



*Best Wishes for 2006*

*From the Staff  
 of the  
 Women and Development Unit*

**Making Women Powerful  
 Lessons Learnt From HIV/AIDS Project**

**Introduction**

With finding from UNFPA, WAND launched its *Making Women Powerful* project, which seeks to intervene in the lives of young females in an attempt to provide them with experiences, skills, and knowledge that would increase their chances of an improved quality of life. The pilot programme, a five-day workshop, which addressed HIV/AIDS and targeted young women between the ages of 15 and 25 years, was held in June in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The overall objective of this workshop was to improve the young women's ability to protect themselves from the negative social and economic impact of the HIV/AIDS endemic. Other objectives included: to identify key factors in the life history of participants that contribute to their vulnerability, increase knowledge of transmission and prevention as well as develop basic life skills. Ms. Sheila Samiel and Ms. Nelcia Robertson facilitated this activity.



**Lessons Learnt**

Working with a diverse group of participants

highlighted several key factors that contributed to vulnerability.

These include lack of education both formal and informal, early pregnancy, expected family support and dependence on and dominance of males in the lives of these young women. It was recognized that knowledge of

HIV/AIDS was high but not using condoms, there was also a change of attitude towards persons affected. Early pregnancy however compounded the problem as this reflected that 'safe sex' was not being practised. Male dominance over and dependence on by these young women indicated that negotiating condom use was not part of sexual activity .

Children proved to be a motivating factor for the participants to seek better for themselves but due to the lack of knowledge and ability these young women were not able to access professional and personal development programmes that were available. (cont...)

## Some Findings

Family support is very important although the general perception was that it was mandatory and therefore did not enhance their sense of responsibility towards taking care of their kids.

Participants appreciated the intervention that enabled them to develop a 'life plan' which gave them direction and self-confidence. The authorities need however to make more programmes available for youth development. Such initiatives should include financial support for education, increase investment in knowledge and skills, and engage families in strategies that help child care as well as provide more public education on HIV/AIDS.

WAND would like to thank its partners, UNFPA, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and NGOs which supported and participated in this workshop. Special appreciation to the School of Continuing Studies, St. Vincent which hosted this activity and was therefore essential in the success of this initiative. *Making Women Powerful* will hopefully be replicated throughout WAND's community in the Caribbean. □

***Arrogance and good manners are never on speaking terms***

### Women of Faith Speak Lecture Series

The *Women of Faith Speak* series will commence in January 2006 and culminate on International Women Day, March 8, 2006 with a one day Conference entitled '*Theologising Gender*'.

A variety of topics are expected to be explored during this series including: *spirituality -the church in the changing society, marriage & divorce, Bereavement, leadership and celebrating self* among other relevant and topical issues. The series will be held fortnightly beginning January 1, 2006. Speakers will be drawn from a cross-section of faiths. □

## From the Reference Library...

Another phase of the development of the WAND Reference Library was completed at the end of June 2005. In addition to a complete physical rearrangement, the electronic database now has 3 648 records for accessing in-house.

An inventory of the periodical collection yielded a holding of 256 active titles and 237 archived. This information is available in both an electronic database as well as in hard copy. The library also has a collection of audiovisual materials pertaining to gender and women issues. There are 143 titles in audiovisuals and approximately 255 in audiocassettes.

In addition to a published bibliography, work was started on the compilation of a hard copy catalogue of the publications in-house. This will be an extension of the online database with periodical updates. The Library continues to provide reference and referral service to UWI women studies and other students, researchers and the general public. □

***Slander, gossip and idle talk have been the ruin of many a person. Be careful of what you say about others and think before you speak***

**WAND** Notes

Newsletter of the Women and Development Unit,  
University of the West Indies  
School of Continuing Studies  
Pine, St. Michael  
Barbados  
Tel: 246-430-1130, Fax: 246 426-3006  
Email: wand@uwichill.edu.bb