

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTER**

The ultimate goal of Raise Your Voice Saint Lucia, Inc. is to advocate for a safer environment where women and children can grow and achieve their full potential. The strategy for change is to empower and educate the public about human rights, while supporting and encouraging survivors of violence to report offences to the relevant officials, and to help them rebuild their lives. To this end, we hosted a public march in the city of Castries on November 25th, 2015 to observe the UN Day to End Violence Against Women and Girls. We are currently in production of five PSA's to create public awareness and education about rape, domestic violence, child abuse and the lack of access to swift justice for women and children who survive these crimes.

### **Project Description – Summary**

The Sexual Assault Support Centre (Voices) will be established as non-profit charity and community based organization. Our purpose is to provide survivors of sexual assault a sanctuary, to listen to them and empower them to find their own path to healing. We will offer non-judgmental support and consider women experts of their own experiences. We will strive to increase public awareness and offer training and workshops on the issues and effects of violence against women. We will to support women and girls in the community. Our work will be informed by the principles of a feminist, anti-oppression framework, and our vision is a society free of all forms of violence against women and girls.

The Sexual Assault Support Centre offers service and support to women who have experienced sexual violence. This could include rape, childhood sexual abuse, adult sexual assault, sexual harassment, etc. We will offer a 24-hour support line, support groups, individual support, legal advocacy, accompaniment to court, hospital and police, information, public education and specialized programs for women who have experienced sexual assault.

1. Women and Girls in Saint Lucia who are victims of sexual assault have nowhere to go to get support; the professionals who respond to sexual assault and intimate violence, including first responders, those involved in the recovery process and the criminal justice system are not trained on how to respond to survivors of intimate violence. For example, according to a 2013 needs assessment, there are few professionals in St. Lucia trained to respond to sexual assault disclosures. Even with training, there is little interagency coordination and no consistency in responding to sexual violence against women and children; victims who do report are transferred from one agency to another, repeating their stories multiple times.

2. The results of establishing a sexual assault support center include a) a consistent and supportive response to disclosures of sexual assault and domestic violence, b) coordination of services in response to disclosures of violent victimization, including shared protocols for hospitals, law enforcement, the courts, and social work agencies.

Between January, 2013 and February, 2016, 158 cases of rape and 445 cases of sex-related offenses against women were reported to the Royal Saint Lucia Police Force. In addition, the Department of Gender Relations and Human Services cites six fatalities due to gender based violence. Between 2012 and 2016, the Departments of Human Services, Gender Relations,

Women Support and Crisis Center received 657 crisis calls from women who were victims of intimate partner violence including 58 juveniles. It is assumed that both official rates of rape from the police and unofficial rates from nonprofit agencies represent an undercount of the actual rate of sexual violence against women and girls in St. Lucia. The barriers to reporting these crimes are significant: stigma based on victim-blaming and fear of the perpetrator in a context of low anonymity and strong community ties. In addition to these cultural barriers, victims face systemic barriers: the absence of shelter or options for escape, the lack of training among professionals who respond to violence against women, the absence of a coordinated approach to responding to disclosure, and the lack of supportive legislation. Because of fiscal constraints, the central government has not provided sufficient financial support to agencies and organizations that respond to violence against women, and these results in a systemic response that is inconsistent, inadequate, and unable to offer effective support to survivors.

## **Project Results**

The results of this project include a) a consistent and supportive response to disclosures of violent victimization, including sexual assault and domestic violence, from all of the following groups: police officers, prosecutors, judges, doctors, nurses, counselors, and social workers; b) coordination of services in response to disclosures of violent victimization, including shared protocols for hospitals, law enforcement, the courts, and social work agencies. An effective systemic response to disclosures of violence against women means women and children who disclose victimization will receive the assistance they need to recover and heal; they will receive support at any agency where they choose to disclose; the number of times victims have to repeat their story to the representatives of different agencies will be minimized; victims will feel supported throughout the processing of their cases in the criminal justice system.

## **Project Strategies and Theory of Change**

Many problems are best solved collaboratively, working across multiple agencies; the establishment of a sexual assault support center will incorporate all partners into a relationship of ownership for the purpose of improving the systemic response to sexual violence against women and girls. We will build a team of advocates and volunteers which fosters creativity and learning, blends complementary strengths, builds trust, and teaches conflict resolution skills, promotes a wider sense of support for victims and encouraging change within agencies that may otherwise be comfortable with the status quo.

A project coordination and monitoring team will be formed that will include representatives from all relevant agencies that deals with victims and survivors of sexual assault i.e. Police, Health, Human Services, Gender Relations, Family Court, Media, and NGOs to meet regularly to review set protocols in response to the disclosure of sexual assault. Ultimately, this group will be a non-statutory, voluntary, oversight body responsible for the establishment, management, and implementation and monitoring of a coordinated response to disclosures of sexual violence. Their specific responsibilities will include guiding the proper management of the center as it unfolds; ensuring that all relevant agencies are able to offer input into the process; conducting an assessment of training needs for volunteers; to providing strategic direction and guidance as to

improvements in the response and any changes needed to implement those improvements, including training, protocol revision and general support for victims.

As enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international and regional human rights instruments, violence against women and girls is a human rights violation. Our organization includes two Human Rights and Gender Justice Advisors, Ms. Felicia Brown and Ms. Mary Francis, and they will continue to be advocates and advisors throughout the project. , We intend to build the capacities of our partners, citizens, advocates, victims and survivors as per the UN Women Centre for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women we will engage in the following:

Develop the capacities of all our partners who will collaborate with us to ensure victims and survivors of sexual assault are given the services and support necessary (e.g. justice, security/police, health and education personnel, among others) by providing training that emphasizes violence against women is a violation of human rights, that women have the right to make informed decisions about their safety, their legal options, and their health care in the aftermath of sexual violence. More specifically, we will offer trainings and workshops with the following themes: police duty (at the request of the woman) to intervene in cases of sexual violence, even when it occurs in the privacy of a home; the gender-based nature of these crimes and the fact that women survivors face stigma and discrimination that may deter them from reporting or filing a case right away; prioritizing women's safety, confidentiality and anonymity at all times; making sure services are available, accessible and known to women and girls; implementing awareness-raising advocacy campaigns to achieve zero tolerance for violence against women and to reduce stigma by changing attitudes; engaging the wider community to reach underserved populations, such as the elderly, women with disabilities to ensure that all women are aware of their right to appropriate and supportive services.

### **Project Sustainability**

Many have recognized the need for improvement in the response to sexual violence against women and girls, and they already support the call for the establishment of a sexual assault support center, collaboration and training. This project, then, fills a gap in services, and we believe that bodes well for sustainability. In addition, the collaboration would be composed of representatives from different agencies, and these positions would not require additional funding after the grant period. Funding for trainings after the grant period will be obtained through other international funding sources.

Critical assessment of our services and the center will be conducted every 90 days and we will ask for feedback from victims who we provide with services and support, that feedback will be incorporated into our management and future plans to ensure sustainability and quality of service.

## **Partnership and Stakeholder Strategy**

Female victims of violence will likely interact with officers and personnel from the Police, Hospital Emergency Rooms, Department of Human Services and Gender Relations, St. Lucia Crisis Center, Women Support Shelter, Family or Magistrate Courts, the media and other NGO or community leader who victims may choose to relate to, Schools Counselors, the Red Cross, etc. Therefore, it is important to work with each and every agency listed to get their input and buy-in for the establishment of the center, as it is imperative that each and every agency personnel who is likely to come into contact with a female victim of violence be trained in skills and competencies to allow them to interact and attend to victims without re victimizing and further traumatizing them. An initial public consultation will be hosted with all stakeholders including lawmakers to ensure everyone is aware of the objectives of this initiative which is to provide better services to female victims and survivors of violence.

At every stage of implementation we will have consultations so our project partners can be part of every decision, provide feedback on the progress being made within their respective agencies, and comment on any changes in strategy to achieve better outcomes.

Although the beneficiaries of this project are female victims and survivors, we recognize the need to include the entire society so they may better understand victim blaming and passing judgement is counterproductive to rehabilitating victims of violence. To better inform the general public we will advocate via town hall meetings, the print and electronic and social media as it is important for the general public to understand our goals and objectives.

## **Organizational Capacity**

We have three trained and practicing social workers, one welfare officer, two lawyers and we regularly collaborate with professional counselors and clinical psychiatric professionals who provide voluntary support to our members who are victims of sexual violence. We have collaborated with professionals who can be contracted to provide consultancy services for the purposes of implementing this project, who are highly regarded in their field. With this project we will partner with the Ministry of Health Wellness, Human Services & Gender Relations, The Ministry of Legal Affairs and Internal Security who have trained and practicing professional in their respective departments to ensure the project is executed and implemented within the guidelines of the UN Women framework and to ensure we have a functioning system of social services with trained officers to ensure victims and survivors of violence are empowered and are given the support and service necessary to heal and to move on with their lives. . Finally, we will facilitate training of professionals by recruiting consultants with a background of success in implementing programs that aim to end violence against women and girls. We will also work with social service agencies that have trained professional staff in order to capitalize on existing strengths in Saint Lucia.

<b>NO.</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>Monthly Cost</b>	<b>Yearly Cost</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1	Lease to Purchase of Building	Lease to purchase a suitable building to establish the Sexual Assault Center (Voices)	1,850.00	22,200.00	A building will be identified where a contract for rent to purchase will be entered into.
2	Upgrade & Customize Building	Redesign to include Administrative Office, Counseling Room for Individual Session, Conference Room for Group Counseling and Meetings, Kitchen, Bathrooms, Bedrooms	10,000.00	10,000.00	To upgrade the chosen building to a secure and comfortable center
3	Furniture	Desk, Chairs, Beds, Tables, File Cabinets, Book Shelves, etc	5,000.00	5,000.00	To furnish center
4	Equipment	Computer, Printer, Phone, Kitchen Appliances, etc	5,000.00	5,000.00	To process and record information
5	Vehicle for Center	Vehicle for pick up of Victims & Survivors during Crisis situations	8,000.00	8,000.00	To pick up victims in cases of emergency
6	Supplies	Grocery, Toiletries, Stationary, etc	1,500.00	18,000.00	Food Items Shower Products Personal Hygiene Stationary
7	Personal Care Kits	Female Products for Victims Staying Overnight	500.00	6,000.00	Sanitary Napkins, Toothpaste, Toothbrush Deodorant Hair Brush
8	Clothing	Female clothing for Victims Staying	500.00	6,000.00	Victims may

		Overnight			arrive at the shelter without additional clothing
9	Utilities	Telephone, Water, Electricity	500.00	6,000.00	
10	Professional Services	Social Workers, Welfare Officers, Legal Officers, Clinical Psychologists, Researcher, etc	1,000.00	12,000.00	Stipend for Professionals who volunteer at the center
11	Volunteers	Victims Advocates to accompany victims to the police, hospital, court, etc	500.00	6,000.00	Stipend for Victims Advocate
12	Administration	Administrator, Secretary, Security, Cleaner	2,000.00	24,000.00	Stipend for full time volunteers
13	Maintenance	Maintenance and upkeep of Center	500.00	6,000.00	
14	Training	Training of Volunteers and Empowerment training for victims and survivors of sexual assault	1,500.00	9,000.00	Group training every 90 days