

ROLE OF A NATIONAL RAPPOREUR



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Though Jamaica has fully adopted the definition of human trafficking in its national legislation as articulated in the Palermo Protocol, for many Jamaicans at all levels of society, there is still reluctance in believing that it is of any significance within the Jamaican context. As the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons for Jamaica, it is my job to engage nationally with a wide range of stakeholders to drive forward efforts to tackle human trafficking and change this current mindset.

Working with parliament

Within the ambit of my role as Rapporteur, I report to the Jamaican Parliament on the scale and nature of human trafficking in Jamaica and to provide an assessment on the efforts that are being made to combat human trafficking. I do this through the tabling of an annual report to Parliament, and if necessary, any other effective means that shed light on the state of human trafficking in Jamaica. For example, in 2018, in addition to my annual report, I commissioned a research report on the Jamaican reality with regard to human trafficking which was entitled "The Underbelly of Human Trafficking: The Jamaican Reality 2018."

Working with agencies

Though it is one of my main responsibilities to report on human trafficking to the Jamaican Parliament, the National Taskforce Against Trafficking in Persons (NATFATIP) is the lead multi-departmental government agency implementing anti-trafficking efforts in Jamaica. As National Rapporteur, I have the authority to obtain information from the Taskforce so that I can report on what the Taskforce does to ensure its various strategies are being pursued effectively and recommendations can be made, where relevant. The information that I learn through my work with the Taskforce allows me to be an advocate and increase awareness on human trafficking issues in Jamaica.

Working with stakeholders

The close relationship I keep with the Taskforce and other players is underpinned by a keenness and importance to collaborate. My office, the Office of the National Rapporteur for Trafficking in Persons (ONRTIP), has a consultative approach and invites participation in any focus groups or working committees that we may convene. In one such initiative, I led an inter-ministerial and sectoral working group, with the support of the British High Commission in Kingston, for the publication of a Human Trafficking Survivors' Handbook – A Guide to Rights and Support Services in Jamaica. The information in this Handbook supports victims of trafficking along their path to recovery and healing through services they can access, informing them of their rights and tackling the stigma survivors of trafficking experience. The Handbook also incorporated contributions from an actual survivor of trafficking from Jamaica who was trafficked while she was a student in the United States of America.

While working on trafficking in persons across all stakeholders in Jamaica remains a work-in-progress, primarily because the relevance of trafficking in persons to Jamaica where with others it eludes them, it should not take away from the receptiveness of the Jamaican Parliament to make noteworthy legislative amendments, including:

- Extending prison sentences from 10 to 20 years;
- Granting the court the ability to award restitution to a victim;
- Awarding a role in sentencing to the prosecution where previously this was the purview of the judge and defence;
- Recognising debt bondage as a form of human trafficking; and
- Establishing a trafficking in persons shelter funded by the Government.

My office's activities will continue to focus on efforts to inform, cooperate, advocate and raise awareness of human trafficking in Jamaica. Again, with the support and collaboration from the British High Commission, I am working towards the finalisation of a comprehensive capacity building e-learning tool for implementers working in the human trafficking space that features short comic book-type narratives that highlight different situations and illustrate how these may morph into trafficking. It is also currently being considered for roll out not only within Jamaica but also in the Caribbean as a region. My work also continues with Government; I am working closely with the Jamaican Minister for National Security to identify funding to be supplied by the Ministry of Finance for diverse anti-trafficking activities.

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