

Jamaica UPR Statement 2020

Childs Rights

From the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM)

Delivered by Torrie Hamilton of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (Member Church of CANACOM)

Distinguished Country Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am Torrie Hamilton from the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

It is my distinct pleasure to speak on behalf of the children in Jamaica.

We are grateful for the recommendations submitted at the 2015 UPR.

Here is a summary of our progress.

The Jamaican Government demonstrated its commitment to the protection of the rights of its children. The Child Care & Protection Act (CCPA) embodies many of these rights and the Child Diversion Act was passed in 2018.

It is regretted that neither of these Acts makes provision for children who have been deemed “uncontrollable”.

The Ministry of Education & Youth has instituted a zero tolerance policy in relation to corporal punishment in schools.

Some youth have been socialized to use violence as a means of dispute resolution.

1. VIOLENCE LEADING TO DEATH OF CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

Many of our adolescent boys and some children in vulnerable communities are involved in gangs and have liberal access to guns. Ongoing governmental responses include skills training, the introduction of harsher penalties under our firearms laws.

2. SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

We welcome the recommendations made by 9 States on this topic at the last UPR. *Efforts to reduce gender base violence* include:

- A 10 year National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate Gender Based Violence in Jamaica (2017-2027) was launched in 2018. Much more work is required for the implementation plan to be more deeply established.

3. TRAFFICKING IN CHILDREN

Efforts by the government included: increased penalties under the Child Care & Protection Act, investigating and prosecuting more suspected traffickers, and publishing its first annual report on trafficking in persons in Jamaica.

CHILDREN IN POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

The Government is working to improve the lives of vulnerable children. The process of adopting children is being simplified.

The Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) assists in providing some basic needs for vulnerable children.

SOME EFFECTS OF COVID- 19

Many children were subjected to sexual abuse while at home during the outbreak.

Some children were unable to access their classes due to unavailability of the internet and/or lack of devices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I applaud the strides made by our Government, the church, the NGOs and various agencies in improving children's rights. The following recommendations are presented from our 2019 and 2020 reviews.

1. The Child Care & Protection Act and the Child Diversion Act should be amended to provide for child diversion practices to be used for uncontrollable children.
"Uncontrollable" children should not be sent to prison.
2. Our Government should be strongly encouraged to introduce legislation to outlaw corporal punishment in schools and in the domestic setting.
3. To reduce violence, our schools' curriculum should include conflict and dispute resolution, anger management and parenting classes up to the tertiary level. Faith based institutions should be resourced.
4. Adequate protection should be given to identified victims of Human Trafficking.

Thank you.