

Wishing You A Year of Peace in 2021 - VPA

The year 2020 was challenging with the COVID-19 pandemic changing the lives of all. The coronavirus (COVID-19), has changed the way we interact with each other.

It has forced us to change the way we operate businesses where some employers are now facilitating employees working from home. Our education sector has been transformed with many schools shuttered and replaced with online learning. This within itself has created another problem where many students have been left behind because of lack of internet connectivity.

There is also the issue of the emotional impact of the pandemic on our children. According to a UNICEF Report, entitled ***'The effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Jamaican Children'***, there was an increase in boredom, overeating, frustration, anxiety, sadness and fear among children. Sadly even though the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed



lockdown measures and social distances, violent crimes are unabated.

With the dawn of a new year it is hoped there will be a new approach in doing things and our resilience in pressing on. As an organisation, we will continue to share an evidence-based public health approach that targets the risk factors leading to violence and promotes multi-sectoral cooperation.

Through the Child Resiliency Programme, we pressed on to work with children who are deemed "at-risk". Throughout the pandemic, the programme responded by distributing care packages, reading books and worksheets for children

attached to the programme.

We also partnered with the Child Protection and Family Services Agency to introduce the Drum Therapy Project in six children's homes. The project is aimed at accelerating physical healing and boosting the immune system and therapeutic treatment which reduces the risks associated with child abuse and neglect associated with the pandemic.

During late 2020, the VPA signed an agreement with the Peace Management Initiative and the Multicare Youth Foundation to implement the Community Advancement for Peace Project, a violence mitigation initiative at the Kingston Public Hospital and the Bustamante Hospital for Children. The project is being funded by the United States Agency for International Development through FHI360 Local Development Partners. The project will be executed over the next six years.

We commit to continue the implementation of our projects in 2021, and strive to make a difference in our country.

Professor Elizabeth Ward
Chair of the VPA

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VPA Wants Drumming Circles in Communities

Professor Elizabeth Ward, chair of the VPA, is calling for the implementation of drumming circles in communities post COVID-19.

She made the recommendation as she boasts of the success of the Drum Therapy Project that was implemented by the VPA in collaboration with the Child Protection and Family Services Agency in six residential children's homes.

"Our nation needs healing, our children need healing. We would like to see other institutions having drumming circles. We could have drumming circles in our church halls, in our school auditoriums, outside recording studios, we could do it in the markets, 'pon the corner' and in communities," she pointed out while

addressing the Drum Therapy Project awards ceremony, which was held at the University of the West Indies Regional Headquarters on December 16.

Jonelle Llewellyn, research associate at the VPA and coordinator of the Drum Therapy Project said that 250 children benefitted from the project with the six homes being furnished with some 30 drums and equipment.

Rosalee Gage-Grey, chief executive officer of the CPSA said the project was a welcoming one which has resulted into positive outcomes.

VPA Among Three Organisations To Deliver Violence Prevention Services

Approximately 160 youngsters from Trench Town and Whitfield Town, St. Andrew, will benefit from interventions aimed at steering them away from crime and violence under the Local Partner Development (LPD) Programme.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded initiative, involves partnership with local civil society organisations to deliver crime and violence-prevention services to at-risk youth, enabling them to become productive members of society.

Three entities – Peace Management Initiative (PMI), Multi-Care Youth Foundation (MYF) and VPA have been awarded grants totalling \$156,400,000 (US\$1,070,000) to provide interventions, including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), mentorship, vocational and life skills training, in addition to employability support. The grant signing ceremony and launch of the LPD took place on Thursday, November 19, at the Terra Nova All-Suite Hotel in St. Andrew.

Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, in hailing the initiative, said that effective social intervention strategies and programmes are vital for safeguarding lives, transforming communities and reducing the number of young men turning to gangs.

Dr. Deanna Ashley, executive director of the VPA commended the funder for the initiative and pointed out that success of the programme would be that none of the victims of violence related injuries will return with similar injuries during the period of the project.

“Tracking that behaviour and the occurrence of violence related injuries is important outcome. The other thing is to continue the work with the institutions and the Ministry of Health to institutionalize the services and to improve their outreach social services and to strengthen child guidance



Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang (standing second left), participates in the grant signing ceremony and launch of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Local Partner Development (LPD) Programme at the Terra Nova All-Suite Hotel in St. Andrew on November 19. He is joined by (standing from left) Chargé d'Affaires, United States Embassy in Kingston, John McIntyre; Jamaica Country Representative, USAID, Jason Fraser, and Chief of Party, LPD, Morana Smrdolaka Krajnovic. Displaying signed grant agreements (seated from left) are Executive Director, MultiCare Youth Foundation, Alicia Glasgow Gentes; Executive Director, Peace Management Initiative, Damian Hutchinson; and Executive Director, Violence Prevention Alliance, Dr. Deanna Ashley.

services at the hospitals and communities,” she said. Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy, John McIntyre, said the partnership “is an indication of the priority placed on the young people in this country and the confidence we have in their abilities to

champion and make change for the better”. He noted that the three organisations, which will provide the support services, work in the communities and know the challenges that the young people face.

Mr. McIntyre informed that the programme will be expanded to other communities and police divisions with similar profiles. The LPD is funded by the USAID through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative. - JIS News

IDEVAW Marked With Slew of Activities

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies Regional Coordinating Office (IGDS-RCO) of The University of the West Indies commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW) and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, by hosting a number of activities to bring awareness and help to end this crime in the society.

Under the theme '2020 Unite: Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!', the United Nations system and activists worldwide acknowledged that women and girls face increasing threats to personal and collective security due to the escalating incidence of gender-based violence (GBV), which has been exacerbated by lockdown conditions being implemented to respond to the novel coronavirus pandemic.



To mark the 16 Days of Activism, in solidarity with global efforts to prevent and eliminate GBV and promote safety for women and girls, the IGDS-RCO hosted a calendar of activities from November 25 to December 10, 2020. One such activity was a 'Conversation on Violence Against Women in Jamaica' where guest presenters: Professor Elizabeth Ward of the VPA;

Joy Crawford, executive director of Eve for Life; Kristina Neil, policy and research officer of We-Change and Joyce Hewitt, executive director of Woman Inc. addressed the webinar.

The Nurses Association of Jamaica also commemorated the day in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Lasco

Foundation by hosting a NAJ's Orange Day Webinar.

The webinar was held under the theme 'Every Woman + Child Matter'. Speakers at the webinar included Dr. Judith Leiba, director of the Child & Adolescent Mental Health and Carmen Johnson, immediate past president of the NAJ.

VPA Urges More Youths to be Enrolled in the Scouts Movement

Professor Elizabeth Ward, chair of the VPA is suggesting that the Scouts Movement, which moulds the characters of young boys and girls into responsible men and women should be more utilized.

Professor Ward made the observation while addressing the National Leaders Conference of the Scout Association of Jamaica, recently.

“Sometimes I think that the Scouts Movement is one of our best kept secrets. We need to change that. We need to share this,” she pointed out. The VPA chair said that there are opportunities to highlight these positive messages such as through social media. She cited that one of the opportunities that could be shared is the movements ‘Do It Yourself (DIY) to



Professor Elizabeth Ward

build things and repair equipment.

“Equipment always need maintenance, it is a huge opportunity. Everybody has a phone and phones need repairs,” she pointed out. Professor Ward noted that the pandemic has forced everyone to come up with innovative ways in doing things

and cited the work of the Child Resiliency Programme, which is administered through the VPA. She said facilitators formed WhatsApp groups and engaged the students who were enrolled in the programme and reached out to the children to assist with their school work as well as delivering food packages to persons who were in need.

Meanwhile, Professor Ward shared that she was informed by a former Scouts Commissioner that no scouts are found in the jails. “That is the testament to the guidance and the importance of your role that we

need to strengthen and grow,” she added. She encouraged the Association to set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART) targets as she suggested this could be on the number of leaders that are needed to be trained; actively promoting the activities of the Association and challenging the government to provide scouting subventions so more youths can be reached through its programmes.

The conference was held under the theme ‘**Reaching Further, Unlocking a new world**’. In his charge to the conference Rev. Barrington Soares, vice president of the Scout Association of Jamaica urged the attendees to use the opportunities of the conference to contemplate the new normal and the objectives and mission of the Scouts Association.

‘Take a Community Approach to Education’ – Dr. Renee Rattray

Education consultant, Dr. Renee Rattray says that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented opportunities for the transformation of the education sector in Jamaica and open doors to get the community more involved.

“We have an opportunity to ensure that we get everyone to the table. This community school concept, it is very important for us to scale that up and have parents at the table. Everybody in the community needs to be involved,” she said making reference to teachers who have been using community black boards to post lessons for students who are unable to access online classes.

Dr Rattray made the statements while addressing the VPA Steering Committee meeting, recently where she stated that it can’t be business as usual as it relates to the education sector.

“We have to be intentional about what we are doing and step

outside the box and disrupt the way we do things. I think that we run the risk of not capitalis-

mentorship and coaching, said she has been offering workshops to school leaders and

are housed for teachers and good practices are shared.

“We have to create a space where teachers can go and observe good teaching practices because many teachers have been traumatized by the education system - that is all they know; it is going to be important for us to have them heal and also have them learn from other teachers who are doing things well,” she pointed out.

Dr. Rattray said that the purpose of education has to be redefined to support the future jobs. She said assessments of students need an overhaul. Meanwhile, she noted that the safety and wellbeing of teachers and students have to be paramount.

She however noted that overhauling the education sector will not be easy but all stakeholders have to put their shoulders to the wheel so there can be improvements.



Dr. Renee Rattray, CEO of Teach Good Lead Good

ing on this moment if we don’t do that,” she said.

Dr. Rattray who is also the chief executive officer of Teach Good Lead Good, an organisation that supports teachers, schools and system leaders through professional development, consulting,

young people.

The 2020/21 International Women’s Forum Fellow said she was in discussion with UNICEF and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to establish a digital teaching hub where resources

Child Resiliency Programme Christmas End of Term & Prize Giving Ceremony



Participants in the programme enjoyed a day at the zoo.



Christmas end of term and behavior prize giving ceremony.



Parenting training seminar.



Canadian Women's Club Donates to Drum Therapy Project

The Violence Prevention Alliance is the recipient of three drums that have been donated to its Drum Therapy Project, which it has established in collaboration with the CPF-SA.

The drums were donated by the Canadian Women's Club and friends of Jamaica. The donation comprise two djembe drums and one bass drum. The donation was presented to the VPA by Kathryn Villeneuve, president of the CWC, recently.

Professor Elizabeth Ward, chair of the VPA said that the drums will be delivered to the Granville



Kathryn Villeneuve (left) makes presentation to Professor Ward

Child Care Facility in Trelawny and the Homestead Place of Safety in St. Andrew.

"The gifts are timely and on behalf of the stakeholders of the project, we express our

"gratitude to the Canadian the wards of the state especially Women's Club and friends of during the COVID-19 pandemic," she said. Professor Ward said time. We thank you for your the Drum Therapy Project is an continued efforts in enriching initiative arose out of the need to the lives of our nation's chil- provide therapeutic outlets for dren," she said. wards of the state who are not

Mrs Villeneuve said the organi- sation was happy to present the drums to the VPA's Drum Thera- py Project, which she expressed will have a positive impact on the wards of the states who are participating in the project.

"The Drum Therapy Project is a useful engagement for

only impacted by the circum- stances that have brought them to these homes, but also the psychological impacts of being confined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Select caregivers from the facilities have received drum training from Jesse Gold- ing, trained drummer from the Edna Manley College of the Visu- al and Performing Arts.