

Check against delivery



**Statement to the Houses of Parliament
Re: Observance of International Men's Day 2020**

**By the Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport
The Honourable Olivia Grange, CD, MP
Tuesday, 17 November 2020**

Madame Speaker,

As Minister with portfolio responsibility for Gender Affairs, I rise in this Honourable House to acknowledge the commemoration of International Men's Day (IMD), which is celebrated annually on November 19.

International Men's Day was first celebrated in Trinidad and Tobago and is now celebrated in other countries such as Canada, the UK, Singapore, USA, Australia, Haiti, India.

As a symbolic show of support, I ask that each member wears their white ribbon throughout this week.

This is a time when we pause to recognise and honour the men and boys in our society. We celebrate fatherhood, paternal bonds and the efforts of male parents towards their family and our society. It is important to recall and recognise the endless efforts, initiatives and contributions of our Jamaican men and boys.

IMD is a day to focus on men's health, improving gender relations, promoting gender equality and highlighting positive male role models in the society. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for men and boys to celebrate their achievements and contribution to community and national development.

Recall the broad objectives of International Men's Day which were ratified in 2009:

1. To promote positive male role models; not just movie stars and sportsmen but every-day, working class men who are living decent, honest lives.
2. To celebrate men's positive contributions to society, community, family, marriage, child care, and to the environment.
3. To focus on men's health and wellbeing; social, emotional support, physical and spiritual.
4. To highlight discrimination against men; in areas of social services, social attitudes and expectations, and law.
5. To improve gender relations and promote gender equality.

6. To create a safer, better world; where people can live free from harm and grow to reach their full potential.

It has been customary for the International Men's Day theme each year to take its cue from one of these six pillars which support the observation of the Day. And so this year our local theme is '*A Man's Health is a Man's Wealth: Men and Healthy Lifestyle Practices during the Pandemic*'. It is drawn from the pillar which puts focus on men's health and wellbeing; social, emotional support, the physical and spiritual and was conceptualised to encourage our men to continue the fight to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to sensitise our men and boys on ways to improve their mental and physical health.

I know that our men, ever so often, take their physical and mental health for granted, due to cultural and social norms that say "Men must be tough", "Men don't need counselling" or the favourite "Men don't need to go to the doctor, just drink some tea", but Madame Speaker, I want to use this opportunity to encourage our men and boys to take their physical and mental health seriously.

Your health is your wealth! Do your routine checkups and make healthy lifestyle choices!

Madame Speaker, I remain committed to support men and boys in Jamaica and also within the Diaspora. The Special Service Desk for Men, in the

Bureau of Gender Affairs, was designed to address issues affecting our men and boys in Jamaica.

Through partnerships, the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) has hosted workshops, seminars, conferences and counselling sessions, to promote positive images of men and boys and addressed different aspects of manhood and fatherhood. These sessions have helped to foster greater parenting skills and provided men with the resources to play a more active role in the lives of their children and by extension, the family.

Madame Speaker, at the IMD Public Forum in 2019, two (2) male initiatives were launched. I will now provide a brief update on the implementation status of both programmes.

#MentorMe2020 Male Mentorship Programme

The first programme, Madame Speaker, is the #MentorMe2020 Mentorship Programme. This programme was designed to assist boys at the secondary level, through support and guidance from positive male mentors, to develop self efficacy/life skills and improve the academic performance and interpersonal relationships among the boys, their peers, teachers and family members.

Madame Speaker, I can proudly state that we have selected the two (2) high schools that will participate in the programme, Haile Selassie High School and St. Andrew Technical High School. From both schools, fifteen (15) boys were selected to participate in the first cohort of the programme. Additionally, we have identified fifteen (15) suitable male mentors who will coach and empower the boys in the programme.

Madame Speaker, I want to use this opportunity to encourage other men to join in on this initiative, to contact the Bureau of Gender Affairs and become a mentor. We need as much support as possible.

Young Fathers Jamaica Initiative

The second programme, Madame Speaker, is the Young Fathers Jamaica Initiative. This programme was designed to assist youth fathers between the ages of 15-29, to improve their parenting roles and responsibilities, develop life skills and improve the interpersonal relationship between the young fathers and their immediate family members.

Madame Speaker, I can proudly state that we had consultation meetings with relevant stakeholders and twenty (20) young fathers were selected to participate in the first cohort of the programme.

Scheduled Activities for IMD 2020

Madame Speaker, I would like to bring your attention to the commemorative activities, which the Bureau of Gender Affairs, in partnership with other key stakeholders, have committed to:

1. IMD Commemorative Church Service

On Sunday, November 15, 2020, the IMD Commemorative Church Service was held at Constant Spring Church of God.

2. IMD Observance and Celebration Forum

The IMD Forum will be held on Thursday, November 19, 2020, at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. This forum will include the following activities:

○ *Presentation of the Outstanding Father Award 2020*

- This award was created to recognise Jamaican fathers who are exemplary in their role as fathers, mentors and role models. This award is usually presented in June, to commemorate Fathers Day. However, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the awards were not presented to the fathers. IMD 2020 presents an opportune time to acknowledge the fathers selected for the award.

○ *Soft Launch - Male Role Models 2021 Calendar*

- The soft launch of the calendar is a joint initiative between the BGA and AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF). The calendar presents an opportunity to recognise men from various backgrounds and professions across Jamaica. The ‘face’ of each month will be tied to local observance and celebrations.

○ *Presentations on Improving Men’s Mental and Physical Health*

Madame Speaker, the scheduled activities aims:

- To raise awareness on men’s health and wellbeing
- To recognise and celebrate the contribution of positive male role models to the social, cultural and economic development of the Jamaican Society.
- To forge linkages with multiple stakeholders and male interest groups
- To highlight systemic discrimination and inequalities faced by men and boys

Madame Speaker, in closing, I want to reinforce my commitment to our men and boys. I will always support and celebrate you!

I will continue to work with our local, regional and international partners to implement policies and programmes to address the issues faced by our men and boys.

Finally, I would also like to use this opportunity to acknowledge all male groups/networks, who are steadily working to ensure that Jamaica is a better place, through countless community engagements, aimed at empowering men and boys and creating positive male role models.

Let us celebrate with intent and purpose, International Men's Day 2020!

Thank you.