

**Launch of the
National Study on the Economic Costs of Violence
Against Women and Girls (ECOVAWG)
Kingston Jamaica**

Monday 06 March 2023

Remarks

by

Vincent Sweeney

United Nations Resident Coordinator a.i.

Ms. Mareeca Brown, Master of Ceremonies

- **The Honourable Olivia Grange**, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport
- Her Excellency, **Marianne Van Steen**, European Union Ambassador to Jamaica
- **Denzil Thorpe**, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport
- **Dr. Wayne Henry**, Director General, Planning Institute of Jamaica
- **Ms. Sharon Coburn Robinson**, Principal Director of the Bureau of Gender Affairs
- **Ms. Tonni Brodber**, Representative, UN Women Caribbean Multi-Country Office

Other Distinguished Guests here and online

Good Morning

It is my pleasure to bring remarks on behalf of the United Nations Country Team sharing in today's launching of this crucial national study highlighting the **Economic Costs of Violence Against Women and Girls (ECOVAWG)** conducted by UN Women under the Spotlight Initiative. This study underlines the reasons behind the United Nations' commitment to end violence against women and girls which, among many social and health impacts, poses severe economic pressure on any society.

The importance of this study on ECOVAWG

In the lead up to International Women's Day (IWD) this Wednesday, March 8, today's launch signifies another milestone under the Spotlight Initiative through this piece of research, which comprehensively indicates the impact of VAWG on national development and poverty reduction efforts. It establishes that violence costs survivors, their children and families, those who have perpetrated violence, businesses, organizations, communities, the government, and the nation at large. The findings confirm that in 2018 the economic cost of VAWG in Jamaica was at least, an approximate \$133 Billion Jamaican Dollars, or 6.6% of GDP.

At the global level, research indicates that the cost of VAWG could amount to around 2 per cent of the global gross domestic product

(GDP); this is equivalent to \$1.5 trillion, approximately the size of Canada's national economy.

With the increased numbers of VAWG reporting we've experienced over the last two years alone - locally and globally - we can imagine that these figures may be even higher.

This emerging data adds evidence to the words of the Most Honourable Prime Minister Andrew Holness when he launched the Spotlight Initiative almost three years ago. At that time, the Prime Minister said definitively that gender-based violence and family violence is not a private issue; that crime of violence is a state issue and the State should and will respond. The Spotlight initiative is proud to be partnering with the Government of Jamaica to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) as the barrier to sustainable development that it is.

We hope that this piece of research will support the government and other partners in strategically responding to VAWG at the legislative, policy and programmatic level.

The study, however, offers the hope, that we can begin to turn the tide on VAWG, through meaningful investments and through appropriate state budget allocations particularly in the areas of:

- i) strengthening data collection systems and capacities,**
- ii) private sector engagement, and**
- iii) improving institutional capacity.**

Make no mistake - any form of VAWG translates into significant losses to national economies. The range of direct costs of VAWG, which include fees to the healthcare systems, justice and social protection systems, and other victim support systems (for example, shelters, counselling, and legal aid) shows the need for investment in these social protection sectors.

In 2021, the Spotlight Initiative contributed to the three areas mentioned through partnerships with the Bureau of Gender Affairs, The Planning Institute of Jamaica and Ministries, Departments and Agencies, through a series of User Producer Dialogues (or UPDs) on strengthening the National Statistical System. These UPDs stressed the importance of capturing vital demographic data, data regarding the type of abuse and evidence of abuse, information on the perpetrator and the actions taken. Through these dialogues, government agencies could engage meaningfully around the feasibility of data sharing. They reiterated the importance of establishing mechanisms for unified data collection on VAWG.

Additionally, the Spotlight Initiative supported work towards the National Statistical System Capacity Assessment Report, which highlights the limited coordination among government institutions and civil society organizations and the need for comprehensive administrative VAWG data.

To complement this, a two-day training initiative on data management best practices, hosted by the Spotlight Initiative, was conducted with forty-three (43) members of STATIN and other key staff and statistical officers of public organizations within the National Statistical System, including Gender focal points from the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and members of the National Gender Advisory Council of Jamaica.

The EU/UN Spotlight Initiative's commitment to ending VAWG

The EU/UN Spotlight Initiative remains committed to lessening the effect of VAWG in Jamaica and the world. Together, we can effectively eliminate violence against women and girls, and reduce its stunting effect on national, regional and global development. This study reminds us that while responding is essential, other efforts are equally important to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. VAWG remains a prominent human rights and public health concern, and **we can eradicate the scourge with sensible commitment, action and investment.**

I take this opportunity to congratulate UN Women and the Spotlight Initiative for encouraging strong and meaningful participation and engagement towards moving the needle in ending VAWG.

Now is the time to advance our efforts to end this terror, allowing us to move closer to improved lives, closer to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and closer to achieving gender equality and sustainable development for all.

The failure to do this risks a human, health, social and economic expense that we certainly cannot afford and women and girls should not have to wait. We have the tools! Let's get it done.

Thank you.