

## Drumming Circles in Communities Commemorate International Day of Peace

International Day of Peace was observed under the locally adopted theme **"End Violence. Build Peace"**. This year, the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA), and several partners, commemorated the day by engaging in the arts – in particular, drumming.

Dr Elizabeth Ward, chair of the VPA said drumming is therapeutic with research showing that drumming circles are supportive in easing anxiety, promoting relaxation and reducing levels of burnout experience.

The VPA invited Professor David Akombo, Dean of the Faculty of Culture, Creative and Performing Arts at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus in Barbados to participate in



Romario Nelson (second left) and Andrea Williams (right), students of Kingston High School teach Professor Elizabeth Ward, chair of the VPA how to play the drum. Professor David Akombo (left), Dean of the Faculty of Culture, Creative and Performing Arts at UWI, Cave Hill Campus shared in the moment.

drumming activities and talks organised by the VPA in commemoration of the day. Professor Akombo is an internationally acclaimed speaker and recognised educator, researcher and scholar in the fields of music education

music education and interdisciplinary research in the arts and health.

While in Jamaica, he was guest speaker at Kingston High School and Windward Road Primary School where he had discussion with the school population on the importance of drumming. This was followed by live interaction of drumming with the schools' drummers.

Meanwhile, drumming circles were organised in children's homes supervised by the Child Protection and Family Service Agency; the Bustamante Hospital for Children and inner-city communities such as Rose Town.

## Photo Highlights of International Day of Peace 2022

Drumming circles marked the activities for IDP. At right, are children at the St. Ann's Bay Hospital and activities at Windward Road Primary School.



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## Drumming Circles at Bustamante Hospital



## Trench Town Children Benefit from Football Summer Camp

Ten coaches and 50 children from Trench Town benefited from a three-day 'Sports for Life Skills Development' summer camp organised by the VPA in collaboration with the Trench Town Community Development Committee (CDC) and Ballaz Football Academy.

Colleen Wint-Bond, Project Coordinator at the VPA said that the 10 coaches were trained in the areas of leadership, discipline and life skills through the initiative of Ballaz Football Academy. After the training, the coaches then engaged 50 children ages 8 to 12 years-old and 13 and 15 years-old. The children were exposed to life skills through sports such as conflict resolution, team work and discipline.

"The idea came from the community and we organised the camp in partnership with the



Participants in the Summer Camp show off their certificates

Trench Town CDC and Ballaz Football Academy with funding from USAID, through LPD FHI360. This experience, even though short, will open their [participants] eyes to what is possible. So we are hoping that they will continue and work with

the Trench Town CDC. We have donated equipment to them – cones, football and bibs so they can keep practicing and have some fun," she informed.

Zann Locke, First Vice President of the Trench Town CDC said that the 10 men from the communi-

ty who have a passion for sports and coaching were recruited for the training and they, in turn, imparted what they learned to the children.

Ms Locke said the intention is to continue the initiative

with the assistance of donor funding. "We are happy as an organisation for this partnership because we have young people in our space who need to be occupied and the fact that we are doing sports for development, a tool that can help with conflict negotiation skills, discipline and building self-esteem and team work is very good," she noted.

Andre Virtue, Director of Ballaz Football Academy said that his organisation was happy to partner with the VPA and the Trench Town CDC to reach young men and children through sports.

Renardo Jackson, a resident from the community of Mexico and one of the coaches who was trained said that it was an inspiring programme for all.

## VPA And MGI Develop Data Analytic Software to Address Epidemic

The VPA in collaboration with the Mona GeoInformatics Institute (MGI) has developed a data analytic software system, which will assist the country to respond to any emergency such as a major disaster or epidemic.

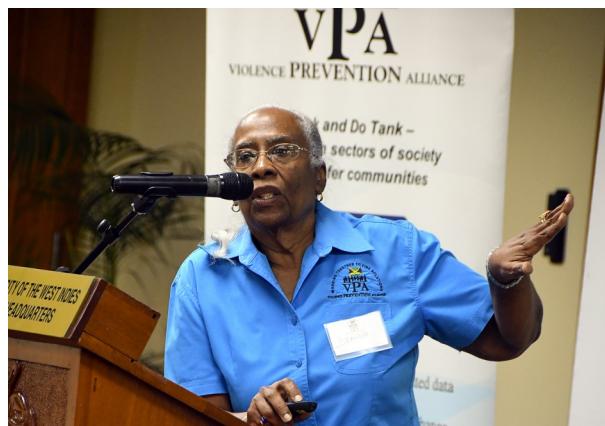
Dr Deanna Ashley, executive director of the VPA said that the software, known as Systematic Analysis for Emergency Response (SAFER) was developed last year.

"We saw the need to have a system that could integrate respective data as it relates to COVID-19 but we did not want to limit it to COVID-19 so in discussion with the Mona GeoInformatics we came up with this - SAFER, which is a system which integrates data in a quick time to respond to an epidemic," she informed.

Luke Buchanan, senior project

manager at MGI in explaining the system at a VPA Steering Committee meeting recently, said that the software is comprised of crime data, public health data on COVID-19 cases, dengue and violent related injuries.

Mr Buchanan said the software can assist with national security as it has information on major crimes and violent related injuries across the country. It also has infrastructural information on the location of the police stations and the Jamaica



Dr. Deanna Ashley, Executive Director of the VPA

Defence Force bases.

"SAFER is able to cross-reference crime data with other data such as intervention programmes, security operations; health, demographic, education, traffic and transportation data. The combination of these data

Allow for the better policing," said Buchanan. The senior project manager at MGI noted that with the assistance of the data from SAFER, the security force will be able to work more efficiently and achieve greater levels of success that will ultimately assist with response planning, crime prevention and risk assessment. "So if you want to do an intervention in a particular community, with a political orientation and socio economic background, you have that information so you plan for the best solution to assist that community," he said. Mr Buchanan noted that one of the advantages of SAFER is that it allows the user to focus on a particular area such as crime, where monitoring and evaluation can be done.



## Child Resiliency Programme Trains Guidance Counsellors and Teachers

The Child Resiliency Programme (CRP) leadership team conducted training in peace building, resiliency and wellness for guidance counsellors and Grade 5 teachers of the current feeder Schools to CRP.

The training, which was conducted on September 14, 2022 at the Alhambra Inn in Kingston was done from the Peace Building Resiliency and Wellness (PRW) Training Manual completed in 2021.

Preparations for the delivery of the PRW course this semester to the guidance counselling final year and Masters in Educational Leadership students at the International University of the Caribbean scheduled for this semester has begun. Meanwhile, preparations have



*Participants in the training take a group photo*

been made for the Child Resiliency Programme, which include identifying the children and parents referred for this academic

years cohort with 60 families referred from Edward Seaga Primary School, Boys Town Primary School, St Alban's Primary School,

Trench Town Primary School and St Annie's Primary School.

The adjusted referral criteria also include identifying children suffering from anxiety and depression and needing mental health support. Two Masters in Counselling and Consulting Psychology students have been assigned to CRP to conduct their research thesis and they attended the Implementers Training held at Alhambra Inn on September 21.

This included an update on the expanded objectives of the Child Resiliency Programme to include PRW training, tips for managing behavioural challenges in the classroom, leadership development for all members of staff and a review of the life skills and literacy 30 week plan.

## Kingston High School Curbing Violent Incidents With Music

Andrea Williams, student at Kingston High School is defying gender norms as she takes up drumming. The grade nine student said she decided to join the school's music club because she took a liking to the creative arts especially drumming because it is relaxing and brings enjoyment to her.

"I enjoy beating the rhythm and the enjoyment it gives the children," she said. Andrea is among a small group of girls who have joined the music club at her school.

The aspiring soldier said that while at home she would practice beating rhythms but decided to formalize the art by joining the music club and so far it has been rewarding.

Jermaine Luton, principal at Kingston High School said in recent times the school has revived its music club and decided to include females. He said

the music has helped to curb violent incidents.

"The drumming contributes to peace of mind and allow them to relax and give them a vibe to express themselves," he said.

"It is difficult for them coming back to school (following the pandemic) and adjusting to the norms. Coming back to a structured environment it is posing a little difficulty. So yes, we have some disciplinary issues with the students and we are working with them and I hope that as more students join the music club we can lessen the number of violent incidents we have in the school," he



*Professor David Akombo (left) and Andrea Williams play the drum.*

informed. Professor David Akombo, Dean of the Faculty of Culture, Creative and Performing Arts at the University of West Indies, Cave Hill Campus in Barbados who was an invited guest of the Violence Prevention Alliance for International Peace Day, which was observed on September 21 also had a talk with the students at Kingston High School and Windward Road Primary School.

Professor Akombo underscored the value of drumming. He said drumming is therapeutic, eases anxiety, promotes relaxation and reduces levels of burnout experience.

"When you are frustrated and have anxiety at home, you talk it out. But in addition to that if you feel like you want to beat someone because you are angry, don't beat them. If you have a drum, beat your drum," he advised the students. Professor Akombo also participated in drumming sessions with the students and taught them the art of playing the drum correctly.

Mr Luton said that traditionally Kingston High School is known for producing great musicians and musical talents such as Marcia Griffiths.

## Community Groundswell for Creatives for Peace

Calvin Palmer has always wanted to showcase his lyrical talent and developed into a well-known artiste. The 35 year-old is getting an opportunity to hone his skills through Creatives for Peace, an initiative of the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) and Island Coffees Cafe Ltd.

"It is a dream of mine to be [associated] with an organisation like this that can transform me not only into an artiste, but as also as a humanitarian," he said, noting that he heard about the initiative through a friend.

The father of two who is from Jones Town is convinced he will emerge as one of the top talents from the initiative. "Me win already!" he said with conviction.

Palmer however described the experience as "mind blowing" as he has got the opportunity to develop positive songs that can uplift others "I come from Kingston 12 but I don't think that is the address that makes you the person. I feel that it is your heart and the destination that God has for you. The experience is mind blowing. When I'm on stage I feel free and happy. The topics that I choose to sing about makes me feel like I can save a life," he said.

Palmer is among 80 participants in the Creatives for Peace Competition who are being developed, personally and professionally, as they learn about the creative industry through training in performance, stage presentation and the protection of their work through copyright workshops. The initiative, which commenced in February enables young people to become positive community influencers and role models for their peers and the young generation through the creative arts.

Paula Surtees, Managing Director of Island Coffees Café Ltd, and one of the conceptualizers of the initiative said that the programme has attracted participants from the communities of Parade Gardens, Craig Town, Tower Hill, Jones Town, Trench Town, Tivoli Gardens in Kingston and Spanish Town in St. Catherine.

She said that the participants have been



Paula Surtees (fifth right) takes a group photo with some of the participants in the Creatives for Peace Competition.



Calvin Palmer in performance

engaged in workshops at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, with Grammy nominated, Ibo Cooper of the world-famous Third World Band and musical educator, where they have been taught how to perform, project their voices and how to deliver their songs. The workshops, she said, are on-going and will conclude in February of 2023.

"At the end of the workshops the participants will receive a certificate of participation from Edna Manley College. We have also done a workshop with the Jamaica Association of Composers,

Authors and Publishers (JACAP). That training covered copyright and how to protect and register their works," she informed. Mrs Surtees disclosed that the participants are being taught how to create their biographies as part of building out their portfolio. She said the year-long initiative will culminate next year in February during Reggae Month where the top three participants will be selected. The intention is to put together an album, which will be a compilation of songs from the participants.

Jonelle Llewellyn, Research Associate at the VPA, shared "As work is being done to build on the talents of the individuals, the project seeks to create further impact through the intervention. Needs assessments are underway with providing the necessary support and referrals to individuals from the at-risk communities and thus strengthening the protective factors."

The initiative is being funded through the American Friends of Jamaica, and sponsored through Island Coffees Cafe Ltd, JACAP, Andrew Azar, Juice TV, Parents in Action and Smartkid Records.