

**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE OLIVIA GRANGE, CD, MP
MINISTER OF CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT & SPORT**

**IN RESPONSE TO THE RECENT ACTS OF GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE SINCE THE START OF THE NEW YEAR**

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Speaker,

I rise in this Honourable House today, as Minister with the portfolio of Gender Affairs to join with all well-thinking Jamaicans to condemn and speak out against the recent brutal acts of violence against women which are part of the 'horrific monster' of gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence can be perpetuated in many forms such as psychological, physical, sexual and economic. It is a reflection of the culture of violence and silence and is reinforced by various structural and systemic inequalities in the home, in socio-economic systems and systems of justice.

The issue of gender-based violence is considered to be a complex characterization, as its private nature can sometimes reduce the likelihood of the victim or witness to report and often times leads to unfortunate cases of lives being lost, almost lost or individuals being injured.

The police report 34 murders in the first 11 days of this year, a slight increase from the 33 recorded over the same period last year. This includes some of our productive women and girls who are the backbone of our society.

This is well below the 57 murders recorded in the first 11 days of 2018, and the 41 in the corresponding period in 2017. With 36 cases of shooting recorded so far this year, the police note that this is one fewer than the 37 recorded to January 11 last year.

The number of rape cases has fallen dramatically, with nine reported cases so far this year, compared to 21 in the first 11 days of last year. This represents a 57 per cent decline.

There is a 69 per cent drop in the number of aggravated assault cases reported so far this year, with four incidents reported to the cops down from 13 last year.

The reported cases of robberies, break-ins and larceny are also down, with the police reporting 47 so far this year, compared to 63 in the same period last year.

The figures are included in the Jamaica Constabulary Force's Serious and Violent Crimes Review published on Sunday.

I wish to use this opportunity to assure members of the public that the government has continued to pursue legislative solutions for enhanced security measures and will intensify the “No Excuse For Abuse” public education campaign to ensure that the ‘scourge of gender-based violence; is treated with the urgent attention and strong operational measures.

I wish to appeal to persons who are involved in situations of conflict, to seek the necessary counselling and psycho-social support. Too often, these situations result in acts of violence and are often life-threatening and rob our families of hard-working and productive community members.

The BGA's Community Liaison Branch conducts outreach activities to address the social issues affecting the public. This is facilitated through the community intervention programmes undertaken across the 14 parishes of Jamaica. I will list a few:

1. Human Service Providers Training Sessions

- These sessions targets professionals who work directly with individuals, families and communities, who may directly or indirectly experience GBV. These professionals include social workers, police officers, nurses, doctors, health aides amongst others.
- From 2018-2019, Twenty-three (23) Human Service Providers Sessions were facilitated. A total of Eight Hundred and Eighty Nine (889), individuals were sensitized, 620 females and 269 males.

2. Community Sensitization Sessions

- Targets community members through the hosting of sessions. These sessions address GBV issues affecting the community, such as, Intimate Partner Violence, Incest, Rape, Sexual Harassment and Child Abuse.
- **'Reasonings Pon Di Endz'** within various communities across the island to educate the public about GBV. It also provides an avenue for community members to state their concerns and recommendations regarding GBV.

3. From 2018-2019, Two Thousand Five Hundred and Ten (2,510) (1601 Females; 909 Males;) community members in forty (40) communities sensitized through twenty-seven (27) sessions.

4. First Level Client Intervention

- Through this intervention, psycho-social support is provided to male and female clients across Jamaica.
- From 2018- 2019, 136 clients (103F; 33M) was supported through first level interventions for persons who were in crisis or victims of gender-based violence. Referrals were made for 94% of cases.

5. Awareness-raising sessions in Educational Institutions

- Students are equipped with skills to mitigate and prevent various forms of school-related GBV.
- During the period of 2018- 2019, Two Thousand Three Hundred and Eighty-Eight (2,388) (1,643 females and 745 males) students were sensitized.

Special Service Desk for Men

- Provides a safe confidential space for men and boys;
- Partners with Male Groups across Jamaica, to create interventions and provide assistance to men and boys on a range of issues, including GBV.

Under the Community Outreach through Partnership for Empowerment (COPE) Initiative several gender-based violence sessions have taken place island-wide in partnership with the JCF, community groups and other key stakeholders. I will list a few:

1. Harmonious Solutions ‘Enough is Enough’

Activities include:

- Ongoing community seminars among several groups including faith-based organisations in partnership with the Police from the Community Safety & Security Branch to address a range of issues including abuse and neglect;
- *Parent Empowerment Seminars* with parents to provide information on building healthier relationships with children and partners;
- Awareness raising sessions to encourage men to speak honestly with other men and boys about healthy respectful relationships;
- Robust conversations on the risks of substance abuse and the link to domestic violence and sexual abuse, health related and child development problems.

2. Youth for Arts & Recreational Development (Y.A.R.D) Empire

- Major focus is on boys-at-risk which are most in need of social renewal interventions and training. Work is done through several communities, including Rae Town, Rose Town and Parade Gardens

3. Woman Incorporated Limited (Woman Inc.)

- Continue to provide safe spaces for victims of Gender-based violence and to offer psycho-social support to them and their family.

4. Men of God Against Violence and Abuse (MOGAVA)

- Bi-weekly programme *“Raising boys and the journey to Manhood”* to encourage men to play their roles in society especially regarding fatherhood and mentorship.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I just want to reinforce the notion that gender-based violence is not a private matter, it is everybody’s business!

If you see it, feel it or know of it, report it!

Let us all Stand Up! and Talk Up!, because there is No Excuse for Abuse!

Thank you.