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POLICE PARTNERSHIP BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS, HELPS RESPONSE TO VULNERABLE PERSONS



Partnership Sealed: JASL's Enabling Environment & Human Rights Unit, a visually-impaired beneficiary (centre) and officers from St. Andrew North Police Division seal their partnership at an EU-UNDEF-sponsored sensitisation and training session held August 2-3 at the Knutsford Court Hotel in St. Andrew.

READ:

- *One woman's quest to leave the mean streets of Kingston and the horrific path it took before she finally got there*
- *JASL's partnership with the Police and how it's changing minds to change lives*
- *How males in inner cities are raising eyebrows as they shed their once-violent and don man persona to promote women's rights*
- *JASL finds possible solution to improve clients' health*

The relationship between the police and citizens is important to ending AIDS by 2030, but stigma and discrimination remain significant obstacles. As critical, front-line respondents to persons living with HIV (PLHIV) and members of other key affected populations (KAPs), this relationship must be carefully harnessed.

Among the issues key populations grapple with are that their reports of violence to the police are often met with ridicule and trivialised, or leave open them to further abuse by the very duty bearers charged with the responsibility to "serve, protect, and reassure" them. Frustrated and helpless, many return to their violent situations, increasing their vulnerability to HIV and other STIs.

Key groups served by Jamaica AIDS Support For Life

(JASL) are women (including those living with disabilities), persons living with HIV (PLHIV), lesbians, bisexuals, transgender women, men who have sex with men, sex workers (SW) and orphan and vulnerable children.

In its newly revamped sensitisation and training sessions with duty bearers, JASL has partnered with the police to improve their response to key populations at risk for violence, going throughout divisions island-wide with its message of 'Love, Action and Support'. The sessions have been warmly received by the officers.

"I think it is an excellent training. The perception I had before [of HIV & AIDS] has changed. In our setting we discriminate, but don't know we are doing it," said Constable Lascell Smith who is attached to the St. James Police Division of the Jamaica Constabulary Force.

Turn to Partnership on Page 3



Christina Gordon, case manager at JASL's Kingston chapter carries out a bloodletting exercise on a client during a clinic session.

165 Orphans and Vulnerable Children Receive Educational and Psychosocial Support

With support from the Global Fund, approximately 165 orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS (OVC) are being supported by Jamaica AIDS Support for Life (JASL). That support comes in the form of psychotherapy from JASL's team of psychologists, social worker and case managers. Also included is educational assistance in the form of payment of tuition, CXC and extra lesson fees; as well as group and mentorship support to create positive relationships and build good interpersonal and communication skills.

In 2017, there were 16,000 OVC living in Jamaica who had lost one or both parents to HIV, according to estimates from UNAIDS. Of that number, 1,500 of the children were living with HIV.

"One of the major challenges facing parents and caregivers of OVC is their inability to access quality education and meet the educational needs of their children, JASL's social worker, Marilyn Thompson, points out. As a result "OVCs have low school attendance rates due to their inability to afford uniforms, stationery, or pay the miscellaneous or tuition fees".

This academic school year JASL spent approximately J\$2,700,000 on textbooks, uniforms, tuition fees and other school supplies for OVC.

Over 80 OVC are being facilitated in individual and group therapies by psychologists at JASL's treatment sites islandwide. These sessions address the needs of children facing multiple stressors including illness and death of parents/caregivers, stigma and discrimination, issues related to HIV disclosure, isolation, and family instability.

Family-centered programmes are important to ensure that OVC have appropriate access to essential services such as health, nutrition, economic strengthening, and shelter and care. To this end, 20 parenting sessions were held with some 60 parents up to October 2018. JASL also conducted in-depth assessments of the households' income, parent/caregiver employment status and is currently strategising around economic empowerment opportunities for the parents to reduce their economic vulnerability, which will in turn improve the educational outcome of the child.

CASE CONFERENCING BRINGS IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES

HIV & AIDS can be a difficult condition to manage, and for many, the strain on everyday life is a daily reality. The range of challenges can make it difficult for clients to respond to their treatment regimen and delay them getting to viral suppression. Cognizant of these challenges, the treatment team at JASL has turned to case conferencing to help clients achieve optimal health outcomes, a possible solution for the organisation.

"HIV presents with a lot of things. ...A barrier to care perceived, no matter how small, is still a barrier."

A practice used worldwide, case conferencing is a multi-disciplinary programme in which key health providers brainstorm and strategise around how to deliver and overcome barriers to a patient's needs. It aims to provide holistic, coordinated and integrated services across all the care providers and may even include family members and close supports.

"If the client has a particular barrier, for example, psychological, we can help as we are not working in isolation," explained Christina Gordon, case manager at JASL's Kingston chapter.

In JASL's treatment site, those care providers include the doctor, treatment and care coordinator/nurse, case manager, social worker, psychologist and adherence counsellor.

There are a number of barriers that can prevent someone who is HIV-positive from achieving optimal health, even with the best possible treatment available, explains Gordon.

"A client will be in denial of their HIV status. That's a barrier," she said. Gordon explained that for some persons who are newly diagnosed the shock of learning they are HIV-positive may still be fresh in their minds, to the extent that they do not do well with their treatment. "Some people are still grieving. It's like a loss. You lose your negative status, especially in terms of your sexual expression as you now constantly have to think about condom use because you don't want to infect your partner. Disclosure also becomes a question as you don't know how they'll react [to news you are HIV-positive]," she said.

Adherence, an important component of treatment, can be difficult for some persons, too, for a range of reasons, including fear of stigma and discrimination. But adherence counsellor Michelle Getten says she understands the challenges some persons have in sticking to their medication.

"No one is perfect. Some persons work on night shift and might not get to take their medication or might just forget. She, however, stressed that it is important to take your medication every day as "it helps to keep down the virus in the body".

Nearly 80 per cent of the just over 30 clients in case conferencing at the Kingston chapter have seen improvements in their health.

LEAVING THE STREETS



Sex workers face myriad challenges in the trade including violence from intimate partners and clients as well as arbitrary arrests by law enforcers.

She has endured a life of torture, the kind you'll find hard to sit through as it becomes painfully clear the anguish is still fresh even amidst her tough exterior.

Losing her innocence to her stepfather is where it all began. A mother in denial did not help matters either. With school no longer in the picture, at 17 she packed her bags and left home. It was then that she met and went to live with Damion*.

"He took me to Palais Royale, then he took me to the streets", said Kemisha*.

"My first encounter was with a soldier. He came at me so hard that I got damaged. ...He [Damion] would watch and then he would come and kiss me on the cheek." During that time Damion would fuss if any of the men came too close to Kemisha. He became violently abusive, controlling her every move and beating her mercilessly at will. Fast-forward to 2015 and she finds herself on the mean streets of Kingston, in the same vicinity as JASL's then upper St. Andrew treatment site.

At that time, "everybody a show yuh dem status," she said. A scared Kemisha finally mustered the courage to take an HIV test at JASL after another SW was found reactive for HIV at a street intervention.

At 2.9 per cent, sex workers have the lowest rate of HIV transmission among key populations at risk for violence. **Turn to Leaving on Page 4**

POLICE PARTNERSHIP cont'd from page 1



Patrick Lalor, Policy and Advocacy Officer (left) and Robyn Miller, Project and Communications Coordinator (2nd right) share a light moment with police officers following a sensitisation and training session with the St. Elizabeth Police Division in the parish.

For Smith, the legal aspect of the training he received in October stood out most as it placed emphasis on proper application of the law and the importance of "maintaining professionalism at all times".

Constable Carlin Daye of the St. Elizabeth Police Division agrees.

"May I hug you?" a young, male officer in the audience asked. Another apologised for the behaviour of his colleagues.

"It cleared up a lot of things for me, HIV especially. Due to the Diversity Policy, I never normally segregate myself from other people or discriminate but now, based on the information, some of my fears are no longer there," said Daye, who works with the Balaclava Police Station.

The sessions have brought out some raw emotions, like the one witnessed in St. Ann after a WLHIV had addressed the group. Tears flowed freely around the room as Janetta Johnson* related her ordeal with police officers, whom she alleged had confiscated goods she was

selling and shared it among their colleagues in what was one of the toughest times of her life.

"Mi neva go buy HIV inna di supermarket, a mi fiancée give mi" Janetta told the group as her voice cracked under the words and tears welled in her eyes.

"May I hug you?," a young, male officer in the audience asked. Another apologised for the behaviour of his colleagues.

Several others would later follow as they interacted with Janetta and Pauline Grandison*, an SW who had earlier addressed the group.

Back in Montego Bay, in October, a similar scene unfolded on JASL's second visit to that parish. After hearing the story of Mitsy Pandohie*, a woman living with AIDS for 16 years, Constable Smith was moved to embrace her, soothing away years of residual pain.

Smith, who has been a police officer for eight years, said having shared the information from the sessions with his colleagues, other officers are now calling for them.

To date, 125 high-ranking police officers have been sensitised and 85 rank and file members sensitised and trained by JASL's Enabling Environment and Human Rights Unit. Among the areas of focus are HIV 101, stigma and discrimination, human rights, women's rights, sensitivity and confidentiality in report taking among others.

The sensitisation and training sessions are funded by European Union and United Nations Development Fund and forms part of JASL's programmatic work to create an enabling environment for key populations at risk for violence and HIV



This hug by Constable Lascell Smith of a WLHIV is enough to break down barriers at JASL's sensitization and training session with rank and file officers of the St. James Police Division In October.

MALE CHAMPIONS PROMOTE WOMEN'S RIGHTS



Participants in JASL's Male Advocacy Programme share some down time with JASL Project & Communications Coordinator Robyn Miller (c), rapporteur Tracey Robinson and Consultant Gender Specialist Dr. Glenda Simms at the close-out session at the Wexford Hotel in Montego Bay, St. James earlier this year. The training was made possible through a grant from the European Union.

As statistics of violence against women and girls elevate to frightening levels, the calls have grown louder for more to be done to address the scourge. And more men are breaking gender norms and lending their voice to the call to end violence against women and girls, like the men from the Peace Management Initiative and Social Development Commission.

Kevin Clarke is one of them. From the tough inner city community of Arnett Gardens, Kevin was among a group of 50 men who participated in a Male Advocacy Programme (MAP) to promote women's rights in May and June of this year.

The wide-ranging programme covered topics such as HIV & AIDS, gender, human rights, women's rights, patriarchy and advocacy and saw full participation from the men and boys. It also gave them an opportunity to reflect on their own roles in perpetrating violence against women.

Since the programme, Kevin says his outlook on VAW has changed. "Since we come to the training it kinda change we a lot, because now everybody a notice. Couple of girls dem si mi," said the forty-something-year-old who is also known as 'Don'. Dem si we come pon TV a talk bout

violence and pon di news, too. Dem seh mi get soft!... Mi start deal wid tings different, cause mi a speak out 'gainst violence against woman now!"

Kevin and a handful of the men from the MAP featured in JASL's public service announcement in an appeal to men to end violence against women.

The men will also be among hundreds of protestors at the JASL-led silent protest on November 24, an annual event commemorating International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

"Wi used to rough and ragged," Kevin said, referring to the days when he was a perpetrator of VAW. "Even the people weh mi used to deal wid a talk bout how mi change. ...Mi just a behave myself!" he said with determination.

Empowered to reach out and talk to men so they can "deal with things the right and proper way" instead of resorting to violence, Roydel Cunningham, from the Montego Bay cohort, stated that the MAP has given him the tools to make the right choices

LEAVING (cont'd from page 3)

Kemisha met one of JASL's targeted interventions officer who invited her to join its support group. It was the start of a new relationship. "[This Interventions Officer]...saw something in me and made me a peer link."

Peer links connect persons from key population to others within their community to take advantage of health and related services.

All this time Kemisha was enduring hell at home while being forced to have sex with men night after night. "I would come to work with the bruises on my face."

Try as she did, Kemisha could not cover up all the bruises, and JASL's officer again became a confidante. "I expected her to spread it, but I didn't hear it back from anyone. I realized that my co-workers became my life."

She recalls the threat on her life by Damion. "He attempted to kill me twice. See those scars I have on my hand?", she showed. "He did that to me," she said in defiance, pointing to a massive wound on her right arm.

"There were nights when I wouldn't sleep. He would light the mattress and get violent." It got worse whenever Damion drank, and during those times he spared nothing.

The situation at home had brought on a horrid aggression, landing Kimesha in trouble with the law and in jail.

Her health, too, had become a concern as she was now one of three women living with Damion under the same roof. "I always had an infection. One day, I went... and the doctor said, 'You have faeces inside you.'"

She was now taking care of Damion's two children and footing the bills as he was jobless. Encouraged by co-workers, she took advantage of training opportunities and was promoted to peer navigator.

But all the time she was struggling with how to leave the streets - the only thing that had empowered her before JASL's intervention.

"I never knew I would stop sex work, because I couldn't, said Kemisha. But, she said, "I would feel so bad when I would go to the banks and business places and I would see persons I did business with. I always said when I made enough money I would leave," said the now empowered Kemisha.

In 2016, Kemisha left the streets and has not looked back since. The twenty-odd year old has been selected for several trainings at work, both locally and overseas and continue to distinguish herself among her peers

DE-STIGMATISING HIV & AIDS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE REFORM



(L-R) JASL officials, Executive Director Kandasi Levermore and Policy & Advocacy Officer Patrick Lalor talk HIV legislation with UNAIDS Country Coordinator Manoela Manova and senior medical officer, HIV/STI/TB Unit, Ministry of Health, Dr. Nicola Skyers at JASL's symposium to examine the legal and human rights framework for PLHIV.

Jamaica AIDS Support for Life on July 10, held a symposium themed: *HIV-Related Legislation and Human Rights* at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel. Senior medical officer in the Ministry of Health HIV/STI/TB unit, Dr. Nicola Skyers, endorsed JASL's efforts at removing stigma noting that "despite all the work that we have done with regards to stigma and discrimination, there are still groups that are heavily stigmatised and discriminated against in our country".

Manoela Manova, country director for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), agreed that there was much to be done, though she noted that the Constitution and the Charter of Fundamental Rights & Freedoms were good foundations on which to address human rights breaches of individuals living with HIV and other vulnerable populations. Acknowledging that legislation "will not change things immediately", Kandasi Levermore, executive director of JASL, pointed out that it would however send a message that the country is for each and everyone, and that everyone should be able to freely access all its services.

Among the key legislative issues discussed was the non-disclosure and the criminalisation of HIV transmission, the Data Protection Act and HIV: privacy and confidentiality, disclosure, partner notification; sexual harassment and rape; and adolescent access to contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health services.

The symposium saw multi-sectoral participation from the Office of the Public Defender; embassies, international donor organisations; UNAIDS, UN Development Programme, local and civil society organisations, Equality for All Foundation, Eve for Life, National Family Planning Board/Sexual Health Authority and community-led human rights activists.



JASL Montego Bay Chapter's intervention team was out in full swing for the Freddie Mercury birthday celebrations at Hard Rock Cafe in Montego Bay, St. James.

SNAPSHOTS



Targeted Intervention Officer at JASL's Kingston chapter, Hanna-Lisa Morgan-Williams, walks TVJ reporter Vashan Brown through the process ahead of his HIV test during a call on JASL by the TVJ crew to gather footage for the All Angles feature on HIV & AIDS, 'Heartbreak to Hope'.



Peer Links Davanta Tyrell and Verona Radcliffe of the St. Ann intervention team make another stop with their message of 'prevention'.



Senior officers from the Trelawny Police Division participate in a sensitisation session at the division's headquarters in the parish earlier this year.



Newly minted male champion for women's rights Kevin Clarke speaking out on violence against women on the video shoot for JASL's End Violence Against Women Campaign in July this year.



Can you guess who is this JASL staff?



Figured out who our little tot was in the last issue? She is Tresha Muir, Administrator at JASL's Head Office.



JASL Jamaica AIDS Support For Life
Love. Action. Support.

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Ke vyn Blair (2nd left), one half of dancehall duo, Voicemail and Anglican priest and human rights activist Father Sean Major-Campbell lead last year's silent protest with JASL's Policy & Advocacy Officer Patrick Lalor and Project & Communications Coordinator Robyn Miller.

SILENT PROTEST BIGGER, BETTER FOR 2018

This year's staging of the joint civil society silent protest will be bigger and better!

The organising committee, which has been putting the final touches to the November 24 event, has moved it to Emancipation Park to accommodate the nearly 1000 protesters expected this year. The route has also been changed and will now see two sets of protesters heading in opposite directions—to Knutsford Boulevard and Oxford Road, before converging on Emancipation Park. The event will culminate with a concert at 5:00 p.m. in the park featuring Wayne Marshall, Romaine Virgo, Vershon and a host of other acts.

Held annually in commemoration of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the silent protest is aimed at raising awareness around the high incidents of violence against women and girls and lobby for legislative and policy change.

HIV 101

Answers to questions in the last issue:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Vaginal secretions, semen, breastmilk, blood | 1. True |
| 2. 1991 | 2. False |
| 3. PEP | 3. True |
| 4. When there is so little trace of HIV in the individual's blood that the virus becomes undetectable | 4. False |
| 5. PREP | 5. True |

Now, let's see you try these:

- Which community among Key Populations has the lowest HIV prevalence?
- Is oral sex considered low risk or high risk for HIV?
- How can persons with HIV maintain good health?
- Globally, how many persons are infected with HIV?
- What is the rate of mother-to-child transmission in Jamaica?
- List five services provided by JASL at its treatment sites.

SAVE THE DATE

November

Mondays—'Stand United' Radio Diaries aired on the 'Barry G' Show
Mello FM 89
3:45-4:00 p.m.

1—Start of World Violence Against Women Month

21—Public Forum to Address VAW @ Terra Nova All-Suite Hotel
Live Outside Broadcast on Nationwide 90FM,
10 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

24—Silent Protest @ Emancipation Park

December

Mondays—'Stand United' Radio Diaries aired on the 'Barry G' Show
Mello FM 89
3:45-4:00 p.m.

1—World AIDS Day

1—Candlelight Vigil (for persons who have died from AIDS-related illnesses)

3—International Volunteers' Day

3—International Day for Persons Living with Disabilities

8—Project Smiles

Quote of the Quarter

The highest result of education is tolerance.

—Helen Keller,
(deaf-blind American author)

Please send your comments, suggestions and contributions for the next edition to:

Email: rmiller@jasforlife.org

Love. Action. Support.

We are social:

