



**PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE:  
908-1982/322-8498**

**Fax: 906-3303**

**e-mail: mcohen@moj.gov.jm**

**MINISTRY OF JUSTICE  
MUTUAL LIFE BUILDING  
NORTH TOWER  
2 OXFORD ROAD  
KINGSTON 5  
JAMAICA**

**NEWS FEATURE**

**NEWS FEATURE**

**NEWS FEATURE**

**WE WANT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE,  
Citizens tell consultation organisers**

The 60-year-old Seaview Gardens resident felt emboldened to tell the group of strangers that even as she has lost four sons to the gun, she makes a deliberate effort to be a change agent in her community. Another much younger woman from Fletcher's Land, located on the other side of the Kingston Metropolitan Area, had embraced such a reconciliatory approach.

As the Fletchers Land resident told the same audience, she was determined that there would be no revenge killing following the death of her son to gunmen from a neighbouring community. She organised a 'peace march' as well as several discussions with residents with one clear message: No retaliation. She would allow time will heal her emotional wounds.

These first-hand accounts of the Herculean will to rebuild personal relationships in the face of the senseless loss of family members have been a common thread in the consultative sessions aimed at soliciting the citizens' input in the development of a National Policy on Restorative Justice, to date.

**(MORE)**

## **WE WANT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE...2**

The situations cited above were disclosed at the first public session, held at the headquarters of the Girls Guide Association of Jamaica, Waterloo Road, St. Andrew. Subsequently, citizens from in and around Granville and Montego Bay in St. James would also relate to personnel from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the Dispute Resolution Foundation (DRF) in separate fora, and to others who they hardly know, if at all, their grief – as well as the desire to see harmony restored and maintained across the length and breadth of Jamaica.

The citizenry has not been alone in the cry for the nation to embrace Restorative Justice practices. Speaking at the launch of the consultative series on August 12, the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Senator the Hon. Dorothy C. Lightbourne, Q.C.; the Chief Justice of Jamaica, Her Hon. Mrs. Justice Zaila McCalla, as well as the President of the Jamaican Bar Association (JBA), Mrs. Jacqueline Samuels-Brown, spelt out the advantages which could accrue to the country's justice system.

Minister Lightbourne noted that a broad public acceptance and use of RJ practices would substantially minimise the number of cases going before our courts and, by extension, contribute to the reduction in the current backlog of cases. She also pointed to the potential for restorative justice practices to reduce the instances of reprisal killings. The Chief Justice expressed the view that the enabling of victims to have a greater say, under an agreed protocol, in their matter would assist his or her healing process, especially in instances of violent crime. Ms. Samuels-Brown stressed that Jamaicans need to return to the practice of dialogue which can be effective in quelling personal conflicts. This culture of talking things through to resolve conflicts, she told the gathering, must begin in the homes and among our youth population, in particular.

**(MORE)**

### **WE WANT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE...3**

The group sessions in the three public consultations held to date have brought together an interesting mix of age and profession, including the unemployed.

Not all participants have the conviction that RJ will be successful, but the overwhelming majority are anxious to see a RJ National Policy put in place to further ensure a more harmonious society, the citizens say.

Superintendent of Police from the St. James Division, Steve McGregor, who participated in one of the four group session at the Sam Sharpe Teachers; College in Granville, is of the view that the adoption of a National Policy on Restorative Justice would strengthen his attempts “to assist in a wholesome way to ensure that closure is brought to the situation” when residents who are at odds. He said that far too many reprisal killing comes from the victims of crime or their family members feeling not fully satisfied with the course of action taken, or not taken by the formal justice system.

Meanwhile, Senior Superintendent of Police, Paul Ferguson, who spoke at the start of the proceedings, stressed that “persons need to pay for their crime, both to the State and to the victim,” and that RJ was applicable in such an instance. Restorative Justice, he continued, could be a useful method of “allowing victims to play a part in getting justice, as victims would get a chance under the proposed policy, to express the to the Courts the impact the offence has had on his or her life.”

The matter of trust among the State agencies which have a major supporting role in any RJ National Policy to come on stream was also discussed at the Granville public session.

**(MORE)**

## WE WANT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE...4

The Immediate President of the Lay Magistrates Association of Jamaica (St. James Chapter), Mr. Joseph Williams, perhaps summed it up this concern best when he said, "Jamaicans love to talk, but people will only talk when they trust the person to whom they are relating." In this regard, Justices of the Peace can provide a support role in communities around the country, by providing a listening ear and an unbiased view, he told the audience

The youth of the North Gully community who took part in the August 20 session at the St. John's Methodist Church, Duke Street, Montego Bay, offered the collective view that closer relationship between the police and the citizens of the country could lend itself to the successful implementation of restorative justice.

Other participants expressed the need for an improved rehabilitation programme in the penal institutions as central to the potential success of restorative justice in Jamaica. Police representatives were of the view that court-mandated diversion to the police youth clubs as part of the national policy, would be beneficial to the young offender and the wider community.

The series of public discussions will resume in mid-September, following the suspension caused by the passage of Hurricane Gustav. Just over 20 sessions are being organised, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

-30-

Contact: Michael Cohen  
September 9, 2008  
Tel: 322-8498

Wewantrj.fea