such should be disclosed before any decision is made to confine that girl to any institution. As such, this bureau will also be given the relevant resources necessary to ensure that confinement is a last option.

Creation of a Safe House(s) for Teens - Ahead of legislative reform, establishing a clear and structured partnership with civil society organisations, such as I Am A Girl Barbados, with comprehensive supportive measures for the creation of one (1) and/or multiple safe houses and transitional homes for teens. In most cases, especially as it relates to teenage runaways, the establishment of a safe house for girls who for whatever reason feel uncomfortable returning home, would ensure girls immediately receive counselling, rehabilitation where needed and through sisterhood and mentorship, and support through legal proceedings.

I Am A Girl Barbados welcomes the opportunity to establish the same, and with the endorsement of the government, in the interim, with lack of legislation, to allow for safe houses to become operational with trained counsellors and professionals equipped with the necessary skills to

comfort and help these girls, by the year 2018. This ensures no overlap or clashing with government institutions and agencies.

Additionally, it should be mandated that these girls be given the option to stay in this safe house, until alternative options can be made and not necessarily be given over into police custody. It should be stressed and marketed as a safe place for these girls instead of an institutionalised facility, through dual approaches between organisations such as ours and government.