British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference on the Role of Parliamentarians in Ending Violence against Women and Girls

Gibraltar; Friday 6 to Sunday 8 February 2015

REPORT
The content of this report is not attributable to the speakers at the Conference but instead is based on the notes taken by summary writers. Accordingly, the content of this report should not be quoted or considered as representing the views of the speakers present.

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1. BACKGROUND

1.01. In 1992 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians gained official recognition, which was confirmed by the CPA General Assembly on 8 October 1992. Since that time CWP has grown to be represented more fully in many of the 9 CPA regions through regional steering committees. Over recent years CWP conferences and events have taken place across the African, Australian, Canadian and Caribbean regions and the inaugural BIMR CWP Conference took place in March 2014 in Edinburgh hosted by CPA Scotland Branch.

1.02. CWP international is governed by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from each region. The international Steering Committee is currently chaired by Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP, Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament. Patricia Ferguson MSP is the international vice-chair.

1.03. The CPA is divided into 9 regions, of which the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) is one. BIMR includes Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, England, Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, the Isle of Man, Malta, Cyprus, Gibraltar, St Helena and the Falkland Islands.

1.04. The Steering Committee of BIMR CWP receives funding from the CWP’s Regional Strengthening fund. Meetings of the Steering Committee decide on the use of the money to best meet their aims and objectives.

2. BIMR CWP AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.01. Build the capacity of women elected to parliament to be more effective in their roles;

2.02. Improve the awareness and ability of all parliamentarians, male and female, and encouraging them to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation;

2.03. Help parliaments to become gender-sensitive institutions;

2.04. Encourage more women into politics and connect with the work of the Commonwealth;

2.05. Focus on themes of communication, advocacy and engagement;

2.06. Link with other groups and associations such as UN Women, UNDP and CSW;

2.07. Expand the work and understanding of CWP.
3. ATTENDEES

BIMR CWP Steering Committee:

- Patricia Ferguson MSP (Scotland) - Chair
- Samantha Sacramento MP (Gibraltar)
- Deputy Sandra James (Guernsey)
- Deputy Carolyn Labey (Jersey)
- Dr Justyne Caruana MP (Malta)
- Jo-Anne Dobson MLA (Northern Ireland)
- Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP (UK)
- Joyce Watson AM (Wales)

Guernsey:

- Deputy Yvonne Burford

Gibraltar:

- Isobel Ellul-Hammond MP

Isle of Man:

- Kate Beecroft MHK

Jersey:

- Deputy Anne Pryke
- Deputy Louise Doublet

Malta:

- Dr Claudette Buttigeg MP
- Dr Marlene Farrugia MP
- Alex Cutajar (Accompanying Official)

Northern Ireland:

- Brenda Hale MLA
- Michelle McIlveen MLA
- Ursula McCanny (Accompanying Official)

Scotland:

- Sandra White MSP
- Cara Hilton MSP
UK:

Rt Hon. Eleanor Laing MP
Sharon Hodgson MP

Wales:

Ann Jones AM
Jenny Rathbone AM

Chair of the CPA international Executive Committee:
Hon. Dr Shirin Chaudhury (Bangladesh)

Chair of the CWP international Steering Committee:
Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP (Uganda)

BIMR Secretariat:

Andrew Tuggey (Secretary)
Helen Haywood
Emily Pignon

CPA Secretariat:

Lucy Pickles

Speakers:

Rt Hon. Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC (UK)
Dr Philippa Olive (University of Lancaster, UK)
Thangam Debbonaire (Respect, UK)
Natalie Thavares (Head of Children and Family Services, Gibraltar)
Clare Borrell MBE (Founder and Manager of Women in Need, Gibraltar)
Jan Pickles OBE (NSPCC & Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner, South Wales)
Inspector Sylvana Briffa (Malta Police)
Clare Moody MEP (UK)
Laura Higgins (Safer Internet Centre, UK)
Rupinder Bains (Pinder Reaux, UK)
Susie Hargreaves (Internet Watch Foundation, UK)
4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.01. The BIMR CWP Conference forum proved very successful at the inaugural Conference in Edinburgh in March 2014. The speakers, participants and quality of debate were all excellent, and levels of engagement were high.

4.02. The Gibraltar follow-up conference was of an equally high standard; the contributions of good quality speakers and participants were important factors; and the choice of the Elimination of Violence against Women as a theme united interest in discussing effective strategies for parliamentarians in tackling Violence against Women and Girls domestically and internationally.

4.03. BIMR CWP Steering Committee Chair Patricia Ferguson opened the conference by emphasising the importance of following up on action points and how this should be kept in mind throughout discussions. Delegates should take back to their branches, and to the CPA, what they learned, and she iterated that the more women there are in Parliament, the higher the likelihood of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women; and that violence against women is a key cause of inequality.

4.04. In the session on Violence against Women and the Economy, Baroness (Patricia) Scotland and Dr Philippa Olive used experience and research to illustrate the scale of the problem, and to demonstrate how investing in solutions to tackle Violence against Women; both prevention and protection, leads to economic savings in the longer-term. The problem makes huge economic impacts on criminal justice, health, social welfare and lost economic activity - money which would not need to be spent if the abuse did not occur. The figures were compelling - for every £1 invested, there was a predicted £6 longer-term saving. The use of reliable data which could robustly stand up to challenge was emphasised, as was the need for cross-government multi-departmental dialogue.

4.05. Thangam Debbonaire told the Conference that further legislation is required to bolster strategies for Preventing Violence against Women. She referenced her work with perpetrators with UK NGO Respect and how they were affected by societal influences such as the portrayal of women in the media, the sex industry and levels of impunity for sexual and violent crime. She referred to research which demonstrates that effective prevention strategies can be defined by modelling pathways to violence, and designing interventions which disrupt these models. Sylvia Briffa, a Police Officer from Malta spoke about improvements to prevention and protection of victims resulting from the establishment of a multi-agency response team working together to deal with perpetrators and victims. She stressed the importance of education in raising awareness of the scale and seriousness of the issue and investment in adequate training for stakeholders.

4.06. How Violence against Women is dealt with at local level was the focus of speakers Natalie Tavares, Head of Children and Family Services in Gibraltar, and Shelter Manager Clare Borrell. The wider impacts to families of living in households experiencing domestic abuse was discussed, highlighting that despite the emotional trauma to their children of witnessing abuse many women were reluctant to leave the domestic setting because of concerns about the economic and social consequences of leaving. Authorities needed to respond to this challenge by providing a safe alternative. Jan Pickles spelled out the importance of robust legislation to protect women; and for legislation to be fit for purpose it needed a reliable evidence base. She spoke about multi-agency professionals having the right tools for the job including training and resources at each stage of intervention - from health workers, social services, police and courts - and multi-agency information sharing and cooperation was crucial. The role of the GP in assessing risk was highlighted and how appropriate training leads to significant improvements in identifying victims and potential victims.

4.07. The need to share best practice, expertise and legislative successes was highlighted at a session on International organisations and cooperation. Clare Moody MEP talked of EU research published in 2014 to assess the extent of Violence against Women in the EU. The findings - that one in three women have experienced some form of physical or sexual abuse - was being used to inform new European legislation. She emphasised the important role of women parliamentarians as the voice of women, ensuring victims did not feel powerless, mute and ignored. She also spoke of the importance of ensuring male colleagues are supportive and engaged with the issue. CWP international Chairperson Rebecca Kadaga stressed her cross-Commonwealth colleagues’ important role in ensuring their Governments are acting on their obligations to protect women. She referred
to the extensive opportunities for women parliamentarians to cooperate - bilaterally with interaction between women’s caucuses, at regional level as exemplified by the CWP regional platforms, and internationally in coordination with existing networks such as the IPU and the Women in Parliaments Global Forum.

4.08. In a speech to the Conference CPA Executive Committee Chair Dr Shirin Chaudhury focused on the potential power of the CPA to achieve the end of Violence against Women through international cooperation - and a that an Action Plan should be formulated by the CWP for implementation at national and local level.

4.09. The final discussion focussed on protecting women and girls against abuse on social media. The three speakers gave enlightening and persuasive presentations on how the proliferation of internet use had brought with it a range of risks for women users. Laura Higgins from the Safer Internet Centre used case-studies to illustrate examples of harmful internet usage and content including trolling and revenge porn, both of which can have profound psychological effects on victims. There had however been some progress; for example in amendments to existing laws, increased public awareness, collaborative work with industry and more help available for victims. Rupinder Bains whose Solicitor’s firm Pinder Reaux has helped victims of online abuse said that UK law is not sufficiently robust to deal with cyber-bullying and that revenge porn is on the increase; however it is only when celebrities are involved that it becomes newsworthy. Whilst Internet Service Providers and websites need to do more to protect users, women and girls need to be much more cautious and be aware of the dangers. Susie Hargreaves spoke about the role of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) in removing criminal content hosted online - their successful work resulting in only 0.2% of child abuse images on the internet being hosted in the UK - and they are sharing their work with international partners to ensure these successes are replicated elsewhere. The IWF recruits and works with parliamentary champions who help with advocacy and also through their constituencies can feed information back at local level.

4.10. The Conference officially concluded with a summary from BIMR CWP Chair Patricia Ferguson. She gave a vote of thanks to Speaker Chaudhury and Speaker Kadaga for their attendance and valuable contributions, and to the Regional Secretariat, colleagues on the Steering Committee and the CPA Gibraltar Branch as host. She emphasised that the Conference must not be the end of the discussion on Violence against Women and that it must go further for the sake of the people they represent. She urged delegates to try to shape legislation and to take opportunities to speak to community groups and schools.

4.11. She highlighted the following action points:

4.11.01. Violence against Women to be proposed as an agenda item for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference 2015 in Islamabad;

4.11.02. CWP BIMR to submit an amendment to the CWP draft strategic plan to ensure Violence against Women is specifically referenced;

4.11.03. BIMR CWP could conduct a survey in the region about legislation on Violence against Women in each jurisdiction;

4.11.04. The next BIMR CWP newsletter to focus on the discussions around Violence against Women from the Conference;

4.11.05. The Steering Committee to consider how to share information discussed at CWP forums with colleagues - both male and female.
5. PROGRAMME

‘Sexual and gender-based violence is the most extreme form of the global and systemic inequality experienced by women and girls. It knows no geographic, socioeconomic or cultural boundaries. Worldwide, one in three women will suffer physical or sexual violence at some point in her life, from rape and domestic violence to harassment at work and bullying on the internet. We must introduce and implement laws to prevent and end discrimination and exploitation. We can challenge discrimination and impunity and put a stop to the mind sets and customs that encourage, ignore or tolerate the global disgrace of violence against women and girls’

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon’s message on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2014

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### Plenary: International Organisations and Co-operation

Clare Moody MEP

Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP (Speaker, Parliament of Uganda & Chair, CWP International Steering Committee)

Chaired by: Dr Justyne Caruana (BIMR CWP Steering Committee, Malta)

### Reception & Dinner

Speech by: Hon. Dr Shirin Chaudhury MP (Speaker, Parliament of Bangladesh & Chair, CPA International Executive Committee) Introduced by Patricia Ferguson MSP.

### Sunday 8 February

### Plenary: The Abuse of Women and Girls on Social Media

Laura Higgins (Safer Internet Centre, UK)

Rupinder Bains (Pinder Reaux, UK)

Susie Hargreaves (Internet Watch Foundation, UK)

Chaired by: Roberta Blackman-Woods MP (BIMR CWP Steering Committee, UK)

### Plenary: Summing Up, Recommendations and Action

Patricia Ferguson MSP (Chair, BIMR CWP Steering Committee & Vice Chair, CWP International Steering Committee, Scotland)
6. REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

6.01. Opening Plenary: Introducing the Conference and its Theme

0900-0930 at the Sunborn Hotel

Patricia Ferguson is Chair of the BIMR CWP Steering Committee. She was elected to the Scottish Parliament in 1999.

Hon. Samantha Sacramento MP is Gibraltar’s representative on the BIMR CWP Steering Committee and is Minister for Tourism, Equality and Social Services and Housing.

6.01.01. Samantha Sacramento welcomed delegates on behalf of the Government of Gibraltar and CPA Gibraltar Branch. A lot of work is being done locally on domestic violence - which affects the whole community.

6.01.02. Patricia Ferguson told the assembled Conference of the work the Steering Committee has been doing including; preparation for the Conference, producing and distributing a newsletter to raise awareness of and update the wider BIMR parliamentary community of the work of BIMR CWP, and working on the draft BIMR CWP strategic plan which charts the way forward and sets down what BIMR CWP is all about and what it intends to do. The draft will be distributed to all branches for comment, feedback, thoughts and suggestions. Feedback should be returned and collated before the BIMR regional meeting in May (Cyprus). A reminder will be sent and Mrs Ferguson encouraged delegates to talk to other women in their jurisdictions about the draft strategic plan.

6.01.03. It had been a unanimous decision for the Conference theme to be Ending Violence against Women - the issue had been raised at the previous BIMR CWP Conference in Edinburgh and she hoped for a comprehensive and open discussion. On behalf of the delegates she thanked the speakers and expressed their good fortune at having attracted such high quality speakers.

6.01.04. Patricia emphasised the importance of keeping in mind follow up to the Conference - and that delegates must take back to their branches, and to the CPA more generally, what they had learned. There were clear links between the Conference theme and issue of women’s representation - with a critical mass of women in parliament, the easier it is to tackle these issues.

6.01.05. Tentative plans are in place for the 2016 Conference in Guernsey in February and for 2017 in Northern Ireland. There is real enthusiasm for the BIMR CWP Conference - but that enthusiasm has to be translated into real action.

6.02. Violence against Women: The Economics

0930-1100 at the Sunborn Hotel

The cost to the economy of violence against women and girls including direct costs of dedicated services, healthcare, criminal justice and social care and the indirect costs of lost economic activity.
Rt Hon. Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC is the former Attorney General of England and Wales. She chaired the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence which collectively worked together to reduce domestic violence by 64% and led to £7.5bn reduction in the economic cost of domestic violence in England and Wales. Baroness Scotland is the founding patron of the Corporate Alliance against Domestic Violence, and in 2011, she founded the Eliminate Domestic Violence Global Foundation.

Dr Philippa Olive is a researcher at Lancaster University in gender-based violence and has expertise in methodologies for measuring the harms and impacts of gender-based violence and for estimating their economic costs.

Chaired by: Samantha Sacramento MP (Gibraltar)

6.02.01. Samantha Sacramento said that the most important factor in domestic violence is the protection of the victims and their families; however the wider costs must also be considered. Her inspiration for the Conference has come from meeting and discussing these issues with Baroness Scotland. She introduced the speakers.

6.02.02. Rt Hon. Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC expressed warm thanks to Samantha Sacramento and observed that it had been an important conversation for them both. Not only had they discussed the importance of the issue, but how to share the learning collectively acquired - and this Conference was an opportunity to do so.

6.02.03. Domestic violence and abuse affects one in three women and is the biggest cause of morbidity in women worldwide. If there was a disease affecting one in three men in the world there would be a scandal. Victims of abuse - and family members of abuse victims (especially their children) are overrepresented in every form in dysfunction pertaining to physical and mental development.

6.02.04. Lady Scotland summarised her experiences during her period as the UK’s Attorney-General (2007-2010). Having arrived in post with a drive to tackle the issue, she found responses varied hugely dependent on whom she asked; which left her wondering how to change things if everyone in the criminal justice system (police, courts, prosecutors, prisons and the probation service) did not act together. A high proportion of women, young people and men in the criminal justice system had a history of exposure to domestic violence. She disabused the mantra of Governments that ‘we cannot afford to do anything about it’ by asking how much does domestic violence cost us as a country? There was a critical mass of Government colleagues at the time who agreed that by making the economic case for change, they would have a better chance of doing it. However, the figures presented in support of the economic case needed to be watertight; and able to withstand any amount of interrogation. At the time, the evidence-based research came up with a figure of £23 billion - disaggregated across multiple sectors (Government Departments and Agencies). It was subsequently estimated that for every £1 spent on tackling violence against women, the Government subsequently saved £6. Baroness Scotland chaired the inter-ministerial group looking at domestic violence; there was much resistance from Government colleagues (and civil servants) about spending money on tackling domestic violence; however by using the economic argument she was able to convince them that it was an opportunity to save money. The Inter-ministerial group used the economic case ruthlessly as only when they ‘talked money’ did everyone understand the imperative.

6.02.05. Lady Scotland called for a multi-faceted, multi-agency approach to tackling domestic violence. She mentioned the contribution of Jan Pickles (speaker at the subsequent session on VAW: Protection) in helping to create the Multi Agency Risk Assessment model - a Victim’s pathway looking at the experience of the victim. A key question was why abuse victims were not coming forward to report domestic abuse. It was mostly because of concern for their children and what would happen to them once ‘in the system’.
6.02.06. The multi-agency approach helped to increase the rate of successful prosecutions of perpetrators which had traditionally been very low.

6.02.07. She called for the Conference not to be a talking shop, but to be a workshop. It was a time for myth-busting. As most jurisdictions have gone through the same processes and made the same mistakes and successes, the importance of sharing information is paramount. Lady Scotland founded the Global Foundation - to take methodology developed in the UK and share it internationally. She highlighted that even in opposition you can contribute to change - by working together, cross-party and cross-government.

6.02.08. Dr Philippa Olive referenced a research study she had worked on with Professor Sylvia Walby (Lancaster) for which they had identified the best methodology for identifying costs associated with violence against women.

6.02.09. She spoke of how gender inequalities contribute to higher rates of violence against women, but also the impact of violence against women on their economic and social needs, i.e. housing and specialised services.

6.02.10. Dr Olive said the reason for costing violence against women was to raise awareness of the scale and significance of gender-based violence, which is bigger than ever imagined. It results in a cost-benefit analysis which enables easier comparisons of policies during the competition for allocation of public funds, the ‘expected outcome’ would be increased funding of policies to reduce gender based violence which would ultimately reduce the overall impact on public expenditure.

6.02.11. Another purpose of costing gender-based violence was to add to the process of gender mainstreaming - i.e. translating a specialist gender equality issue into mainstream policy (thus changing the mainstream). Policy areas concerned were economic growth, social inclusion, justice, freedom and security and public health.

6.02.12. The UK has a history on costing VAW - Dr Olive’s most recent research with Professor Walby (2014) Estimating the Costs of Gender-Based Violence in the EU builds on Walby (2004) The Cost of Domestic Violence - is important information for policy makers in terms of distribution of resources. They identified a preferred methodology, having evaluated several on the basis of comprehensiveness, robustness, replicability, simplicity and feasibility - building on one used previously in the UK. They included all definitions of violence (Gender based violence, against women and against men and women, and intimate partner violence, against women and against men and women), but also deconstructed the costs against each of the definitions. In terms of costs to be measured they included lost working time and lost economic output and cost to the public (state) including criminal and civil justice, healthcare (physical and mental), social welfare and specialised services. There was also an aspect applied of the public’s ‘willingness to pay’ to avoid pain and suffering (whilst a contested principle, most budget holders include this impact when providing services and it is integral to economic analysis).

6.02.13. The data challenges to the research are huge, so the most robust data possible was used - as well as a range of methods in modelling costs (either using a ‘unit cost’ model based on cost per service multiplied by the number of incidents or a ‘top down’ model, which is total expenditure with a percentage applied for usage resulting from gender-based violence).

6.02.14. To assess the scale of gender-based violence in the UK they reference the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) which included the categories homicide, wounding, common assault and sexual violence.

6.02.15. Lost economic output (time off work) figure was €4,214 billion.

6.02.16. The cost of health services was €1,946 million - this figure was used in Home Office methodology which disaggregates the number of Gender Based Violence incidents by sex and crime type using the CSEW, the extent of injuries for each type of violent crime, and the extent to which injuries lead to treatment.
6.02.17. The cost to the Criminal Justice system was **€4,739 million** (police, prosecution, courts, legal aid, probation and prisons) with a further **€405 million** on the Civil Legal System (protection orders, injunctions to restrain or expel a violent partner, divorce and separation plus associated disputes/settlements over child custody and finances).

6.02.18. The Social Welfare cost was **€1,296 million** which included housing and child protection and Specialist Services Costs (refuges, shelters and advice services) were **€210 million**.

6.02.19. A figure of **€18,911 million** was applied to the Physical and Emotional impact - the monetary value of the loss of healthy life years.

6.02.20. When disaggregated for each country the 2012 cost to the UK was **€33 billion** (lost economic output 13%, health services 6%, criminal justice 15%, civil legal system 1%, social welfare 4%, personal costs 3%, specialist services <1%, physical/emotional impact 58%). However, in England between 2012/11 and 2011/10 there was a 31% reduction in funding of VAW service provision - with smaller budgets suffering greater percentages of cuts. Much less is spent on direct services for women to help them extricate themselves from situations.

6.02.21. In conclusion, the cost to the EU of gender based violence is **€258 billion** each year; however less than 1% of this total cost is spent on specialised services to combat this violence. Additionally, funding streams are often given for a short amount of time.

6.02.22. A question and answer session followed. **Patricia Ferguson (Scotland)** asked about the availability of the referenced data for dissemination. Dr Olive responded that the research data had been presented to the EU in December (2014) and that data is transferable i.e. Denmark has used the UK data.

6.02.23. **Roberta Blackman-Woods (UK)** asked how the data be applied to focus on ending VAW rather than paying for it, for example Local Government budget cuts leave funding for specialist services vulnerable and compromising on services. Lady Scotland reemphasised the ‘invest to save’ message - i.e. focus on the cost of not intervening and how the costs replicate. Early intervention was the ideal. Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada have implemented the model used in the UK and she called on the CPA to use its inter-parliamentary network to encourage its implementation across the Commonwealth, which would be life changing for the women of the Commonwealth.

6.02.34. **Sandra James (Guernsey)** asked why women take so long before seeking help, further questioning if young women’s values are compromised and misplaced by the treatment and portrayal of women in the media.

6.02.35. **Joyce Watson (Wales)** commented that VAW is not a women’s problem and society (as a whole) has to pay for the cost of VAW. She reiterated Lady Scotland’s call for a Commonwealth-wide model for tackling VAW.

6.02.36. **Jenny Rathbone (Wales)** spoke about women not seeking help because of their fear of losing their children (because of valid concerns about children’s welfare) and the lack of support services for women who have had their children taken from them.

6.02.37. Lady Scotland said that VAW is no respecter of people and it happens across the social and economic spectrum. Often it involves a slow breaking down of confidence between partners, and victims do not believe it when it happens to them. People do not always recognise when a relationship becomes controlling. Dealing with it requires an understanding of the complexity of reality, and that it is not straight forward.

6.02.38. Jan Pickles spoke from a practitioner perspective. She said that action often follows tragedy; however there do not need to be multiple tragedies to inspire change. There has been a failure around prevention. There are many cases of agencies failing to follow their own procedures which were in place and systems need to change and improve - and the costing model is a good impetus for change.
6.02.39. **Kate Beecroft (Isle of Man)** commented that she had not appreciated the scale of the problem, and especially in recognition of the data estimates being conservative - she asked if allowances had been made for non-reportage, and is the reality that much bigger?

6.02.40. Lady Scotland responded that the mental health of children had not been included which was valid data, but it could be challenged if used. She said that the figures are the minimum cost impacts on the economy and that the actual figure is much more. As far as non-reportage is concerned, she cited the example of her own Government Department where they applied their own best practice in raising awareness of the issue and encouraging victims to come forward - and the number of reports was much higher than anyone had imagined.

6.02.41. In response to a question by Brenda Hale (Northern Ireland) Lady Scotland responded that everyone had to count the same thing so that the system can withstand interrogation. The language had to be similar so everyone was working from the same baseline and all actors had to work together, including the third and private sectors. It was important that policy development is based on empirical data.

6.02.42. **Sandra White (Scotland)** commented that tackling VAW transcends all party politics and that it starts with education; and that educating boys and men on the issue is just as important as educating women and girls. Lady Scotland responded that it was key to seek out men who have daughters, women they care about, good people who are committed to ending VAW.

6.02.43. **Patricia Ferguson (Scotland)** concluded by emphasising the importance of outcomes from the Conference. She urged delegates to call on their respective CPA branches to respond to CPA Secretariat’s request for a suggested theme and discussion topics for the 2015 Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference by putting Ending VAW on the agenda - with the economic argument as a key focus.

6.03. **Violence against Women: Prevention**

1115-1230, Sunborn Hotel

Effective prevention strategies addressing the root causes of gender inequality and the disempowerment of women; education programmes for young people; targeting men and boys; community mobilization; data collection; legal and policy reforms.

Thangam Debbonaire became Research Manager for Respect, the UK national domestic violence organisation in 2008. She brings research, practice and policy together to improve responses to domestic violence perpetrators. She is also a parliamentary candidate at the UK 2015 General Election.

Sylvana Briffa is an Inspector in the Malta Police Force. In 2013 she was nominated as a member of the Task Force on Human Trafficking in Malta and lectures on domestic violence at the Police Academy.

Chaired by:
Joyce Watson AM was first elected to the National Assembly of Wales in 2007. She is Chair of the CPA Wales Branch and a member of the BIMR CWP Steering Committee.

6.03.01 Joyce Watson opened the session by introducing the speakers.

6.03.02. Thangam Debbonaire, conscious of time but eager to ensure she covered all her points, made her presentation to the Conference on effective prevention strategies that address the root causes of gender inequality and empower women.

6.03.03. Respect is a UK National organisation for responses to domestic violence perpetrators (male and female), male victims and young people. It runs two national helplines and supports high quality interventions. Thangam was responsible for bringing research, policy and practice together. Respect works in partnership with sister organisations, academics, practitioners and policy makers.

6.03.04. Thangam referenced a review of research about violence against women, violence against children and sexual orientation violence by Carol Haggeman-White (2009). It was developed for the European Commission as a feasibility study to assess the possibilities, opportunities and needs to standardise national legislation on gender violence and violence against children. Haggeman-White used interactive models to understand the relative factors influencing categories of violence, and a model for interventions to interrupt them. These models are available online: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/funding/daphne3/multi-level_interactive_model/understanding_perpetration_start_unix.html

6.03.05. Haggeman-White looked at thousands of pieces of research and came up with an innovative way forward, ensuring a robust evidence-base for her recommendations. The evidence supported the theory that the disruption of traditional models disrupts a whole host of other factors.

6.03.06. She noted that the routing in different pathways is influenced by the levels of factors at play. For example for some the path leading to abuse is strongly influenced by childhood or individual life histories, whilst for others the trajectory may be set in motion by societal values and prejudices and driven by peer approval or discriminatory environments.

6.03.07. Some of the work with perpetrators includes gender-based cognitive behavioural programmes which change ideas around honour and respect. Early prevention strategies are also important, like compulsory sex and relationship education in schools.

6.03.08. There are lots of state-level interventions which impact on the incidence of rape and sexual assault - these include improving prosecutions of perpetrators (better recording and investigating, improved gender equality - requiring legislation, leadership and accountability) and more boundaries for media i.e. human-rights-based standards to limit the depiction of violence, sexual coercion, degrading images of women/children.

6.03.09. Factors which influence the incidence of all types of abuse are impunity, notions of masculinity, entitlement and honour codes.

6.03.10. According to Mirabal research (published 2015), after completing a Respect-accredited programme, most men stopped using all forms of physical and sexual violence. Most reduced most forms of emotional abuse.

6.03.11. The steps a perpetrator needs to take to change behaviour are to give an honest account, take full responsibility - no blame, no minimisation, no justification, develop empathy with and understand the impact on the victims, unpick masculinity and entitlement and choose to change.

6.03.12. Thangam emphasised that these programmes do not replace, but work with the criminal justice system - perpetrators must go to prison.
6.03.13. The spotlight needs to remain on the perpetrator both in individual cases - changing what they think about being a man - and at state accountability level. Policy making needs to focus on the perpetrator as well as the victim. Attention is put on the woman that she must leave; however in 50% of cases abuse does not stop when she does.

6.03.14. There is evidence of the link between gender based violence and sexually abusive “entertainment” - lap dancing and strip clubs and access to pornography - which needs to be addressed through legislation. Different approaches to prostitution also maintain the culture of entitlement. Sweden has criminalised demand which shines the light on the perpetrator. Lap-dancing, prostitution and pornography are predicated on the abuse of women before, during, after and outside employment. They are not a job like any other, with workers in need of a legal system to be safe. They contribute to a culture of entitlement and reduce all women’s public safety. The “sex industry” is a harmful cultural practice. It reinforces beliefs about women which contribute to violence and abuse.

6.03.15. Thangam summarised the role of parliamentarians in effective prevention - to legislate on protection, prevention, prosecution and equality. To lead by example, and in voice. To hold the state accountable.

6.03.16. Thangam spoke of the strength of cross-party validity; that the case is stronger when made together.

6.03.17. She ended by stating that violence against women is preventable. Intimate partner homicide, for example, has reduced - but can go back up again.

6.03.18. **Sylvana Briffa** made her presentation on prevention strategies on violence against women within the Maltese legal framework. She began by stating that violence is a violation of the fundamental rights of a human being. There is no particular profile of violent partners; it can affect anyone.

6.03.19. Domestic violence reflects gender inequality and the need to dominate and control.

6.03.20. Using figures of reports of domestic violence she observed that these are just those reported to the police (i.e. the tip of the iceberg).

6.03.21. In legislation the definition of domestic violence, types of abuse, and definition of household members helps with the rate of successful convictions. The definition includes verbal, physical, emotional, psychological, financial and sexual abuse. Household members include persons married or formerly married, or who have lived with the offender, parents and their children, other adults sharing the household, persons who have a child or are expecting a child in common.

6.03.22. Recent changes to legislation include that reports do not need not be lodged only by the victim - some victims were withdrawing their reports - the criminalisation of harassment and the fear of use of violence. Malta has also introduced restraining, protection and treatment orders. The State has implemented the Istanbul Convention on rape and consent into Maltese law.

6.03.23. In Malta they have established a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) - medics, social workers and police working together - they have a responsibility to notify one another of any cases or suspected cases of abuse. There is also a strong focus on cooperation with other sectors including the Social Support Agency (Domestic violence unit), Child Protection Services (when minors are involved) and NGOs. A whole range of support, including psychological and emotional, is available.

6.03.24. Inspector Briffa referenced a case-study of a domestic worker, abused by her employer - she had suffered many types of physical and psychological abuse. The perpetrator was successfully prosecuted. The case came to light through a SART partner NGO.

6.03.25. In Malta they have had a poster and leaflet campaign and have produced and distributed contact cards, including different contact numbers for victim support. The campaign was
highlighted during Fresher’s week at the University. The Malta Police have been involved in highlighting the issue in the media - following which the number of reports increased.

6.03.26. They have also instituted training programmes for different sectors dealing with victims.

6.03.27. An education programme run in the schools focussed on gender equality, and non-violent behaviour.

6.03.28. Inspector Briffa finished by recommending better coordination between stakeholders, increased funding to support social services, more flexible access to justice and a coordinated approach in issuing emergency barring and protection orders.

6.03.29. A question and answer session followed.

6.03.30. Louise Doublet (Jersey) asked if there was a reluctance by victims to report abuse because of processes. Thangam responded that prosecutors should look for other forms of evidence rather than just the victim’s report. Inspector Briffa said victims needed more trust in the people dealing with their cases and suggested building trust by working with victims housed in refuges.

6.03.31. Isobel Ellul-Hammond (Gibraltar) asked Thangam what percentage of perpetrators Respect programmes reached. Thangam responded that it was a very small number who go on programmes, because there are so few programmes. Those that did were referred from social workers and family courts.

6.03.32. Marlene Farrugia (Malta) said that VAW was an emotional campaigning issue, not just an economic one, and it should be made so. She spoke of the need for a bigger emphasis on education - there is an opportunity of access to both students and parents while in the education setting. She also said action must be taken to address the speed and cost of the justice system - its lack of speed prevented women from pursuing convictions.

6.03.33. Thangam responded that there were huge emotional impacts, but for impacts to translate into policy they need to be evidence-based. Inspector Briffa agreed that education is a key factor in prevention.

6.03.34. Sharon Hodgson (UK) observed that pornography is increasingly violent - and as such it becomes the norm - i.e. girls exposed to violence do not necessarily recognise it as unacceptable behaviour.

6.03.35. Thangam said messages about sex are always going to problematic - is banning pornography the answer or is education? There needs to be elements of both.

6.03.36. Justyne Carruana (Malta) spoke of how she had represented abuse victims and that timeframes for prosecution can have huge impacts on victims. She said that in some jurisdictions police can issue protection orders - which speeds up the process (Third Party Protection). Inspector Briffa agreed that the process needed to be speeded up. Thangam also agreed that Third Party protection was a good idea - i.e. other people intervening to stop the violence.

6.04. Violence against Women: Protection

| 1530 - 1700, Sunborn Hotel |

Adequate and effective resourcing and provision of support services for victims including police protection, shelters, counselling, helplines, legal services, access to justice and healthcare, stakeholder awareness and sensitivity.
Natalie Tavares is the Head of Children and Family Services in Gibraltar with a focus mainly on child protection.

Claire Borrell MBE is the founder and Manager of the Women in Need Shelter in Gibraltar.

Jan Pickles OBE is the Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales and works for the NSPCC. She has a 35 year career in child and adult safeguarding with specialism in domestic abuse. She was a member of the expert panel that advised on the current Welsh Government on Violence against Women legislation.

Chaired by:

Joanne Dobson MLA is the Northern Ireland Assembly’s representative on the CWP BIMR Steering Committee. She was first elected in 2011.

6.04.01. Chair Jo-Anne Dobson opened the session by welcoming the speakers and gave a warm welcome to Speaker Rebecca Kadaga MP, CWP Chair, now in attendance.

6.04.02. Natalie Tavares spoke of her work in child protection - working with families on domestic abuse and how important developing safeguards for children is.

6.04.03. She has found that initial referrals to Children’s Services do not often cite domestic violence as the reason for the referrals but it is often present in the dynamics of the family in such cases.

6.04.04. Natalie spoke about how, from a stable family herself, she went into social work with naivety. She believed that if children were not physically in the room during a domestic violence episode then they would not suffer. She also believed that adults stayed in the relationship because they wanted to - it was their choice.

6.04.05. Now there is no doubt that domestic abuse is a children’s welfare issue. The children are affected even if they are not harmed. Neuroscientists are finding that healthy development of the brain is impaired by domestic violence. A very young child’s brain is very vulnerable to the traumatic effects of being in close proximity to domestic abuse. The infant growing up will suffer abnormal brain development. Stress triggers the release of the chemical cortisol - prolonged exposure to cortisol will over-stimulate the feedback system of the child who may consequently be anxious and fearful, leading to depression. Observed behaviours of a child exposed to domestic abuse are likely to show a range of emotional responses. These children sometimes also have to become the carer for the victimised parent.

6.04.06. School aged children have conduct disorders due to impaired cognitive development; this results in relational dysfunctionality from childhood into adolescence.

6.04.07. Natalie then spoke about what helps children who are exposed to domestic violence. The most severe impacts are accumulative over time. However, a strong sense of self-esteem can help the child understand that the violence was not their fault.
6.04.08. She also spoke about the effects on the woman. Stigmatisation goes further in a small jurisdiction such as Gibraltar. Victims usually endure a number of assaults before having the courage to leave the situation. Readily accessible services are key to ensuring that the mother can leave and are therefore key to ensuring the wellbeing of the children.

6.04.09. Reunification plans have to take into account the domestic abuse that might still be going on within the family. There are frustrations when a mother chooses the abusive father over the children - knowing that the children shall then be taken away.

6.04.10. Therefore people need to understand the dynamics of domestic abuse. Locally social workers are trained in the ‘freedom programme’. It focuses mainly on women victims but men can attend as the perpetrator. The aim is to help them make sense of the domestic abuse and especially how the life of the child is improved when the issue is resolved.

6.04.11. Natalie emphasised the need to educate women to help them to recognise the signs of an abuser to keep them safe in future relationships. They see the women return to the male abuser or look for partners with similar traits. However, she emphasised that making an intervention in the behaviour of the man is key. Perpetrators who want to can become positive role models.

6.04.12. She cautioned that shared parenting agreements can be a channel of contact that allows for continued abuse.

6.04.13. It is key to invest in support and treatment services (think of the economic case made earlier). We can make sure that support is provided earlier - the earlier the intervention the better the outcome. We can work in schools to remove gender stereotypes. The Istanbul Convention points out how misogyny is at the key to it all.

6.04.14. She endorsed the quote from Ban Ki-Moon that by tackling this issue we empower the greatest resource for global development; women who can be mothers, police, teachers, chief executives, politicians.

6.04.15. Ms Clare Borrell MBE opened with the fact that she has 70 people currently in the Gibraltarian shelters and shared a moving poem by a child, entitled Why, about domestic abuse.

6.04.16. She shared her personal experience of abuse. Clare met her husband at 19 - she did not see the signs of a violent man. Rape felt impossible to prove in the marriage - but women do not have the strength to resist sex when they have been physically abused. It was difficult to find a lawyer; she could not go to the police as the abuser himself was a police officer. It was terrifying when she had a petition served against him; he then used psychological abuse to persuade her that she couldn’t do anything without him. However women will reach a breaking point when she decides to leave, whatever the cost; she was aware that the children really could hear everything.

6.04.17. The perpetrator was not arrested despite evidence of abuse. She continued to live above his flat for 7 years - despite the fact that he could access the building.

6.04.18. She became involved in victim support services when she had an issue with her income tax - she was told by a civil servant that that was the way the system was until someone changed it; so she advocated against the unfair system.

6.04.19. Clare listed a number of important issues; the need for further safe accommodation for victims and those at risk of abuse (including men) - particularly in Gibraltar where accommodation is at a premium; victims’ self-esteem; and the particular risk category of teenagers threatened in the home environment by men who are not family members, i.e. mother’s new partners.

6.04.20. Jan Pickles OBE Spoke about being part of the development of the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing) system, as referred to by Baroness Scotland.
6.04.21. She spoke about being in the expert coalition group - which crucially included a survivor of abuse - on the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill 2013.

6.04.22. They collated the evidence base for the Bill - Wales has a good democratic feedback loop to their Assembly with 3 million people with good access to politicians. People in Westminster have shown interest in the expert coalition group and their recommendations for the Welsh Bill.

6.04.23. They made the case for the Bill to be evidence-based - civil servants tried to dilute the Bill but the ministers fought for it. Business as usual cannot be enough - however, she feels civil servants can be too content with the status quo.

6.04.24. Jan spoke about what the new Bill will achieve. An education package will ensure a whole school approach. Parliamentarians need to make sure that teachers can teach it; a school can have a crucial wellbeing role. Peer mentoring is important so that young people learn good things from each other, including how to treat women well.

6.04.25. Wales has a Ministerial Advisor to keep pushing for the end to VAW. Jan mentioned the national training framework to ensure ‘tooled-up’ professionals. They must have the tools for each stage of intervention to make sure that ending up in a refuge really is the last resort.

6.04.26. In Wales, if you receive a salary from the government from the health service or the legal system you now have a statutory duty to ‘Ask and Act’ - with the aim of putting victims and those at risk of abuse onto a ‘care pathway’. GPs are sometimes resistant to providing reports - they will now have a duty to ask, and to pass the information on to the referral contact. It is known that people see a GP on numerous occasions before they report abuse. Each case will then get an ‘RE+’ note which informs subsequent professionals that this person is a referred victim.

6.04.27. She explained how this had been created from a ‘bottom-up’ approach in South Wales in 2002 - which became known as MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing). Under MARAC the name of the person at risk is then followed up by each agency and information gathered for a month or so. Then during the MARAC meeting each case gets 15 minutes of expert time; 6 minutes of information-sharing and then 6 minutes of planning. The plan will be a pathway to prevent repeated appearances of the victim at any of the agencies. This is a good way to make sure that the courts and police are fulfilling their obligations.

6.04.28. She explained that the added value of this Bill is that stakeholders are working together and building up trust together. Even low risk cases should be acted upon in order to prevent abuse and a prevention and protection culture should exist. 10% of police 999 calls are still to do with domestic abuse.

6.04.29. Jan also highlighted the 85,000 children whose lives are changed by witnessing domestic violence in the UK - these children are growing up with hypervigilance and anxiety.

6.04.30. Jan mentioned an interesting idea from Holland called the ‘Orange House’. The ‘Orange House’ is a refuge, where they call the perpetrator and to let them know that the victim is in their care, and to give the perpetrator the option of working towards reconciliation. Prior to this approach victims were often going straight back to the abusive partner. Now they are arranging a formal meeting and the victim decides when they are ready to re-engage in the relationship.

6.04.31. In a time of cuts to public services, all services must shrink proportionately, otherwise vulnerable people will fall through the gaps.

6.04.32. Baroness Scotland (UK) thanked the speakers. She wanted to highlight that Ending Domestic Violence (EDV) is working with the British Medical Journal and British Medical Association on an e-learning model available for free for Doctors and Nurses and other clinicians. She encouraged participants to have a look and share it with doctors that they know; EDV hopes it can be translated into other languages.
6.04.33. **Claire Borrell** responded that there were difficulties in getting people to tell the truth and it was difficult for GPs to recognise the signs and then push for the truth.

6.04.34. **Claudette Bietgeig MP (Malta)** talked about semantics; what is ‘Gender Justice’ (as defined against Gender Equality). In Malta the word ‘shelter’ is used but seems defensive - perhaps refuge is better. She asked how we can empower young people who want to make a difference to actually start mentoring.

6.04.35. **Sandra White MSP (Scotland)** asked about how you deal with VAW in a small society; with only 30,000 people (Gibraltar) it makes it difficult for victims to hide. It makes it more important to work with the perpetrator who will bump into the victim in the community. What will enable them to change their ways and make it possible to protect the victim/child?

6.04.36. **Carolyn Labey (Jersey)** brought up the use of language (for example the benefit that comes by calling a ‘carer’ a ‘Personal Assistant’ for a disabled person). By making the language more business-like it might change the paradigm for domestic abuse victims.

6.04.37. **Isabel Ellul-Hammond (Gibraltar)** wondered about how people get the courage to step away from the relationship in a small jurisdiction? She would like to see more agencies working together in Gibraltar. In recognising the importance of education to the process of eliminating domestic abuse she undertook to talk to head-teachers about how the issue should be dealt with in schools.

6.04.38. She also talked about financial empowerment and how reporting abuse was often prevented by the economic realities faced by victims.

6.04.39. **Sharon Hodgson MP (UK)** asked about the situation regarding the statutory duty to report child abuse, which can help identify women victims of abuse.

6.04.40. **Natalie Tavares** replied that in Gibraltar they encourage multi agency referrals but they do not have a statutory duty to report.

6.04.41. **Jan Pickles** encouraged delegates to look at Gene Feder’s (Bristol University) research. She also commended the IRIS project which works with GPs using an advocate educator. Evaluation of the project compared two matched samples. The sample of GP practices which did not use the IRIS training made only 20 referrals for suspected domestic abuse compared to 220 referrals from GPs using the IRIS training. Now Wales has decided that the IRIS training will be rolled out throughout the country. It is possible for GPs to be persuaded that they need to get their numbers down - tackling domestic abuse can stop repeat presentation.

### 6.05. International Organisations and Cooperation

1700 -1800, Sunborn Hotel

*How can CWP cooperate and work closely with other stakeholders on the issues of Violence against Women, women’s empowerment, gender equality and the representation of women in decision-making roles? Are conventions effective?*

[Clare Moody MEP](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/252587) is the Member of the European Parliament for the South West England and Gibraltar Region, elected in 2014.
Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP is Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda and Chair of the CWP International Steering Committee.

Chaired by:

Dr Justyne Caruana MP is BIMR CWP Steering Committee member for Malta and has been a Member of Parliament since 2003. She is lawyer by profession.

6.05.01. **Justyne Caruana MP** opened the session and welcomed the speakers.

6.05.02. **Clare Moody MEP** thanked the previous speakers for sharing their extraordinary expertise and for providing useful information which would help the legislators. She spoke about how parliamentarians take a while to learn how to be effective in their place of work; however women have a responsibility to act now on Violence against Women.

6.05.03. Clare stated that in the European Union there has been a lot of work on domestic violence. Human dignity is a ‘fundamental right’ of all EU citizens - which reminds us to prioritise prevention because domestic violence fundamentally undermines the human dignity of the woman.

6.05.04. She spoke about European Union research completed and published in March last year on Violence against Women. It found that 5% of women (from the age of 15) had experienced rape. It is easy to lose sight of what is going on, but this fact is illuminating; 5% of women is 25 million women across the EU who say that they have experienced rape. She believes that the biggest obstacle to tackling domestic violence is that it happens in isolated circumstances and behind doors. However we must not allow the 167 million victims of domestic violence (1 in 3 women) across the EU to think that they are the only woman in that situation. Legislators must be the voice of these women and discuss the solution - particularly looking at early intervention. (For reference: [http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/mar/05/violence-against-women-european-union-physical-sexual-abuse](http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/mar/05/violence-against-women-european-union-physical-sexual-abuse))

6.05.05. Clare implored legislators to take time to work on preventative measures - legislators must not just provide the sticking plaster after it occurs. She said domestic violence cannot just be dealt with in a silo; gender issues must be mainstreamed.

6.05.06. Clare is on the European Parliament Budget Committee - so will think about how she can bring the issue of Violence against Women onto the Committee’s agenda - and other women parliamentarians should think about how the issue can be referenced within their particular portfolios. Moreover, she challenged delegates to think about how to engage male politicians in their own jurisdictions on the issue.

6.05.07. She ended with a challenge for each delegate to think about their personal action points.

6.05.08. **Hon Speaker Rebecca Kadaga MP** began by thanking BIMR for the invitation to Gibraltar, saying it was a pleasure to be there. She outlined that her presentation would be on how CWP fits into the international campaign against VAW; how can we make sure that our governments are acting on their obligations to protect women?

6.05.09. Hon. Kadaga raised the issue of electoral violence against women politicians, agents and candidates; and also the need to look at how to ensure men and women can make their own political choices. She said women should not be punished for voting in a different way from male relatives.
6.05.10. CWP works with the IPU, Women in Parliaments Global Forum and on a cross-regional basis to identify opportunities for cooperation; and by working together women’s caucuses can improve the situation. She referenced to how CWP had supported Kenyan women parliamentarians in the campaign against female genital mutilation.

6.05.11. In reference to Clare Moody’s presentation, she acknowledged that there is further work to do to stop domestic violence. In Africa there is considerable stigma around speaking out against your husband - and training the police to deal with gender-based violence is an obvious priority. CWP should campaign for curricula changes in schools and also work with judges, the police and legislators.

6.05.12. Hon. Kadaga spoke about a recent change to the law in Uganda where previously only evidence from police surgeons was permissible in rape cases, rather than evidence from other medical practitioners. As access to a police surgeon had not always been possible, many cases were going unprosecuted or convictions were low due to lack of evidence.

6.05.13. She also wants to encourage each CPA Branch to have a CWP group so that CWP is active nationally, regionally and internationally.

6.05.14. There followed a question and answer session.

6.05.15. Roberta Blackman-Woods MP (UK) asked how the work of the European Parliament is communicated to other jurisdictions. She also highlighted that refuges and domestic violence response frameworks are not enough - what root causes are we not tackling that are causing domestic violence on such a scale?

6.05.16. Clare Moody MEP responded to the first question saying that the UK Parliament scrutinises the work of the EU through select committees - ministers should scrutinise the work of the Council of Ministers. MEPs also try to disseminate information through monthly leaflets.

6.05.17. She also highlighted that enforcement is a key part of the legal process - the parliamentarians’ statute is nothing if not followed up.

6.05.18. Patricia Ferguson MSP (Scotland) said she was struck today by the need to have relationship education and sexual education which is clear from a number of speakers. She also mentioned the session at the previous BIMR CWP Conference on gender budgeting; these discussions underscored to need to scrutinise how government’s budget decisions impact on women.

6.05.19. Eleanor Laing MP (UK) challenged delegates to think about what their action point might be. She said all women parliamentarians can keep the issue of gender based violence on the agenda in Parliament. In 1997 her party was poorly represented by women and such issues were not given serious attention; so she said more women in Parliaments is crucial.

6.05.20. She suggested looking at what the CWP can do to keep the topic on the agenda. Can CPA have sessions at the main conference on gender issues?

6.05.21. Carolyn Labey (Jersey) asked about child brides; how do we go about changing cultures? Can we have a meaningful impact whilst such cultural structures exist?

6.05.22. Clare Moody said yes, there are crimes which are sometimes seen as just cultural practices but they are crimes - we need to get rid of cultural excuses. International aid donors should use their power to deny grants to organisations who do not stand up to prevent cultural abuses.

6.05.23. Hon. Kadaga said that politicians must engage with the elders of the society (with Government support) and make them understand that culture cannot be a prevailing argument and that they are bound by national legal frameworks. The Ugandan Police have been proactive in policing and prosecuting child marriage.

6.05.24. Clare Moody stated that putting VAW into the mainstream in Parliament is a full time job.
6.05.25. **Roberta Blackman-Woods (UK)** suggested that asking the House of Commons Library for a review of Commonwealth countries in terms of their action on Violence against Women. Furthermore she would like an amendment from BIMR to the CWP strategic plan to keep figures and data collection in mind.

6.05.26. **Marlene Farrugia (Malta)** mentioned that it is difficult to talk about the causes, but we need to address causality in response to the fact that the occurrences are not going down. She highlighted that we need to talk about controlling behaviours as well as abuse and educate professionals to spot the signs of controlling and coercive behaviour.

6.06. **The Abuse of Women and Girls on Social Media**

**0930 - 1100, Sunborn Hotel**

*Promoting safe and responsible use of online technology; informing children and young people, parents, carers and teachers; cooperation between government, law enforcement and the internet industry; legal frameworks and the requirement for new legislation*

Laura Higgins is the Online Safety Operations Manager for the UK Safer Internet Centre, responsible for delivering Helpline services. Prior to joining the Safer Internet Centre she worked in social care and criminal justice services, and was a Committee Member for BBC Children in Need.

Rupinder Bains is the Managing Director of Pinder Reaux one of the UK’s leading internet law firms. Acting for individuals as well as companies and corporations of all sizes, Rupinder and her team have tackled the internet giants of Google and Facebook.

Susie Hargreaves is Chief Executive of the Internet Watch Foundation. Susie is a Board member of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety.

Chaired by:

Roberta Blackman-Woods MP is the BIMR CWP Steering Committee representative for the UK. She was a professor in Social Policy before being elected to Parliament in 2005.

6.06.01. **The Chair** welcomed the speakers and highlighted the importance of engaging with social media in the fight against Violence against Women. There are complex issues such as the sharing of images between teenagers at school which are of concern to teachers. School teachers are talking to politicians about how to put protocols in place to avoid the exploitation of young girls.

6.06.02. **Laura Higgins** explained that the UK Safer Internet Centre (UK SIC) is part of a European network funded by the European Commission. UK SIC’s focus is on keeping young people safe whilst online and they are partners of *Childnet International*. Safer Internet Day on Tuesday 10 February has a wide target market as UK SIC is concerned about the use of the internet by young people from toddlers up to older teenagers.

6.06.03. They serve the adult practitioners who work with children and advise them. The stakeholders engage in a two way process and tell UK SIC about the developments that they have
noticed taking place amongst young people. They do not deal with *illegal* but ‘harmful’ internet content.

6.06.04. She emphasised that it is okay to still be a fan of the internet for the benefits that it brings to young people in learning and engagement. Whilst UK SIC generate and support serious news stories about internet safety they are not keen on sensationalist stories which muddy the water.

6.06.05. Laura used the example of Caroline Criado-Perez who was campaigning to have women depicted on banknotes to show that the abuse recieved is completely unrelated to the victim’s actions. This case was key. It allowed people to really think about what a ‘troll’ is. Most trolls live their lives on the internet getting sucked into the online world. They can be charged for stalking and harassment.

6.06.06. She highlighted that online abuse can make people afraid to go outside in real life. In fact UK SIC has been a victim itself of foul online abuse.

6.06.07. However, often trolls are remorseful about what they have done. It is interesting how much of the abuse is sexual; the reason that trolls say ‘I will rape you’ is because they are using gender against women and using sex itself as a weapon.

6.06.08. Next she spoke about ‘Revenge Porn’ which is ‘sharing intimate pictures as a weapon’.

6.06.09. Laura highlighted the case of Amanda Todd. UK SIC does not endorse people sharing intimate images online BUT they do tell young people to report it if they are victims of abuse rather than hide in shame.

6.06.10. Another example she shared was the #SLAGALERT Twitter hashtag, this played on the anticipation of abuse as there is no way to deal with the threat of image posting. Even worse, once the photos are up they cannot be shut down and they can be copied by multiple devices.

6.06.11. She spoke about how Bitcoin, money or images are exchanged for images and how different websites have different regulations. For example, Tumblr allows nudity so it is difficult to distinguish between harassment and permissible content. Pictures are sent by social media but also on instant messaging, WhatsApp and other apps.

6.06.12. Laura has had 120 calls about revenge porn (from victims despite the phone line being advertised only for practitioners). Practitioners can also be victims themselves.

6.06.13. Then she went on to outline some successes:

i. In the UK there was an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill 2014 which mandates that one posting of abuse is enough to prove the posting of ‘revenge porn’. The ‘Malicious communication’ and harassment laws had proved inadequate because those offences require a repeat act.

ii. There is increased public awareness.

iii. Good collaborative work with industry is happening to define how they deal with the issue - for example how to report Revenge Porn and the complex issues of possession rights over the photograph (selfies belong to the taker and the site should take it down).

iv. UK SIC has a new UK Government funded internet helpline for victims of revenge porn.

6.06.14. Rupinder Bains explained how her work entails dealing with individual members of the public who come for legal advice.

6.06.15. Lawyers feel that the UK law is not sufficiently robust on the myriad of issues surrounding cyber bullying. She feels that unless the judge is on the same wavelength then the case is lost.
6.06.16. In 2012 the first case hit the headlines. Nicola Brookes, who posted online support for an X-Factor show finalist, was followed by trolls online for months. She relied on the internet for everything due to an illness. They followed her on every website she visited. Ultimately she gave 2,000 pages of evidence to the Police but they were powerless to prosecute.

6.06.17. Rupinder explained how her team at Pinder Reaux used a civil proceeding rule ‘Norwich Pharmacal Order’ to help in this criminal case. It compelled Facebook to release the identities of the cyber-bullies. She was surprised to find out that one of the trolls was an undercover Police Officer.

6.06.18. She explained how the psychological damage that was caused to Nicola Brookes led Pinder Reaux to research the issue. 1,000 people were surveyed in 2014 - the results for women showed that 50% of respondents had received ‘grossly offensive’ internet communication. 27% had received ‘threatening’ or harassing internet communication - most on Twitter and Facebook.

6.06.19. Rupinder said most people do not think that they will be taken seriously by the police when they raise online abuse. The police need better training - they need to know that it is potentially a criminal (not just civil) offence.

6.06.20. ‘Revenge Porn’ is on the increase. Globally, issues are being dealt with in different ways. But the feeling of shame is always the same - many victims commit suicide. Ten states in the USA have created further legislation to cover it. Israel has a five year sentence for Revenge Porn in their Sexual Harassment Bill.

6.06.21. Rupinder observed that India is using older non-specific legislation to prosecute ‘revenge porn’ whilst in Australia they have added a line in their law to specify ‘non-consensual sexting’. Germany has recently experienced a case wherein a man was ordered to delete naked photos of his wife when they got divorced - despite there being no threat from him to use them in the future. Last year UK courts prosecuted a 16 year old boy for selling images of his girlfriend (aged 15) for £10.

6.06.22. She discussed whether UK citizens get sufficient protection from the Harassment 1997 Act and also the 2003 Communications Act and the 1988 Malicious Communications Act. There are suggestions that there should be a specific amendment to allow a two year sentence for posting revenge porn. However she feels it will still be a difficult crime to prove because it is difficult to prove who actually posted the photo. For example, what if your phone is borrowed by a housemate? Will the police have the funding to follow through with such detailed investigations?.

6.06.23. Rupinder has found that the courts are sympathetic to cases in which you want to prove a breach of confidence or copyright infringement and breach of data protection. Now due to restrictions on legal aid plaintiffs face legal fees of up to £15,000; and the perpetrator (because of the common demographic) will be unlikely to have the funds to pay damages.

6.06.24. She also believes that the bigger problem is that once a picture is online it is online forever. The only way to tackle this is for everyone to come together to demand action. ‘MYEXGF.com’ is an extortion site wherein you have to pay to have your explicit image taken down but it has already been copied elsewhere. Her legal firm has managed to have some images removed by making threats to sue people who are disseminating the pictures; however there is a cost attached to this and there is no way of knowing that it is completely removed from the internet. She observed that celebrity cases make the story big news.

6.06.25. The reach of the internet across jurisdictions is a big problem - it should not be assumed that internet providers in overseas jurisdictions will play ball. In the US there are laws protecting internet providers from crimes committed by third party users of their media.

6.06.26. She gave the example of a Revenge Porn ‘hoster’ in the US (Kevin Bollaert at Yougotposted.com) has been successfully prosecuted and faces twenty years in prison. His prosecution shows that there is a way to catch these offenders and for courts to tackle the issue.
6.06.27. Rupinder touched on freedom of information campaigners. Adults can of course consent to certain acts. We need to get the message across to people to use common sense and be cautious about the images they share.

6.06.28. We need to warn women to think twice before posting pictures online. The final challenge is to push Twitter to do more and to persuade ISPs to use blocks for certain content.

6.06.29. Susie Hargreaves Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) explained that they work with criminal content. They are the hotline for reporting criminal content hosted anywhere in the world. Funded by the internet industry; 90% funded by the big ISPs, whilst 10% of funding comes from the EU through UK SIC.

6.06.30. She explained how the public can confidentially report the illegal images. Analysts then look at the photos and work with the police to prove that it is illegal footage (rather than pornographic). They are the most successful hotline in the world at removing content. Now only 0.2% of the world’s child abuse images are hosted in the UK. If every country had the same mechanism more content could be dealt with. If an image is hosted in the UK it gets taken down in less than an hour. If abroad then the URL is blocked until the image is taken down.

6.06.31. Susie explained that old style chatrooms are still used by paedophiles and the IWF try to tackle that too. Since April 2013, the UK Government has allowed them to proactively seek out images and they have taken action on 31,000 images. 80% of images appear to be of children aged 10 or under; 4% appear to be children aged 2 and under. 43% show sexual activity between adults and children. 80% of images are of girls. Over half of global child abuse content is hosted in the USA– even if it is watched and/or produced elsewhere.

6.06.32. Susie stated that self-generated content complicates things. If the child looks 14-15 years old it is difficult to take the image down because it could be a young looking adult (and therefore legal) performer.

6.06.33. She stated that more and more self-generated content is being found online. Now the IWF is looking at child abuse images which look like self-generated images of 14-16 year olds but have been put up by someone else on a paedophilic website. They are trying to understand self-generated images - new research is showing that 50% of self-generated images are created on home webcams by children being groomed; this is a big problem with younger children, some even under the age of 10.

6.06.34. IWF is asking people to be very aware of people they are messaging. IWF is clear that it needs to work internationally, training and giving advice to countries which cannot afford to fund a hotline in-country. They are also bidding for funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to work in the UK Overseas Territories.

6.06.35. She is a member of the Commonwealth Cybercrime Initiative (CCI).

6.06.36. There followed a question and answer session.

6.06.37. Roberta Blackman-Woods (in the chair) summarised the key questions in her mind; how do we deal with the objectification of women and are teenagers more desensitised to sexual behaviour? Education in schools must be better; such sexualisation of children must not be normalised.

6.06.38. Rupinder Bains highlighted how popular culture trivialises online sharing of personal content (citing as an example a recent Hollywood comedy ‘Sextape’ with Cameron Diaz).

6.06.39. Eleanor Laing (UK) thanked the speakers for giving information to delegates (as mothers as well as parliamentarians) about the potential dangers on the internet. She asked what further changes to criminal law are needed.

6.06.40. Rupinder Bains responded that the new offence of Revenge Porn will deal with the ‘poster’ who puts the image online. There will be difficulties if the person says it was not them who clicked ‘send’ - cases need to be tried and tested in courts. What it will achieve is to show frontline
police officers that this is an offence now. The resources are there for the police - it needs to get past the frontline police officers and be investigated seriously. Hopefully everyone will now be taking it seriously.

6.06.41. Joyce Watson (Wales) asked how we get agencies working together. How can parliamentarians advertise the IWF? Moreover, what about small towns? Awareness is not what it ought to be - perhaps parliamentarians could focus on the correct training for teachers. We need to make it a criminal offence because it cannot be left to private individuals to take offenders to court.

6.06.42. Susie Hargreaves said that the IWF has found that the narrower their remit the more money they can leverage. The ISPs self-regulate because they will be liable for the criminal content; Microsoft fund research. However the internet industry will not do anything unless the law tells them to. The IWF do have Parliamentary champions - they give information to parliamentarians for local press releases etc. Traditionally the IWF has not been at the forefront of the news, but now the sex abuse inquiry in the UK is really making people aware of child sexual abuse.

6.06.43. Laura Higgins added that Royal assent could be given very soon to make Revenge Porn a crime in the UK. The Ministry of Justice is taking it seriously and is running an awareness campaign mainly targeted at perpetrators and the police.

6.06.44. Ann Jones (Wales) highlighted the work of ‘E-Cadets’. As school and community group budgets are contracted, how do we show budget holders that they must invest in child safety now? How can we make sure that victims have the financial resources to carry on living during a case?

6.06.45. Louise Doublet (Jersey) said that Jersey’s schools are formulating policy on ‘bring in your own device’ to classes. How can we get through to young girls not to post images online?

6.06.46. Laura Higgins said she believes that teaching young girls may be more successful than telling boys not to look- we need to talk to girls about self-respect and why it important not to bully victims. Also we need to make sure that social services are aware not to blame and not to judge in cases of revenge porn.

6.06.47. UK SIC can provide free training for teachers on online safety - including policies on ‘bring your own devices’.

6.06.48. The internet is such that it is changing quickly before legislators can catch up - this might not change. There is a lot of material out there - we do not need to reproduce it, we just need to promote it. For example there is a good campaign by the NSPCC Share Aware, an online film called ‘Alex’s Willy’.

6.06.49. Hon Speaker Kadaga asked how we make the public aware that the girl is the victim not the perpetrator. How do we warn the young people where to stop?

6.06.50. Jenny Rathborn (Wales) raised that it is important to get celebrities to take charge with positive messaging and self-censoring. Jennifer Lawrence for example has given very positive messages and Emma Watson in the ‘He for She’ campaign.

6.06.51. Susie Hargreaves pointed out that the ideal would be an awareness raising campaign with young men 18-25; how do we stop opening Pandora’s Box and stop viewers moving from pornography to child abuse images. It is difficult to get celebrities to talk about it because of the fear of guilt by association. We need male role models such as footballers to talk about it.

6.06.52. Rupinder Bains said that we need to get on board celebrities famous for good things - many are just self-publicists. We need to make the public aware that the victim of Revenge Porn is not the one to blame (as society judged rape victims five years ago). There is also a need to educate Black and Minority Ethnicity communities where there is blame and shame for victims just for being sexually active.
6.07. Summing Up, Recommendations and Action

Patricia Ferguson MSP (Chair, BIMR CWP Steering Committee & Vice Chair, CWP International Steering Committee, Scotland)

6.07.01. Patricia Ferguson said that the presentations had been excellent; the speakers had done their causes proud and the delegates were grateful.

6.07.02. She voted thanks to Speaker Chaudhury and Speaker Kadaga, the conference had enjoyed their company as well as their international expertise. She also gave thanks to the regional secretariat and thanks to colleagues on the Steering Committee and the CPA Gibraltar Branch - highlighting that Gibraltar is a great place to visit.

6.07.03. Patricia said that the topic has been important, perhaps even more than predicted; it was both informative and emotive. She stated that this cannot be the end of the discussion within BIMR CWP - it must go further for the sake of the young people whose lives are being damaged even as the conference happened. She urged delegates to all try to shape legislation and to take opportunities to speak to community groups and schools.

6.07.04. Patricia Ferguson then gave a final summary of action points from the conference -

6.07.05. Violence against women must be taken forward to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference 2015 in Islamabad - CWP must push to change the behaviour of men. CWP in each branch should discuss the issue they would like to talk about at CPC; perhaps the economic cost of Violence against Women.

6.07.06. She said that an amendment to the draft strategic plan should be submitted; BIMR CWP could do a survey of each Branch in the region about their legislation on Violence against Women. The next BIMR CWP newsletter should focus on Violence against Women and show the information that had been looked at during the Conference. The Steering Committee need to look at sharing the information with the men in our branches. Moreover perhaps domestic violence should become a standing item on the Steering Committee agenda.

6.07.07. Finally Patricia said that following the conference BIMR CWP will write to the branches with the summary. Patricia urged colleagues with thoughts about how BIMR CWP can take this forward to email Patricia Ferguson Patricia.Ferguson.msp@scottish.parliament.uk and Emily Pignon pignon@gmail.com.
7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.01. The BIMR CWP Steering Committee would like to record their thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of the 2015 BIMR CWP Conference in Gibraltar.

7.02. As well as the delegates and speakers whose contributions were relevant, interesting and well-targeted to the audience, the Committee recognises the work of all at the Parliament and Government of Gibraltar for their commitment to ensuring the Conference was delivered with utmost professionalism. Particular thanks go to Paul Martinez, Secretary to CPA Gibraltar and his team for all their hard work in the run up to and during the Conference and Hon. Samantha Sacramento MP for her commitment to ensuring the event was delivered to the highest standard. The Government of Gibraltar’s hospitality was generous and its local flavour - The Royal Gibraltar Regiment Beating Retreat at the Garrison Library, the Rock tour and the performance by the Gibraltar National Choir - was enjoyed and appreciated. Thanks also to the Speaker of the Gibraltar Parliament Adolfo Canepa for hosting delegates at Parliament House and Chief Minister Fabian Picardo for his Government’s support of the event.

7.03. Thanks also to Emily Pignon and Helen Haywood from BIMR CWP Secretariat (working out of CPA UK) for their work on all aspects of the programme.

7.04. BIMR CWP acknowledges the excellent work of its sponsor organisation the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and was pleased to host at its conference Chair of the Executive Committee Dr Hon. Shirin Chaudhury MP and CWP Steering Committee Chair Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP whose long journeys and contributions added a Commonwealth-wide reach to the event. Thanks also to Lucy Pickles from CPA Secretariat for her attendance, advice and assistance.

8. FUNDING

8.01. The Conference was part-funded by Regional Strengthening Funds allocated to BIMR CWP by CPA Secretariat (£17,777 for FY 2014/2015 - part of which was also used for other BIMR CWP regional activities) and partly by the Government of Gibraltar (in-country costs).

8.02. BIM regional branches paid for their delegations to travel to Gibraltar. St Helena and Falkland Islands branches were unable to send delegations to the Conference due to disproportionately high travel costs from their home branches to Gibraltar.

Report written and compiled by Helen Haywood and Emily Pignon, CPA UK.