



GENDER AFFAIRS ANGUILLA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION

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SUBJECT: GENDER AFFAIRS ANGUILLA IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES AND ACTIONS TO GUARANTEE WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Greetings distinguished guests and colleagues. Please let me adopt the protocol already established. On behalf of the Minister of Social Development and Education, with responsibility for Gender Affairs in Anguilla, the Hon. Dee-Ann Kentish-Rogers and the Permanent Secretary with responsibility for Gender, Dr. Bonnie Richardson-Lake, I am pleased - as Anguilla's Gender Development Coordinator - Dr. Ronya Foy Connor, to highlight the contribution of the Santiago Commitment during this 60th Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women. We note this regional consultation prior to the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women under the theme "Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls."

Today we highlight two areas of impact related to the measures and actions promoted by Anguilla to guarantee women's rights in the context of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in recovery efforts. Gender Affairs Anguilla stands with our partners around the Caribbean and around the world in trying to address the holistic psychosocial effects caused by, or even heightened by, the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, in Anguilla, we have responded to help all persons, with special attention to women, children and those who are vulnerable, by first conducting a statistical review of domestic dispute incidents and changes since the COVID-19 onset which was in March 2020 for Anguilla. The statistical data was prepared and analyzed in partnership with the Royal Anguilla Police Force. We found that in March, April and May of 2020 Anguilla saw an increase in reported domestic dispute cases compared with reports from 2019 and 2018.

In March 2020, there was a 125% increase in reported domestic disputes (from 8 cases in 2019 to 18 cases in 2020). In April 2020, there was an 88% increase in reported domestic disputes (from 9 cases in 2019 to 17 cases in 2020) and in May 2020, thankfully the level of increase was not as sharp as we saw a 29% increase in reported cases (from 14 cases in 2019 to 18 cases in 2020). This data only captures the first two quarters of 2020 but it shows that there may be some correlation between COVID lockdown and associated employment, family and overall well-being burdens and responses.

It is important to note that in April 2020, we saw the only incident for the year involving an estranged husband and wife. Also, the highest increase in domestic disputes since COVID-19, has been between boyfriend and girlfriend and parent and child or step-parent (including uncles and aunts). Prior to the COVID-19 presence in Anguilla, domestic dispute numbers were in the single digits and the lowest it had been in the last 3 years (2017-2019) for January and February 2020.

In response to the unprecedented needs of all members of society due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the second initiative that occurred was the establishment of a national 24/7 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) hotline. The hotline was launched in Anguilla in March and is currently still operating through the Department of Social Development and the Anguilla Red Cross. Calls are accepted from the public in relation to stress, anxiety, grief, violence in the home or other crisis matters. The MHPSS team also extended workshop and training offerings geared toward ensuring the well-being of first responders and those in the hospitality sector. Workshops engaged over 200 participants from March until November 2020 in the four topic areas of:

- Ending Stigma and Discrimination in the time of COVID-19;
- Promoting Communication and Conflict Resolution in the Workplace;
- Utilising Stress and Coping Methods; and
- Customer Service Excellence in the COVID-19 Context.

Our efforts continued through Gender Affairs Anguilla's robust programme for the *16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence* under the three-tiered theme of "Be a Pillar." A series of events engaged men, women, girls and boys in "being a pillar" to: 1. To stop domestic and gender-based violence, 2. To end child sexual abuse, and 3. To stand against stigma and discrimination. We are grateful that events took place in person, virtually, and through strategic messaging shared on Facebook @GenderAffairsAnguilla and at the website www.GenderAffairsAnguilla.com.

In conclusion, we thank you for this platform to share just some of the action steps taken by Gender Affairs Anguilla and the Ministry of Social Development and Education in Anguilla to promote gender equality despite the setbacks presented by COVID-19. We have viewed the pandemic as an opportunity to educate and encourage our population at new levels and we offer you support and success in your respective country endeavors. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ronya Foy Connor

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