



Ministry of National Security

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State Minister of National Security

Sectoral Presentation
Youth Empowerment and Rehabilitation:
Keys to secure a better future

May 16, 2018

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Contribution to the Sectoral Debate by the Honourable Rudyard Spencer

Opening Preamble and Acknowledgements:

- Mr. Speaker, my esteemed colleagues, I wish to acknowledge the confidence reposed in me by the Most Honourable Prime Minister, Andrew Holness and the Honourable Minister of National Security, Dr. Horace Chang to share on the national security portfolio for the country.
- I wish to pay special thank you to the former Ministers of National Security, Hon. Robert Montague and Senator the Hon. Pearnel Charles Jr. both of whom did a tremendous job. I wish them success in their new roles.
- I wish to also commend you, Mr. Speaker for your skilful and erudite marshalling of the proceedings of the Lower House of our Parliament; and to my esteemed fellow colleagues on both sides of the aisle, whose passion and commitment to the people of Jamaica continue to be invaluable.
- To my family, whom I go home to at the end of difficult and triumphant days to find warmth, solace and comfort, I am grateful!
- The wheels of the Office of the Minister of State do not turn on its own. I want to give special thanks to my staff - Ms. Young, Ms. Riddell, Ms. Brown, Mr. Wright and all the Close Protection Officers who contribute to making our efforts successful.
- Mr. Speaker, I also wish to recognize the Permanent Secretary, Ms. Dianne McIntosh and staff of the Ministry of National Security, and the leadership and staff of the Ministry's Departments and Agencies.

- Of particular note, I wish to highlight the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) and the Jamaica Combined Cadet Force (JCCF), for which I have direct responsibility. The DCS is led by Commissioner, Ina Hunter and is staffed by over 2,000 committed men and women, who manage the day-to-day custodial and probation services of the DCS.

At the JCCF, Commandant Johnson and his team continue to support opportunities for positive youth development in cadets across the island. I wish to offer my unreserved appreciation for their important work under very demanding and difficult conditions, as part of the comprehensive efforts of the Ministry of National Security to keep our country safe.

Introduction:

Mr. Speaker, every day we at the Ministry of National Security are challenged with the task of making Jamaica a safe and prosperous nation. It is in this that we find common purpose.

Across our Caribbean region, security is a primary concern. In Jamaica, violent crime is estimated to cost our economy approximately 4%¹ of our GDP annually.

Crime and violence in our society continue to be pervasive across communities but this did not start overnight. As my colleague Minister, the Honourable Robert Montague, who laid the foundation through the Five Pillar Crime Reduction Strategy, has said repeatedly, the seeds were planted long ago.

¹ Harriott, A.D. & Jones, M. (2016). *Crime and Violence in Jamaica: IDB Series on Crime and Violence in the Caribbean*. Retrieved from: <https://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/7773/Crime-and-Violence-in-Jamaica-IDB-Series-on-Crime-and-Violence-in-the-Caribbean.pdf?sequence=4>

Poor parenting, early exposure to violence in the home and or community, low educational outcomes are known factors that contribute to the perpetual issue of crime and violence in this country.

Numerous studies across different countries and cultures, have arrived at a common finding, which is now universally accepted: *a small minority of youth², defined as persons aged 15 to 24 years, are responsible for a large percentage of all violent juvenile crimes worldwide.* Many of these juvenile offenders would have been exposed to violence and reproduce violent behaviour from an early age, usually at home or in the community. In Jamaica, youth are both the main perpetrators and victims of violent crime.

Our priority must be to engage, empower and educate our youth. We must be prepared to tell them from early that wrong choices have tough consequences, and above all, we must find more effective ways to present them with better life options.

Five Pillar Strategy

In this regard, the Ministry of National Security wants to remind this Honourable House and the nation of the strategy that is guiding our efforts toward crime reduction. This strategy has five elements that provide the basis for short and long term programmes that enable the objectives of the National Development Plan, Vision 2030.

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d). *Definition of Youth*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

These elements are

Swift and Sure Justice – which focuses on improved court management and reduction in delays in the disposal of cases;

Situational Prevention – aims to reduce opportunities for crimes to be committed through safe design of environments;

Effective Policing – involves strengthening the rule of law and enhancing police legitimacy with the general public;

Crime Prevention through Social Development – aims to reduce the risk of future crime; and

Rehabilitation and Redemption – enhances rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for offenders under the care and supervision of the DCS.

The Minister will speak in greater detail on this strategy when he makes his presentation to the House.

We must continue to redirect our inmates and wards from a path of crime. In this regard, we are currently drafting a national rehabilitation strategy designed to cater to their individual needs. It is noteworthy that all of the children are engaged in purposeful activities such as education, skills training among others. Equally worthy of note is that we are moving towards ensuring that all adults are meaningfully engaged in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes through partnerships.

Mindful of this, the Government as a matter of policy is putting renewed focus on dissuading people from engaging in criminal activity through the implementation of, *Crime prevention through Social Development* and *Rehabilitation and Redemption*.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to interrupting the transmission of crime and violence at the root. We will engage our young people and use every opportunity to reach youth who are at the greatest risk of offending and re-offending.

In this regard, both the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) and the Jamaica Combined Cadet Force (JCCF) as well as other youth development organisations have a role to play.

Portfolio: Crime Prevention through Social Development & Reducing Re-Offending Pillars

Mr. Speaker,

For far too long, our crime management strategies have largely focused on older youth and young adults. We need to have a proactive approach that will complement the existing strategies in order to see sustainable reduction in crime and violence. Prevention is always better than the cure.

The JCCF is one avenue through which the government will proactively address crime.

As Minister of State, I intend to promote social development through youth engagement facilitated by the JCCF and similar organisations that have the ability to reach the target group and help with positive diversion activities. The Ministry will support initiatives that help to counter factors that negatively shape the way our children think and deal with situations, especially conflict.

Jamaica Combined Cadet Force

Mr. Speaker, since 1943, the Jamaica Combined Cadet Force (JCCF), a voluntary paramilitary youth organisation under the remit of the Ministry of National Security, has served to instil discipline, develop leadership abilities and promote good citizenship amongst members. The programmes challenge youth and develop character qualities valuable to the civilian and soldier alike. Currently, there are 2,741 cadets in the approximately 81 Secondary High Schools within the island and 285 volunteer adults who are trained to lead and guide the children, once enrolled in the programme.

Mr. Speaker, the JCCF is an excellent organisation for imparting values and attitudes to our young people. It is noteworthy that several cadets are currently appointed Head Boys, Head Girls, and Student Council Officials because of their high academic performance, level of discipline and leadership qualities. The cadets are engaged in several community outreach projects and provide valuable assistance such as first aid support at the annual Boys' and Girl's Championship and various events.

However, its potential for youth engagement has not been fully maximised. Therefore, we have steadfastly been reaching out to schools especially in crime hot spots, to increase the number of cadet units across the island. This move is essential to expanding our reach to youth especially those at risk of going down the path of crime and violence.

Since the last quarter of 2017, through the JCCF Expansion Project (2017 – 2022), 10 schools came on board and joined the Jamaica Combined Cadet Force. Discussions are being held with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information for a partnership with the JCCF to increase the number of secondary schools with cadet units by an additional 50 this year. We are targeting approximately five thousand youth over the five-year period and intend to broaden the geographical scope. Mr. Speaker, this project will play a monumental role in maximising the positive impact of the JCCF on the lives of youth in this country.

Additionally, the cadet core can also serve as a pool of resources for recruitment for the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF), DCS, the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the Fire Brigade.

The Ministry recognises that the JCCF engages in work that is critical to the crime prevention through social development pillar of the national crime reduction strategy.

Cadets are prime conduits for dissemination of crime prevention messages and conflict resolution skills. We have designed a programme to leverage the principles of *Discipline, Leadership and Community Service* into the wider national youth population as part of our crime prevention and engagement strategy.

Since November 2016, the Cadet Ambassador Programme, dubbed T-CAP, transforms cadets into non-violent conflict resolution ambassadors. This is geared towards encouraging youth participation in the preventative measures to combat crime and violence. To date, 16 cadets have successfully completed the programme. Cadets will share the principles of conflict resolution with their peers. Therefore, these JCCF cadets will become channels for disseminating messages that engender the kind of behaviour we want in our society. This strategy will boost cadets' confidence and promote skill development in areas such as public speaking while simultaneously enhancing school safety.

Reducing Reoffending

Mr. Speaker,

Reducing re-offending is an equally important focus of the crime prevention strategy, which is the mandate of the DCS.

Department of Corrections

The DCS has the tremendous responsibility for the operations and management of correctional services in Jamaica. This includes the administration of seven (7) adult correctional centres and four (4) juvenile centres. As at May 4, 2018, the inmate population in these facilities stood at 3,620³ adults (118 females and 3,502 males) and 230 children (53 girls and 177 boys), respectively.

Additionally, through the sixteen probation offices across Jamaica, the DCS supervises 2958 persons serving non-custodial orders island wide. As at May 4, 2018, some 506 parolees were being supervised by probation officers.

At the heart of the Government's policy approach to the management of the correctional services is purposeful rehabilitation for successful reintegration, which guides how we treat with inmates in our custody and those serving non-custodial sentences.

³Statistics concerning inmate population at adult and juvenile correctional centres are based on situation report dated May 1, 2018

Mr. Speaker,

In the first few weeks of taking up office, I did my own assessment of the DCS. I toured correctional facilities and met with DCS staff, which allowed me to observe the work of Correctional Officers and other staff in the institutions.

These interactions have been very instructive. Not only have I seen first-hand what life is like behind bars but I also gained insight into the challenges we still face in the Department of Correctional Services, both for the convicted offenders as well as for the staff who manage the system.

Mr. Speaker, the Correctional Services in Jamaica are in urgent need of reform and modernization. There is a need for better living spaces for inmates and more functional working conditions for Correctional Officers to deliver rehabilitation services in our correctional centres. And we grapple with the still unacceptable numbers of youth and young men in the system.

I encountered children, holding on to their dreams and aspirations. So many of them said to me- “**Sir, I still want to be a soldier**”, “**I want to be a pilot**”, “**I want to be a doctor**”- these children in our correctional system are hoping for redemption and reintegration into society.

In our facilities, we have wards who have passed six and seven subjects at the CSEC level and former wards who are pursuing tertiary education. This speaks to their vast potential.

We Transform

I am happy to state that my colleague Minister, Sen. The Hon. Parnel Charles Jr. had taken significant steps to provide these children with the opportunity to realise their dreams through the We Transform Programme.

The We Transform Youth Empowerment and Reintegration Programme is the Ministry of National Security's flagship youth transformation programme geared towards providing the children (12-17 years) within the care and supervision of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) with the requisite skill sets, character and support to become productive model citizens. The Programme is one of the Ministry's strategic evidenced based approaches to reducing youth offending, and by extension the high levels of crime and violence.

The Programme has gained the support of several organizations including the CHASE Fund, Organization of American States, United States Agency on International Development, Jamaica Public Service Foundation, Jamaica Union Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, Operation Save Jamaica, Hawkeye Jamaica, Tastee Limited, as well as other Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

It is also noteworthy that several public figures including Reggae Artiste, Jeffrey 'Agent Sasco' Campbell, Gospel Artiste, Jermaine Edwards, Miss Jamaica Universe 2014, Kaci Fennell-Shirley, Miss Jamaica World, Solange Sinclair, and Singer and Media Personality, Naomi Cowan have all partnered with the We Transform Programme as ambassadors and mentors for the children within the programme.

The successes of the programme thus far compel me to build on this and push for reforms that will give our children a second chance at life through effective re-socialisation and rehabilitation programmes.

Mr. Speaker,

The time has long come for us to carefully consider our attitudes and behaviour towards those who have been incarcerated.

The time has come for all of us as Jamaicans to listen to our 'better angels' when we reflect on the state of our fellow citizens in correctional institutions; to choose to be less judgmental by becoming more redemptive in spirit, see the potential of those behind bars and be bold enough to allow them to seize the opportunity of a second chance to become productive members of society.

The Department of Correctional Services needs the support of our society to maximise the success of its rehabilitation and re-integration programmes.

Delivering a Comprehensive Rehabilitation Strategy

Mr. Speaker,

I am not naïve to the challenges we face in modernizing our correctional service and delivering a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy. This administration inherited a system with several shortcomings as pointed out in a report by UWI Professor Anthony Clayton, Commissioner Hunter and others, where there was:

- Limited use of technology and need for capacity building of the staff
- Grossly inadequate facilities, some of which are deteriorating
- Over-crowded, unsanitary and no longer fit for purpose buildings;
- Corruption and low staff morale;
- Inmates with mental illnesses and learning challenges; and
- Systemic public stigmatisation of inmates and even of workers in the system.

No magic wand will solve these problems overnight but I am equally resolved that we must overcome. We cannot continue to operate as normal. While challenges exist, it is not beyond us to create solutions that are meaningful and that add value to the lives of those within state care, as well as, our correctional officers.

This Government is putting its finger on the root of the problem; we will deliver a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy in our correctional facilities.

Mr. Speaker,

A key part of this effort will be the upgrade of the Carl Rattray Staff College in St. Ann for our correctional officers. Our correctional officers do this country a service from their hearts and it is not easy. This is why we are moving to provide them with the best training and the resources to carry out their functions effectively. Commissioner Hunter and I will be touring the facility and meeting with staff tomorrow (May 17, 2018).

One of our primary mandates is keeping the offenders secure; however, equally important, is our duty to support crime prevention by calibrating the system to transform more lives, to bring down the rate of reoffending and to make Jamaica a safer and more prosperous nation.

The respected American jurist and scholar Roger Warren had this to say about Prison Rehabilitation, and I quote: *“State sentencing policies that expect to control crime solely by punishing the offender’s past misbehaviour, without any meaningful effort to positively influence the offender’s future behaviour, are short-sighted, ignore overwhelming evidence to the contrary, and needlessly endanger public safety”*⁴.

This is why we are focusing our attention on rehabilitation and redemption because we want to ensure that once offenders pass through the gates of our facilities, they will leave there much better persons, being able to contribute meaningfully to society and safeguard youth against coming in.

⁴ Warren, R. (2007). *Evidence-based practice to reduce recidivism: Implications for state judiciaries*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nationaltasc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Evidence-Based-Practice-to-Reduce-Recidivism-Crime-and-Justice-Institute-NIC.pdf>

Colleagues, the focus on punishing the offender does not work. Keeping them solely confined in the worst of places still sees them committing another crime and re-entering the criminal justice system at a rate of almost 50% within a few years after being released.

Mr. Speaker, if we are honest with ourselves, we will realize that even from an enlightened self-interest perspective, since most of our inmates will be released within three years, it certainly makes no sense to dehumanize these young people, for that period of time...before releasing them back into society. We have to show those in conflict with the law that there are alternatives to a life of criminality. The foremost aim is therefore to reform and rehabilitate offenders and so reduce the risks of re-offending.

Fortunately, we do know what works. Almost all studies agree that ex-offenders are 5-26⁵% less likely to commit another crime once they were empowered whilst incarcerated through getting therapy; benefiting from treatment for drug and other addictions; learning literacy skills; gaining life skills and leaving with a vocation that will enable them to earn a decent living upon release but more importantly to dissuade them from returning.

Mr. Speaker, our rehabilitation strategy is not based on just the kindness of our hearts but on empirical evidence which explains that we can lower crime and create a safer Jamaica by empowering those incarcerated and putting them in a position to be less susceptible to a life of crime.

⁵ Aos, S., Miller, M., & Drake, E. (2006). *Evidence-based Adult Correctional Programmes: What works and what does not*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

This has already begun. I believe that *Education is the bridge that links poverty to prosperity*. Education is a key part of the rehabilitation process and empowering inmates. It is one of the main tools we are using to reduce reoffending and enable inmates to make a valuable contribution to society. This is our focus.

To ensure that more inmates leave being functionally literate, we have partnered with the Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL), who have provided us with six additional teachers and trained our core teaching staff in how to deliver the High School Diploma Equivalency (HSDE) curriculum. Mr. Speaker, over 200 inmates are improving their literacy through this initiative. Participants who are unable to read at the intermediary level will benefit from literacy training whilst those already at that level will be exposed to various CSEC courses.

The courses include English A, Mathematics, Human and Social Biology, Social Studies, Principles of Business. Just recently, I handed over four HP desktop computers that will aid inmates at Fort Augusta with preparation for their CSEC Electronic Document Preparation and Management examinations.

Crucial to the project as well is the preparation of inmates for long term employment: each inmate will benefit from learning and receiving certification in a vocation. These skill areas include Making Beaded Jewellery, Information Technology, Screen Printing and Music. All of which will be bolstered by entrepreneurship training.

We have also partnered with HEART Trust/NTA to ensure that our inmates are trained and certified in vocational areas. Mr. Speaker, over 300 inmates learnt various skills including how to make jewelry, furniture as well as how to farm in the last financial year (FY). I must pay tribute here once again to Senator the Hon. Pearnel Charles Jr. who in his wisdom invited the NGO Stand Up For Jamaica as partners to the DCS. This partnership led to a successful grant submission which saw DCS receiving over JA\$40 million in grant funding from the EU to commence the most comprehensive rehabilitation project in DCS' history.

Over the next three years, 900 inmates are expected to benefit from a yearlong engagement involving life skills workshops focusing on self-development, conflict management, family life management, and career development. Wards at the South Camp Juvenile Correctional Centre will benefit from an onsite gynaecologist. Under this project, inmates will be seen as partners and will lead on organizing and implementing various activities.

One of the programmes we are really proud of is *'Rehabilitation through Music'* that was introduced by retired Superintendent, Gladstone Wright in 2005. This programme was responsible for Siccature Alcock, also known as Jah Cure. His song, *'True Reflection'* turned out to be one of the most successful and impactful songs to come out of Jamaica.

This is why we are not only training our inmates in life skills but we are making assessments of the talents they possess and zoom in on that so that we can produce more artistes like Jah Cure.

This programme is part of the DCS' multifaceted approach to rehabilitation, which has benefited greatly from the input of singer/songwriter, Mr. Duane Stephenson, voice coach, Mr. Ewon Simpson, the former Commissioner of Correctional Services, Major Richard Reese and technical assistance from Joey Bogdanovich, CEO of DownSound Records.

The programme was re-introduced with Mr. Wright as Project Director. To date, the programme has made significant strides as several inmates have been identified, vetted and auditioned for the programme.

The *'Rehabilitation Through Music'* programme is currently in the process of developing two albums of 16 songs each. One by a talented and accomplished artist – Mr. Serano Walker, and the other which is a compilation of songs from several current and former inmates. Some songs have been completed and others are at different stages of production.

Last year, a song from the programme entitled, 'Jamaica 55' was selected to be on the Jamaica 55 Commemorative album by the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sports through the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC). This year, the song entitled, "Hand Pon Yuh Heart" entered the JCDC Festival Song Competition and was selected to be among the top ten (10) finalists.

I must express thanks to the producers and musicians who have helped this programme by volunteering their service or working at a reduced cost.

The end result Mr Speaker is that we are looking at a group of inmates who will be leaving much more empowered and less likely to return to a life of crime.

Mr. Speaker,

We have listened to the public. We know they want inmates to be put to work. Inmates want to work as well.

Currently, all correctional institutions with the exception of Horizon Adult Remand Centre (HARC) are engaged in agricultural production. For the period, December 2017 to March 2018, the DCS saved approximately one million dollars (\$1,004,500) as inmates and wards produced a portion of the food they consumed.

That is good Mr. speaker but not good enough. We are going to eat what we grow and grow what we eat so that there will be no budgetary allocation for food for inmates and wards of the state. We must be self-sufficient!

Mr. Speaker, plans are already underway to ensure that in a few years we will be able to report to this house that we have transformed several hundred inmates into farmers!

We will also report, Mr Speaker that we will require no money from tax payers to feed inmates as the inmates will not only learn farming but do so in practice as they will continue to cultivate the land in the institutions in order to feed themselves and over time produce enough excess to sell on the open market! Our inmate population will become self-sufficient through agriculture.

This is another area through which the government is providing a platform for successful reintegration. Through this agricultural plan, more inmates will be involved in the agricultural production of short term crops, poultry rearing, aquaculture and rabbit rearing. This programme will provide the best option for rehabilitation based on resources, cost, and health of inmates, marketplace demand and work ethic associated with farming.

Mr. Speaker,

If we truly mean what we say, when we declare as a guiding principle 'Rehabilitation for Reintegration', then we must put the measures in place in our correctional facilities to provide the life-skills for the inmates leaving the system and mitigate against the risk of them regressing into a life of crime and violence.

So, in practical terms when we talk about a comprehensive rehabilitation programme, we mean setting realistic goals for inmates and wards leaving our system, to:

- Be functionally literate;
- Capable of making good decisions with some ability to communicate their emotions, and not revert to violence and anti-social behaviour;
- Have improved self-esteem and capacity to de-escalate conflicts;
- Have improved parenting skills to return to their families and;
- Know how to identify and pursue a career, have social values and a sense of citizenship

These are outcomes that we are setting for the DCS, and for which they will be held accountable.

Mental Health and the Correctional Services

Mr. Speaker, allow me to turn to another risk factor in our correctional system; the matter of mental health issues among the inmate population. Currently, there are 282 mentally ill inmates, who represent 7% of the inmate population, and nearly half of whom, 119 to be exact are unfit to plead.

The Ministry of National Security, as mandated by the National Security Council in 2017 has drafted a proposal on how to treat, care and house the unfit to plead population. We are now at the consultation stage and are aiming to complete a strategy during this financial year.

On the troublesome issue of sex offenders, there are 168 registered sex offenders in our correctional facilities. We are still working assiduously to provide sufficient intervention programmes for sex offenders and inmates in need of psychiatric care. The Ministry is arranging individual and group therapy sessions to address the criminogenic needs and appropriate treatment for these offenders. The web-based Sex Offender Registry is also being updated in order to effectively track sex offenders post release.

In addition, inmates who struggle with substance abuse now receive assistance. Recently, the DCS collaborated with the National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA) to develop the Substance Treatment and Referral Tool (S.T.A.R.T.). The tool is administered by the Probation Aftercare Officers to people serving non-custodial sentences. Since the launch of the programme in October 2016, 105 persons have been registered as at March 2018 and referred to the NCDA for treatment.

Modernising the Correctional System

Mr. Speaker,

Delivering a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy will require that we equip the DCS with additional training, capacity building and support.

Technology

Mr. Speaker,

The electronic case management system, Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) system and amendment to the legislative framework represent game changers in our move towards a modern correctional system.

Electronic Case Management System

We will implement an electronic case management system to replace the current paper based system to support effective offender management. With the assistance of our international partner, the Organisation of American States, an electronic case management system was identified in Brazil, which can be replicated in Jamaica with minor adjustments.

It is expected that the implementation of this system will improve monitoring and treatment of offenders. This too is slated for completion in FY 2018/19.

Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV)

We also intend to install high technology Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) system throughout all correctional and remand centres. This will significantly improve the DCS' monitoring capability and act as a deterrent to people wanting to bring prohibited items into the facilities.

Legislation

There will be a progressive legislative agenda to support efficient and effective management by the leadership within the DCS.

1) A review of the Parole Act is being undertaken to revise the forms to capture more relevant information, to better assist the Parole Board in making informed decisions, to align the act with current best practices, and particularly to enable juvenile offenders to be eligible to apply for parole.

2) In addition to a general review of the Corrections Act to update/revise aspects outdated, we are seeking to make amendments in the following areas:

a. To increase the fines for trafficking in contraband and to set out a clearer definition for contraband/prohibited items.

b. To support the use of electronic tagging of inmates.

c. To clarify the role of the Probation Officer in the supervision of children who need monitoring while serving non-custodial sentences.

Further to an assessment of other jurisdictions, we are exploring the separation of the justice system for adults and children. Consultations have commenced and legislative amendments will be examined likewise. This in our view will be a game changer in how we deal with juvenile offenders and define our success at rehabilitation of these offenders into productive members of society.

Infrastructure

Mr. Speaker,

Aged and deteriorating infrastructures in Tower Street and St. Catherine pose a threat to the safety and security of inmates and staff at these facilities.

Inmate Population Management Strategy

This administration is keen on addressing the issue of overcrowding in our correctional centres.

To alleviate the overcrowding problem at the maximum security facilities, a 304 cell block was constructed at Tamarind Farm Adult Correctional Centre. The aim is to reduce the overcrowding at the two male maximum security facilities⁶ by way of classification and transfer to the new block at the Tamarind Farm facility.

⁶ The overcrowded facilities are Tower Street Adult Correctional Centre and the St. Catherine Adult Correctional Centre.

a. *Reclassification and Transfer*

Inmates are being re-classified and transferred from overcrowded maximum security centres (Tower Street and St. Catherine Correctional Centres) to underpopulated medium and low security centres.

Protocols have been developed and targets set in order to address inconsistencies in the reclassification efforts of the past. This has already borne fruit.

There has been an increase, from 443 inmates reclassified and transferred in 2016 to 563 inmates in 2017. This represents a 27 percent increase in the number of inmates reclassified and transferred.

Mr. Speaker,

Those who study penal systems have identified a host of alternatives that are proving to be more effective. One option being pursued is electronic tagging and monitoring of low risk inmates.

b. *Electronic Monitoring*

The use of Electronic Monitoring (EM) deployment via Global Position System (GPS) for the purpose of electronically monitoring persons on bail or those convicted of minor offences via GPS is a tool widely used worldwide.

Last year, the DCS launched the pilot phase of the electronic monitoring programme. Potential suppliers were given an opportunity to demonstrate the suitability of the electronic tag through appropriate testing and to ensure operational effectiveness. Fifty - five (55) inmates participated in the programme, which proved to be a success and will be used to monitor low risk inmates.

This alternative is cheaper than imprisonment, prevents overcrowding and strengthens families and communities.

Future Plans

Mr. Speaker, with the assistance of local and overseas partners, this administration will promote a safer Jamaica through 'Crime Prevention through Social Development' and 'Rehabilitation and Redemption' pillars of the Five Pillar Crime Reduction Strategy. Plans are already under way.

Some of these initiatives are:

Ministry of Education, Youth & Information educational programmes in juvenile facilities

A proposal is being developed to have the Ministry of Education, Youth & Information (MEYI) assume responsibility for the education of children in the custody of the DCS. This is in keeping with the Sinclair McCall report (The Report of the Task Force on the New Regime for Juveniles in Remand and Correctional Facilities in Jamaica, 2010) and with international best practices (UK, USA, Canada, and Chile).

There are a myriad of issues relating to the education system in the DCS. The teachers do not receive similar pay to their counterparts in open society, they are not entitled to summer breaks, they are required to teach more than one subject and they do not benefit from seminars offered to other teachers during summer. The students do not benefit from the services of specialist teachers such as in reading. The curriculum is not monitored by the Ministry of Education. There is almost a disconnect between the DCS and the Ministry of Education in this regard. This must change in order for correctional facilities to become centres of transformation through purposeful rehabilitation for successful reintegration.

Correctional Advisory Council

For the first time, the Ministry will take advantage of the provision within the Corrections Act that allows for the establishment of an advisory council that will advise the Minister on matters relating to the operations of the DCS.

Regulations have been drafted for the establishment of an Advisory Council and members are being identified to advance this initiative that will support effective management of correctional services.

JCCF Development Trust Ltd.

Steps will be taken to implement the JCCF Trust Limited. This Trust will enable the JCCF to receive donations that will be used to strengthen its capacity to achieve its mandate and offer scholarships to cadets.

JCCF - Youth Challenge Training Programme

Mr. Speaker, the youth are the future. We have to find ways to effectively reach them and include them in our youth engagement efforts as active participants. The JCCF has designed the Youth Challenge, which targets non-cadets in at-risk communities. Sixty (60) at risk youths between 13 and 16 years old are being targeted for this intervention. They will benefit from cadet type training which will build confidence and promote self-reliance, initiative, a sense of service to others, leadership development and team work.

Strengthening of Partnerships

International Development Partners

Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe in forging strategic partnerships that allow us to leverage the knowledge, experience and resources of stakeholders for greater efficiency and impact. I am very pleased to note that in creating the platform for a modernised correctional service, we have engaged many partners in a meaningful way to advance purposeful rehabilitation for successful reintegration.

In this regard, I commend the OAS, USAID, and Trust for the Americas that have done tremendous work with the DCS to improve the quality of, and access to, reintegration services, technical training and individualized psychosocial/emotional services for juvenile offenders.

Through the project entitled, 'A New Path: Promoting a Healthy Environment and Productive Alternatives for Juvenile Remandees and Offenders', more than 1460 youths have received assistance and more than 160 officers and staff have received training on strategies and tools to deal with challenging behaviour. I wish to also acknowledge the work of the European Union (EU) through Stand Up for Jamaica, for invaluable work in 9 of the 11 correctional institutions.

Additionally, I recognise the work of the British High Commission through the Department for International Development (DFID). DFID has been involved and made significant contributions to the DCS over the years. Currently, the Jamaica Strategic Corrections Partnership Project, funded by DFID, is being implemented in the DCS. The project aims to improve the administration and operational management of correctional facilities and inmates/wards to create an enabling environment for the delivery of rehabilitation services.

Local Partners

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to express sincere appreciation to the Pastors, counsellors, and many volunteers in our correctional system, who carry in their hearts the burden of redemption for our fellow citizens who are incarcerated and their re-integration in communities and the society at large.

I would like to recognise:

- Food for the Poor
- The Stellar Marris Foundation
- RADA, Coconut Board, 4H Club
- Jamaica Agricultural Society
- HEART Trust/NTA
- The Caribbean Cement Company
- Courtney Walsh Cricket Foundation, and
- The Magnificent Chess Foundation.

We also recognise the involvement of all NGOs, churches, private sector entities and individuals, who work in our correctional facilities.

Mr. Speaker in closing let me just say we aim to be transparent as we carry out the plans I have outlined here. What remains would be a leaner operation that lends itself to greater efficiency and productivity. Through the JCCF and the DCS, people will be given an opportunity to develop important skills that assist them to function as contributing members of society.

I invite the public to go to the website of the JCCF - cadetforceja.org, the DCS -dcs.gov.jm/ and follow their Facebook pages as we will update you in real time on the progress we are making with all the plans I have outlined.

Mr. Speaker I invite the entire Jamaica, all citizens, our partners and all to join us on this journey.