

Together We NAME Our World!

# NAME Newsletter

ISSUE NO: 2

JANUARY - MARCH, 1988.

## MASS EDUCATION: An Antidote For Violence

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As a traditionally dominated group, women feel the effects of violence in the home, at the workplace and through the various forms of sexual abuse which have extended to rape and murder of children.

At the same time, men, who are unfortunately the major users of violence, are themselves victims of their own violence and of the traditional expectations of them as men. Society, like a fish trapped by an octopus, is caught in the tentacles of the cancer of violence.

It was against such a background of violence that the first International Women's Day came into being. On March 8, 1908 women workers in New York, USA held a rally to demand trade union rights which would



Women in IWD March

ensure fair wages and safe working conditions. The success of the rally encouraged women in other American cities and other countries to organise for their rights. In 1910, March 8, was officially celebrated as International Women's Day.

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## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MASS EDUCATION

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**NAME Newsletter is published by the National Association for Mass Education, an organization which promotes literacy and adult education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.**

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**We reproduce here the cover [opposite] and excerpts from the text of Issue No. 2 (January-March 1988), the theme for which is Women and Adult Education.**

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Today, 78 years later, there is a greater need to rally around the issues facing women. It is not enough to speak; it is time for action! An Education program is needed:

- (a) for women to become aware of themselves and their worth, develop their self-esteem and skills, and to articulate their needs;
- (b) for men to understand the humanity of women, their needs, their right to freedom, to pay them honour as the weaker vessel or dominated group, and to raise them from that position.

The good news is that NAME is well-placed to carry out this task. NAME believes that "...education should seek to enhance self-esteem, to develop one's potential, to equip the individual with the skills necessary to function in, analyze and change society." (Constitutional Guidelines). It is structuring its activities to fulfill these aims.

Mass education is the antidote to the spread of violence as men and women work together in an atmosphere of equality to build bridges for women's total liberation.

## Is Your Program Helping Women?

**E**nsuring that Adult Education programs are improving the lives of women it takes conscious effort on the part of organizers, learners and tutors. NAME encourages each program to acknowledge International Women's Day by examining how you are serving the needs of women. The following questions may be useful as points for discussion and as suggestions for actions you can take:

1. How many women learners are in the program? Why do you think there are more or less than men? What problems do they face in coming to the program? Have you considered trying to organize childcare during classes?
2. What percentage of the tutors are women? If there are few women tutors, why do you think this is so? Have you considered recruiting more women? Are the male tutors sensitive to the needs of women learners?
3. Are women learners taking classes like carpentry? Are they encouraged to?
4. Are women always expected to cook and clean when you hold special events? Could they play a more active role in leadership and as organizers? Could they learn to operate Public Address systems, tape recorders, etc?
5. Are women encouraged to participate in sports and other recreational activities?
6. Do women in your community face problems (poor health, violence, unemployment, etc.) that your program could work to overcome?
7. Do you ever discuss the contributions of women when studying St. Vincent & the Grenadines and its history?
8. Have you considered inviting a speaker to discuss the situation of women within St. Vincent and the Grenadines or world-wide?

## Women Speak on Importance of Education

**N**AME asked several women involved in Adult Education what they consider the greatest obstacle to women in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and how they believe Adult Education could advance their cause. Here are their responses:

*It comes down to attitude, not just of men towards women but also of women towards themselves. For example, if men said you can do anything you want — that 50% of the police force and mechanics will be women — women won't take advantage if they don't feel they are able. Women have to feel that the sky is the limit and men must be able to accept a women's capabilities. There is also the assumption that the man is the breadwinner, so he gets more pay. That's ridiculous when the fact is that most families are headed by women in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.*

*We need to change attitudes and that comes down to education — actually believing that you can do something. In an Adult Education Program, you have taken the first step when you step through the door. Ideally there is the opportunity for speaking out, for decision-making, for taking risks and for developing leadership skills. There should be equality for learners in the groups. The groups should give the confidence so that if the electricity goes off, for example, you don't sit and wait for a man, you take care of it yourself. Secondly, Adult Education Programs are the ideal opportunity to provide women with training in non-traditional skills. The programs also provide a chance to express feelings and gain an awareness of each other and respect. When men and women share and express their feeling, then they can recognize their sameness as well as their difference.*

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*Two things are responsible. One is work, the kind of work women do as well as the salary. They are paid less than men even if they do the same things. Secondly, a societal impression of women being the weaker sex, the subordinate person who can't perform as well as men can. Even if they do better, it still isn't accepted on par with what the man does. It has to do with a woman's place in the home. Perhaps it comes from the sex role that a woman plays. Men can do as they like and women can't.*

*Adult Education gives women more skills so that they can do more things — perhaps even as many men can do. Right now women's skills are limited to things in the home and office. Not many women are managers. But when women are trained they can do what men do. The more education and skills she has the more the woman can become the breadwinner along with the man. It becomes a partnership.*

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*I would say that teen-age pregnancy is caused most of the time by many young women not having anything to do. Most girls reached up to senior school and then dropped out. When you are at home, it's easy to get around the wrong people, get into trouble and get pregnant. When you have a job, you meet more people and experience a lot.*

*The Adult Education Program really helps a lot. I am meeting different people, going places I'd never been before, learning things I'd never heard about. I've learned to address a crowd, I've learned a lot in English like how to make sentences, form a letter and make a composition. In math I've been doing percentages and long division. We also had a six-week course in Family Life Education and Teen-Age Pregnancy. We really learned a lot. More courses like that would help.*

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*I think that the greatest obstacle to women's development is illiteracy. With it I would add the inadequacy of training in marketable skills.*

*For our women to be able to participate meaningfully in the economic, social cultural and political life of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, they need the armour of self-confidence which comes with the ability to understand and be understood together with the skills which would fit them for well-paid jobs. Educated for life and living, they will be able to function according to their maximum potential.*

*The greatest obstacle against the advancement of women is the great lack of "support structures" — the non-availability of adequate Daycare Centers, limited training opportunities, high unemployment and under-employment. The judicial system does not cater enough for women and their rights as a whole.*

*Adult Education can advance the causes of women in SVG by enhancing their all-round development, which will help them to be better citizens. It is evident that women are the main victims of the high rate of drop-outs from the school system. Therefore Education programs should place high priority in catering for the needs of women.*



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