I. DESCRIPTION OF THE CHALLENGE

Background

The Eastern Caribbean Area comprises twelve (12) countries - Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands - with populations ranging in size from 5,000 on Montserrat to 1.3 million people on the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This subregion is classified as middle-income and therefore UNICEF’s work is primarily at the upstream, policy level.

A primary challenge across all islands is the sexual abuse of children of children. The gravity of the situation was highlighted in a 2000 World Health Organization study which found that 42.8% of sexually active Caribbean children had their first sexual intercourse before the age of 10. And by the time a young person reached between the ages of 16 to 18 years, approximately 29.8% had more than five sexual partners. Of the children surveyed, 47.6% of girls and 31.9% of boys surveyed acknowledged that their first intercourse was forced or coerced by family members or family acquaintances (Halcron et al, 2003). In Barbados, in a study of female adult respondents, 30% reported having been sexually abused during their childhood. Another study cited that 70-80% of the child victims of sexual abuse are girls; that in 50% of the cases, the perpetrator lives with the victim; and in 75% of the cases, the perpetrator is someone the child knows and trusts.

A 2005 UNICEF Student Survey with 2,364 students ages 10-14 years across four Caribbean countries highlighted that over a third of the boys (38%) boys and 6% of girls said they have had sex (“gone all the way”); most sexually initiated students said they had sex for the first time with someone their own age; however, forced sex was reported by 14% of all students; on the same cohort three years later, 17% of students report forced sex. Less than 50% of suspected cases are reported to the police and social services, very few by professionals interacting with children, but occurs across all social classes.

However, while the issue of sexual violence against children is a social imperative and most countries have mandatory laws for reporting suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by teachers, neither is this widely practiced nor enforced. UNICEF focuses on preventing the sexual abuse of children, not only because it violates one of children’s inalienable rights, but because of the short- and long-term physical, psychological and social consequences on survivors, and on their families and the community as a whole. Survivors suffer from an increased risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, early pregnancy, psychological distress, stigma, discrimination and difficulties at school.

1 The UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area located in Barbados covers 12 small but sovereign countries through a multi-country programme reaching: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Virgin Islands UK.
Assessment of Current Practices, Behaviours and Norms

According to the Study on Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean (Jones et al., 2009), there are widely held normative personal beliefs of the general population about child sexual abuse:

1. It is unacceptable.
2. It is widespread and has reached alarmingly high rates.
3. It is under-reported due to the shame and embarrassment it brings to families, fear of the abuser and of possible reprisal.
4. ‘Real’ victims believe the veracity of their story would be questioned.
5. Mothers turn a blind eye when their partners have sex with their children for economic reasons.
6. Most abusers are male and the perpetrator most likely to be victim’s stepfather or the mother’s current partner.
7. Cases are hardly prosecuted as mothers accept payments from abusers to ‘drop these cases’.
8. High access to pornographic television programmes and internet by children is making more sexual active and more prone to abuse.
9. Poverty is a precursor to child sexual abuse.
10. Cases increasingly involve teens who seeking money to support their cell phone and other material needs.
11. Sexually aggressive and provocative girls deserved what they get.
12. Sexual abuse does not include the involvement of older men in ‘consensual’ sexual relationships with female minors.
13. Sexual abuse does not include sex between older women and boys as this is an acceptable form of sexual initiation for the boys, who do not consider themselves as victims of abuse.
14. Sexual abuse of a child by someone of the same sex will influence the child’s sexual orientation.
15. The act is both cyclical and intergenerational – abusers themselves were abused

This study was done across six countries via a questionnaire administered to a random population sample across all ethnic and socioeconomic groups, and through focus group discussions with men and women, and with adult survivors of child sexual abuse. No specific work was undertaken with the groups of professionals who are mandated reporters. Nor has an assessment of this issue from a social norms perspective been undertaken.

However, it is unlikely that the beliefs of teachers will vary widely from those recorded for the general population. At the individual level, most teachers appear to have a strong personal belief or moral norm that disavows the practice of child sexual abuse. They feel that all individuals should report any form of suspected abuse of children. However, within their professional network or reference group, there appears to be a social norm for non-compliance with the professional and legal obligation to report such cases. Teachers appear to hold the empirical expectation that most of them will not report suspected cases of sexual abuse of their students and it also appears that it is their conditional preference to uphold the normative
expectation that they all ought not to report, in line with Union policy. To do otherwise, one
risks a “you are on your own”, generalized reproach by the Union, which appears to be enough
to sustain the practice.

Current union policy across the Caribbean is that non-compliance protects teachers from risk of
reprisals, overreach of their professional obligation into the personal lives of their students,
involvement in extended court processes, and placement of affected students in inefficient and
ineffective social services which are not in students’ best interest (McClean-Trotman et al 2013).
Teachers therefore feel that they ought to comply with this expectation, despite their personal
belief, which can be perceived as a situation of pluralistic ignorance.

The Goal

This goal of this exercise is to develop a strategy for changing the perceived social norm of non-
compliance with reporting obligations on suspected cases of child sexual abuse by teachers, to
one in which the reporting becomes the social norm within the subregion, as an integral part of
teachers’ professional obligation to respond to the social needs of children within their care.

II. CRITICAL EVALUATION OF INTERVENTIONS TO DATE

Evaluation of Interventions to Date

UNICEF-driven political advocacy around the issue successfully culminated in the signing of the
1989 Belize Commitment for Children and the 2000 Kingston Accord by all governments of the
Caribbean Community (CARICOM). They committed countries to implement mandatory
reporting laws on child abuse. This subregion’s commitment was re-affirmed at the international
level in the 2002 United Nations General Assembly’s Special Session on Children (UNGASS).
Among the UNGASS strategies and actions in support of goals outlined for protecting children
against abuse, exploitation and violence were:

“End impunity for all crimes against children by bringing perpetrators to justice
and publicizing the penalties for such crimes.” (UNGASS 2002: paragraph 44:4)

As late as November 2012, this commitment was further re-affirmed by Caribbean governments
through the Bridgetown Declaration in the United Nations Secretary-General UNiTE Campaign
against Violence Against Women Conference held in Barbados. These milestones of political
commitment were celebrated by UNICEF, and rightly so, as important wins for children’s issues.

Further celebration ensued as most Caribbean Governments subsequently introduced legislation
governing domestic violence, mandatory reporting by professionals and providing
harsher sentences for sexual acts with children, after long-standing UNICEF lobby and technical
support. Advocacy at the political level had been translated into a legal norm that demonstrated
for UNICEF, official readiness to adopt issues that confront traditional, patriarchal power
arrangements within families, which includes the violation of children. This wave of legal reform
is being underscored by a powerful communications campaign branded by use of the Blue
Teddy Bear symbol, which denotes a commitment to the *Break the Silence Against Child Sexual Abuse*, across the entire Caribbean region.

Messaging has been informed by research into the perceptions and behaviours associated with child sexual abuse, including incest, within the cultural contexts of the Eastern Caribbean region. Female caregivers who directly or unwittingly ignore the disclosures of their children, males with sexually abusive behaviours and children who need to be supported with self-protection knowledge and tools, have been the primary targets of this campaign. Fora have been created for values deliberation on what childhood should mean, when does it end, and how sexual abuse should be defined. This **public attention and debate** has resulted in public support for the legal reforms, heightened media reporting of child abuse cases, and increased reporting to the police and social services primarily by parents and vigilant community members.

**Sectoral engagement around professional obligations** under the new laws has been undertaken, and resources have supported the development of national and sectoral prevention and reporting protocols for professionals working with children. However, these protocols have languished at the draft stage for many years, as they still need to be approved, implemented and enforced.

**Lessons Learned**

Therefore what emerges from the public and professional debates on the issue within the subregion is very mixed messages. There is evidence that communities are being moved to take action; however, the strident voices of denouncement at the professional level are stonewalled from acting on the premise of ethical dilemmas that arise from the necessary interaction between “**diverse professional context, legal requirement, professional ethical standards, and circumstances of suspected abuse**” (McLeod et al., 2000). This course has put in perspective, the significant divide between the legal norm established by the state and the moral norm held at the individual level on the one hand, and the social norm which guides the behaviour of the teaching profession on the other (Mackie, 2012; Guillot, 2013). Lessons from the Citizenship Culture approach to policy and programming in Bogota, Colombia have been most instructive for reflection in relation this case study (Guillot, 2013). The 80 years of legal failure to deter underage marriage in India has the potential to parallel the approaches UNICEF and its partners in the Eastern Caribbean have utilized to date, if a social norms perspective is not introduced into the mix of strategies (Mackie, 2012)! Another lesson is the fact that existing research has not explored the belief systems of specific target groups who are the mandated reporters. Could it be that prevailing beliefs among a significant segment of the general society, also resides within the teaching fraternity, and helps to drive their preference for non-reporting?

A crucial take away for this case study is that the law, while necessary, is not the only condition required for bringing about desired social change. The public policy approach has overlooked a critical examination of the social motivations for legal compliance by teachers. According to the *Cultura Ciudadana*s doctrine and civic practice, the reporting obligation policy should have first
relied on moral regulation, next on social regulation and only as a last resort on legal regulation to bring harmony to the three systems of regulation (Mackie, 2012). This insight will inform continued engagement for building a new social norm around professional commitment to reporting cases of child sexual abuse in the Eastern Caribbean.

III. CHANGE IN PRACTICES

The following strategy is proposed to initiate the required change process:

i) Overcome possible resistance by motivating the need to change and assuring the support of key power groups

a) **Surface dissatisfaction with the present state of non-compliance internally within UNICEF**
   with a full programme team discussion on the social norms perspective as:-

i. There needs to be congruence in our understanding of how the social norms perspective can complement the other legislative and communications strategies.

ii. We need to choose between tackling the issue at a subregional level or through a drill down process in a focus country, before engaging a diffusion mechanism for replication across the subregion. Given very positive relationships with key powerbrokers both within the Ministry of Education and the Teachers’ Union in Barbados; the ability for UNICEF to have sustained hands-on involvement in the required pre-triggering engagement, it is recommended that we work first on our base in Barbados.

iii. To avoid any likelihood of rejection by the Teachers’ Union who may initially be reluctant to critically examine and reflect on the situation if promoted by an ‘external’ entity, UNICEF’s leadership and support for this process must be provided in the background (Bates 1998).

iv. While the goal is achievement of reporting compliance by teachers, our entry point is positioned within the existing relationship between the Ministry of Education and UNICEF on the Child Friendly Schools Initiative (CFS). This integrated approach will help to eliminate the possibility of partner confusion (many UNICEF initiatives) and dilution of messages on what is the ideal, child-friendly school.

b) **Surface dissatisfaction with the present state of non-compliance with the key state actors – the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Education.** Likewise, in an initial separate and then subsequent collective programmatic discussions on how a social norms perspective can support overcoming the non-reporting challenge, will be held with these entities to strategic positioning via the CFS initiative, and be adequately prepared to take leadership of this process going forward. Essentially the conversation with the Ministry of Education is about the changing the script about a how a good school is defined. Essentially the conversation will be around the fact that good schools can no longer be defined by their students’ healthy development in the academic and career arenas alone but rather that a good and safe school must perform a comprehensive role that promotes healthy development in academic, career, and personal-social arenas in which they are part of the collective to protect children from sexual and all other forms of abuse.
c) **Ministry of Education to conduct a Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices and Behaviours Survey Among Teachers.** This survey must be conducted to empirically confirm knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviours to determine the attribution of motives of self versus others, in what appears to be professional social pressure to be a part of the wall of silence around child sexual abuse. While some of the proposed key questions are listed below, these must be pre-tested:

**Reference Group**
- Who are the people in your professional reference network?
- How do you get news from them?
- Who influences your thoughts on this issue?
- Whose advice do you seek on issues of children’s behavioural challenges?
- If you are having a problem in your classroom, who would you talk to?

**Factual beliefs**
- Up to what age do you consider someone a child?
- Do you believe that child sexual abuse is a problem among children in your school?
- Would you consider ‘consensual’ sex between a 14 year old and an older man to be sexual abuse?
- Would be consider forced sex between an adult woman and a 14 year old boy as child sexual abuse?
- Are boys victims of sexual abuse?
- Who do you believe are the main perpetrators of child sexual abuse?
- Are there any benefits of reporting suspected cases of child sexual abuse?
- Are there any benefits of not reporting suspected cases of child sexual abuse?

**Normative Expectations**
- Who might be disappointed if you reported a case of child sexual abuse?
- Who might be disappointed if you did not report a case of child sexual abuse?
- Would a teacher in your position report suspected cases of child sexual abuse?

Together with information on the scale and impact that child sexual abuse is having on children in the Eastern Caribbean, such information would provide the evidence to support the desired norms shift. Firstly it would help to create both **personal and collective empirical and normative attitude shifts** through collective discussion and the change of factual beliefs (with good reasons provided about how vulnerable children can be supported to improve their life chances) and attitudes (regret at current practices) to **build a new social norm** of professional commitment for reporting. This would be based on **common knowledge and cooperative behavior** for the public good (healthier, happier, more confident children/greater school success). It will unearth the pluralistic ignorance that appears to exist – the variance between parts of their personal beliefs and the normative expectations they feel obliged to uphold.
d) **Analyse and have solutions to possible challenges that will be raised by key power groups**

It will be necessary to engage around the current script that unions have offered to defined their current position:

- **Response to fear of reprisals** – the murder of a teacher 25 years ago is now highly unlikely as there are enhanced legal protections for teachers; society is less tolerant of child sexual abuse as evidenced by increased reporting from community members; the safeguards for alleged perpetrators are better known by all.

- **De-personalisation of reports from the individual teacher to a school-based process** – While a generic school protocol will be prepared by the Ministry, the school-based implementation process will be discussed and worked out by the school’s staff complement, following a specific training programme that builds in a values deliberation process around the safety of children in the classroom and school setting. It will be stressed that the role of teachers and schools is one of referral and not investigative. This will help to erase some of the self-doubt that appears confronts individual teachers at present.

- **Intrusion in students’ private lives** – Again the script will be changed to view the process not as an intrusion but as an extension of their natural and presently executed role of reaching out and responding to signs of neglect and physical needs of children.

- **Length of time involved in court processes** – Teachers will need to be made aware of the ongoing legislative and structural changes that are being made to make this process more child-friendly and expedient to all concerned.

- **Referral to inefficient social services** – Similarly, teachers will need to be made aware of the ongoing legislative and structural changes that are being made to make this process more child-friendly and expedient.

- **Offer capacity building exercises that will empower teachers to confidently expand their professional obligation within the social partnership with parents for the best protection of children.**


e) **Assure the support of the key power groups** – Winning over the Teachers’ Union will be key to triggering the process of change. In the initial meeting, the Ministry of Education will need to approach them very positively. The script for engagement with the Union is usually characterized by antagonism related to negotiations of better pay and conditions of service. In this consultative engagement, the developmental role of the Union in underscoring the important role schools and their teachers play in a community for the care of children, will be underscored. While *Parents Are A Child’s First Teacher,* equally as the other half of the people who directly engage with children on a sustained basis, “What the teacher is (to a child’s whole being), is more important than what he teaches.” — *Karl A. Menninger,* They will be encouraged to recognise a community that is in crisis based on the evidence generated on the incidence of child sexual abuse and the qualitative analysis of the current response, an appeal made to their innate ability as teachers to reach students in the way that often parents and others cannot do, and acknowledge the fact that this a natural extension of what they already do for children who emit signals of physical distress and need. This plays on an accepted Caribbean societal value – *It takes a village to raise a child!*
Winning the support of the **Association of Principals of Public Schools** (there are few private schools) is also crucial. A similar bilateral meeting between the Ministry of Education and themselves will be facilitated and similar arguments conveyed. This move is to ensure that change comes from within as it gives the eventual change process legitimacy. Rather than making the issues of non-compliance the central issue, it will be reframed around what a good, safe school ought to be. In this discussion, the existing dichotomy between the fact that schools ought to be safe places for children, yet current practices unwittingly enable perpetrators of abuse, will be unearthed.

For both groups, making visible the fact that schools and individual teachers who are already doing something about the problem will be key to securing their buy-in (Muldoon, 2013). One way in which this can be done without direct referencing to the reporting of suspected cases of child sexual abuse, would be public service announcements during Education Month (October) in which individual school principals publicly declare their school’s commitment to ‘looking after every aspect of a child’s safety’, even when that means referring or working with a child and his/her family and a relevant support agency.

ii) **Harmonize power to shape political dynamics of change**

a) **Use leader behaviour to generate energy in support of change** (Aaltio-Marjosola *et. Al*, 2000, Bate, 1998). – With the Union and Principals on board, a joint meeting for teachers will be suggested to achieve the mutual trust and coordinate abandonment of the existing expectation of non-reporting.

b) **Ensure participatory nature of change – Teachers** at each school will be facilitated to agree, based on the guiding principles of the generic protocol, their specific school guidance, as discussed above. **Student councils** will also make their input and be supported to responsibly spread informed word on the process among the student population. More importantly, the Council will advise and encourage students to know that caring support will be provided to any of them requiring assistance. **Parents** will become a part of the social contract of the school through dialogue within each school’s Parent Teacher Association. In addition, the Blue Teddy Bear campaign will provide media messaging for **general public awareness** to describe the attributes of a safe school; underscore that there will be zero tolerance for the abuse of teachers who must discharge their professional obligation transparently and indiscriminately – essentially a message of **Teachers and Parents - working together to better protect the nation’s children**.

c) **Give time and opportunity to disengage from present state** – Uptake will not be the same across the school community. Therefore, the system will be provided with enough time – suggested one school year – in which to develop the systems and conduct the necessary teacher training and implementation process.
d) **Reward for behaviour in support of change** – The schools that operationalize their protocol in the relevant timeframe will receive acknowledgement from the Ministry of Education and be publicly declared as meeting the safe school standards; conversely, Principals of non-complying schools will be sanctioned by official letter from the Ministry and be provided with the support to comply.

### iii) Build in control of the change process

a) **Develop organisational arrangements for the transition** – There must be institutional arrangements for management of the change process at the central level within the Ministry of Education and at each school. Every effort must be made to avoid relapses into the harmful social practice of non-reporting. Focal points are accountable for ensuring that agreed activities take place, are reported on and any remedial action taken.

b) **Build in feedback mechanisms** – Among the duties of each school’s focal point will be development of feedback mechanisms internally and to the Ministry. This process will help to support individual teachers to avoid slippage and to receive any required support. The Ministry will also be monitoring the qualitative reports/requests received from individual schools to determine whether there are areas to be addressed collectively or individually. The Ministry of Social Development will also track the cases being referred by schools to determine if the new norm is taking route. Student satisfaction surveys will also be undertaken both to obtain their input on what a safe school means to them, and then how the rate its implementation.

c) **Build in a process to guarantee sustainability** – To ensure that all incoming teachers understand their reporting obligation, training to undertake the role will be integrated as a mandatory part of their training at the Teachers’ Training College. For those teachers who entered the system directly without teacher training education, this will be a mandatory part of the orientation for untrained teachers.

d) **Assessment of shift in social norm** – The social norms assessment process will be repeated within two years to verify changes in personal beliefs, personal normative expectations, empirical and normative expectations to confirm whether the social norm has shifted/is shifting toward reporting compliance.

### iv) Replicate the change process across the Eastern Caribbean

Pre-existing relationships with the Caribbean Union of Teachers and with the Standing Committee of the Chief Educations Officers will be useful to act as bridges for diffusion of the effort across the Eastern Caribbean. This organized diffusion will bring structure to the process and support the transmission of faithful messages. This will be backed up by UNICEF’s direct exchange with country’s Union and Ministry, since these weaker links (the CUT and CEOs) meet
only two to four times yearly may be good for spreading information, but slower as a direct influence to shift their empirical and normative expectations. (Muldoon, 2013)

a) Via the Union – Individual member unions are members of the Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT) which meets at least four times per year. The Barbados Union of Teachers will be supported to prepare a documentary on the process to be shared at a CUT meeting. This documentary will highlight the leadership role of the BUT appealing to acknowledgement of its critical role as an initiator of this change. In this way, the CUT will become a bridge in the exchange of this positive information.

b) Via the Chief Education Officer (CEOs) – Similarly, the CEOs of all Caribbean countries met twice yearly. A similar documentary highlighting the role of the Ministry and the collaboration with the Union will be supported for sharing with colleagues.

c) Country meetings – UNICEF will meet with the CEOs of all other countries to discuss the change process in Barbados and through the positive feedback anticipated from the Unions and themselves, facilitate them to adapt and initiate similar processes in their respective islands.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is hoped that through the foregoing process, compliance with the reporting obligations of teachers of suspected cases of child sexual abuse in the Eastern Caribbean, will become the new social norm, in line with the prevailing legal and moral norm, within the next two years. The first proposed step for doing so is by changing the factual beliefs of teachers and exposing the social norm to them by sharing and discussing with them, information on the impact of child sexual abuse on children and the results of a diagnostic survey on the social norm among teachers. Next, a public policy reaction to confront the enormity of the community problem of child sexual abuse will be deployed. This will be done by re-defining or changing the script of what is a good and safe school. No longer will be a school be defined by its academic prowess alone, but by how it caters to the child’s academic, career and social needs through a child friendly approach. This process brings into play a series of values deliberation by the reference group - Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, Teachers’ Unions, teaching professionals, student themselves and their parents, to discuss in a mutually supportive environment how the socially accepted value of ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ can be practically lived by schools and its teachers, and safeguarded by the society at large.

This process anticipates a disruption of the pluralistic ignorance of teachers by which they are confronted with evidence of their personal moral norm for reporting on the one hand, and their empirical and normative expectation for non-reporting compliance which is currently inimical to children’s best interest. Early wins will be secured by making visible the fact that there are already schools, principals and teachers who are already playing their part to address children’s social needs. Public service announcements by individual school principals who are willing to
declare their school’s commitment to the process will not only highlight the trendsetters for others to emulate, but will de-personalise the concept from that of an individual teacher, to the collective responsibility of a school.

The Blue Teddy Bear, already a symbol for action against child sexual abuse in the Caribbean, will be utilized as another opportunity to amplify the public discussion and gain buy-in for the role of the teaching profession in the all-of-society responsibility to protect children against child sexual abuse. The process engages the pre-existing programmatic entry point of the Child Friendly Schools Initiative as well as pre-existing relationships with Ministries of Education and Teachers’ Unions to act both as catalysts for change at the national level, as well as bridges to support diffusion across the Caribbean. Mechanisms have been built in to ensure full participation of all stakeholders and to sustain its permanence through mandatory training processes for new teaching recruits and periodic measuring of the shift in the social norm, until it becomes fully established in line with the prevailing legal and social norm.

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