

**Address at the Victim Support Unit
10th Anniversary Church Service
From the Senator the Hon. Dorothy Lightbourne,
Attorney-General and Minister of Justice
At the Emmanuel Apostolic Church, Portmore, St. Catherine
On Sunday July 20, 2008**

“Embracing Victims.....Enhancing Communities”

Thank You for giving me the opportunity to share with you in praise and worship on what is a beautiful Sunday morning in the Sunshine City---Portmore ,St. Catherine.

I want to express the gratitude of the Ministry to the leadership and members of the Emmanuel Apostolic Church for so graciously allowing us to be a part of today's service.

Safety and security for the young, the elderly and law abiding citizens are very essential in any stable democracy. Several initiatives aimed at improving the safety of these persons in their communities, have been and continues to be a major priority for Government.

However despite the best efforts of numerous stakeholders, including Neighborhood Watch Groups, Citizens Associations, the Church and the security forces, some communities continue to be plagued by marauding criminals, bent on killing and maiming at will.

They have little or no care about how their actions impact on those who have been robbed of their loved ones.

As we gather here today to commemorate the tenth (10th) anniversary of the Victim Support Unit, please pause with me to observe a moment's silence for the scores of law abiding citizens- including members of the security forces whose lives have been snuffed out.

(PAUSE FOR MOMENT OF SILENCE).

May their souls rest in peace.

As we embark on what is a week of promotional activities island wide for the Victim Support Unit, today is a great opportunity to share with you some of the work that has been undertaken by the Unit as it tries to live up to its commitment of seeing to the best interests of victims of crime, identifying their needs and advocating their rights.

The main crimes for which victims are seen by the Victim Support Unit are: Rape, Carnal Abuse, Incest, Attempted Rape, Indecent Assault, families of citizens who have been murdered, Domestic Violence and Wounding.

A major concern at this time is the impact crime and violence is having on women

According to annual data females are more than twice as likely to be victims of crime.

A summary of the island wide national statistics of clients served by Victim Support Unit officers during the past three years paints a disturbing picture.

In 2005, Victims Support Unit officers saw six thousand eight hundred and fifty-six (6856) new cases involving females.

In 2006 the numbers of clients jumped to 7436 and 7369 in 2007, while 2318 clients were seen for the period January to April this year.

This translated to 580 more clients or an eight percent increase for 2006, and 513 more clients or a seven per cent increase in 2007.

For the same period under review, male clients served by the Victim Support Unit were 2395, 2711, and 2582 respectively while 1072 male victims were seen for the first quarter-January to April 2008.

This is evidence that hard working employees of the Unit have been serving a significantly higher number of female victims compared to their male counterparts.

These interventions are co-ordinated throughout 13 Parish Offices and involved counseling, support during and after case disposition and mediation services.

But even as the Victim Support Unit provides these far reaching interventions, residents in the various communities across the Sunshine City, as in all Jamaica, have a major role to play in supporting the work being undertaken by the Unit.

We recognize that the challenges that face the communities are enormous. It will require the collective effort of all law abiding citizens to meet the challenges with all the physical and mental resources available to us.

But a critical component of the success of the Unit is the integral part played by its volunteers and their efforts must be applauded at every opportunity. Indeed the work would not be accomplished without their commitment and dedication of the volunteers that serve the Victim Support Unit. .

It is easy to find faults and to blame each other, the challenge is to listen to each other, to forget grudges, to forget old views and to work in harmony to grasp the opportunities that are emerging and working towards the VSU's theme "**Embracing Victims....enhancing Communities**". If we fail to recognize that we can achieve far more by working together then the battle is already lost.

God's richest blessing to all the dedicated and loyal hardworking members of the Victim Support Unit and all the best for a successful week of island wide promotional activities. May the blessings of Lord rest remain and abide with us all, always and forever more Amen.

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