



# Lessons learned: Evaluating the program fidelity of UNWomen Partnership for Peace domestic violence diversion program in the Eastern Caribbean

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## ABSTRACT

To date, there have been a plethora of punitive and diversion programs to address domestic violence around the world. However, the evaluative scholarship of such programs overwhelmingly reflects studies in developed countries while barely showcasing the realities of addressing domestic violence in developing countries. This paper features a multi-year (2008–2011) evaluation study that measured the fidelity of the United Nations Partnership for Peace (PfP) domestic violence diversion program in the Eastern Caribbean country of Grenada. Our findings illuminate organic engagement strategies that were built within existing multi-sectoral partnerships that included magistrate court judges, law enforcement officials, and social service agencies. Furthermore, we documented how the locally-devised implementation strategies ensured the program's fidelity within a resource-limited context. This paper contributes to the global evaluative scholarship, highlighting the lessons learned about implementing culturally-adapted and theoretically-driven domestic violence diversion within a developing country.

## 1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), domestic violence is “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (WHO, 2013). Domestic violence is universal and a public health problem for which multiple approaches have been devised to reduce the impact on individuals and communities (Bellack, Hersen, Morrison, & Van Hasselt, 2013; Sosin, 2012). However, studies of programs that were developed to address domestic violence are generally skewed toward developed country realities and rarely showcasing the practices in resource-limited developing countries (Krahé, Bieneckz, & Möller, 2005; Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Kimmel, 2002; Straus, Gelles, & Smith, 1990; White & Koss, 1991). This paper is about the first comprehensive evaluation of the eastern Caribbean domestic violence model and program Partnership for Peace (PfP) implemented in Grenada. The PfP is the only culturally adapted, theory-driven domestic violence program that has been

implemented in the eastern Caribbean countries of Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, Belize, the British Virgin Islands, and Guyana (UN Women, 2010). It is delivered as a court-based diversion program that allows adjudicated male perpetrators of domestic violence to enroll voluntarily in a controlled, cohort cycle psycho-educational program as part of their court mandate.

## 2. Background

Violence, particularly domestic violence, has been a Caribbean public health challenge throughout the region's history (Allen, 2009). Among the Caribbean's colonial past, violence was routinely used as a means of ensuring stratified relations along racial, ethnic, and gender boundaries (Lewis, 2003; Morgan & Yousef, 2006; Dabreo & Jeremiah, 2010; Jeremiah, 2012). In today's contemporary Caribbean societies, violence, particularly domestic violence, is continuously perpetuated against women and children (Jeremiah, 2012). In 2000, the existence and acceptance of violence the Caribbean was challenged by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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(UN Women) pursuing regional efforts to criminalize domestic violence as a human rights issue and a public health challenge (Jeremiah, Quinn, & Alexi, 2017).

By 2005, UN Women was leading structural changes to promote regional domestic violence policies in the Eastern Caribbean. Among these activities, Partnership for Peace (PfP) was developed as a culturally-adapted and theoretically driven domestic violence diversion program. It became a 16-week cycle intervention that allowed male perpetrators who were charged under Grenada's Domestic Violence Act of 2001 (Division of Gender and Family Affairs, Ministry of Social Development, 2001) to voluntarily enroll into the PfP as an alternative to imprisonment or fines (Jeremiah, 2011; Jeremiah & Gamache, 2013). Eventually, in the aftermath of Hurricanes Ivan in 2004 and Emily in 2005 increased anecdotal accounts of domestic violence were found among Grenadian communities, the PfP was debuted to address domestic violence (Jeremiah, 2011).

### 3. The PfP model and curriculum

According to PfP protocol, a community-based organization should lead the implementation of the PfP program on behalf of UN Women. In Grenada, Grenada's Legal Aid and Counseling Clinic (LACC), a non-profit legal and social services agency with more than 30 years of community service was selected as the implementation partner. The PfP protocol makes provisions for the implementing partner, LACC to assume full responsibility of the delivery of the PfP as a domestic violence diversion program. LACC's premiere approach about the PfP implementation was leveraging relations with Magistrate Courts, Government Ministries, and family-based social service agencies to be referral points of the program. While LACC led the implementation, UN Women maintained oversight and provide technical support to ensure the PfP's fidelity.

The PfP is delivered as a 16-week cycle with at least ten to fifteen recruited men confirmed with their voluntary willingness to be candidates in the intervention. It is based on a closed-cycle format that enrolled PfP male participants cannot accrue more than two excusable absences. Such rules were intentional included to encourage synergy and support among the PfP men in each cycle. A cycle is facilitated by two trained facilitators – a male and a female, who completed comprehensive training administered by UN Women.

The PfP curriculum introduces and reinforces life skills that participants can incorporate into their daily lives. For example, anger management (week 2) is presented with the understanding that some participants may not consider it to be an issue. But, the principle is reinforced in later stages of the cycle illustrating connections to other issues such as Power and Control in Relationships (week 9) and Substance Abuse Prevention (week 13).

During the sixteen sessions, PfP program administrators and facilitators are continuously mentoring the PfP participants to adopt and sustain life skills that are based on nonviolent behavioral practices. Table 1 provides an overview of the PfP psycho-educational curriculum reflecting how it has been adapted to include the social and cultural norms that perpetuate violence in the Eastern Caribbean:

#### 3.1. Justification for the evaluation of the PfP

Without a doubt, there are a plethora of punitive and diversion programs to address domestic violence around the world. However, evaluative research publications overwhelmingly features studies conducted in developed countries in North America, Europe, and Australia (Montoya & Rolandsen Agustín, 2013). As a result, we know very little about the successes and failures of programs in a developing world context such as the Eastern Caribbean (Rothman, Butchart, & Cerdá, 2003). This paper features the undertaking of the PfP evaluation of in the Eastern Caribbean as novel and groundbreaking particularly, in documenting how the program fidelity as achieved according to

**Table 1**

UN Women's Partnership for Peace Program Curriculum.

1. Orientation
2. Understanding and Managing Feelings: Part 1: Anger Management
3. Understanding and Managing Feelings: Part 2: Managing Life's Transitions
4. Effective Communication
5. Conflict Resolution
6. Family History
7. Manhood
8. Womanhood
9. Power and Control in Relationships
10. Sexuality, STIs and HIV Prevention
11. Fatherhood and the Effects of Violence on Children
12. Stress Management and Trauma Recovery
13. Substance Abuse Prevention
14. Domestic Violence and the Law
15. Spirituality and Culture
16. Relapse Prevention and Personal Development

(UN Women Partnership for Peace Curriculum Training Manual, 2009).

Graham-Kevan (2007):

- (1) well-designed programs have a firm and explicit theoretical basis, which is supported by empirical research; (2) programs are based on accurate assessment of the "risk," "needs," and "responsivity" of offenders; (3) there is strategic targeting of such risk and needed factors through program features; (4) programs are delivered to consistently high standards using treatment responsivity; (5) there is inclusion of skills-oriented, cognitive-behavioral approaches in the program, and most importantly, (6) only programs that are well-matched to or modified to meet the needs of the offender and demonstrate that treatment or program efficacy have integrity (p. 222).

To support our evaluative inquiries into PfP program fidelity, we drew upon Rossi and Wright's discussion of the role of social research principles: 'the use of social research procedures to systematically investigate the effectiveness of a social intervention program is a way to evaluate program interventions' (2003, p. 16). We believed that social intervention programs such as the PfP are to be understood as planned and organized, with ongoing activities that relate to their processes, and their impact is usually measured by how well they improve a social condition – in this case, domestic violence in Grenada (Dane & Schneider, 1998; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2003; Sullivan, 2011; Summerfelt, 2003). The evaluative study inquiries were aligned to the PfPs goals to understand how a social program focused on addressing domestic violence, reducing recidivism (repetitive violence), and improving the social conditions and human rights of Caribbean women and children were undertaken in a resource-limited context.

Our evaluative approaches were influenced by Rossi and Wright's five principles for measuring program fidelity based on ascertaining answers to key questions: what worked, for whom, and under what conditions did the program thrive or not thrive in Grenada? (Lipsey & Cordray, 2000) We extrapolated on these principles for the PfP in the following ways:

1. Program need: We described domestic violence in the Eastern Caribbean and derived an understanding of the target Caribbean population and the magnitude of the problem.
2. Program theory: We analyzed the PfPs implicit and explicit assumptions about domestic violence and the methods through which it could be ameliorated.
3. Program process: We documented key aspects of PfP performances that linked intended program functions to some appropriate standards such as a model.
4. Program impact: We measured whether the PfP achieved its desired outcomes with every client in the program.

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