

**Presentation by Honourable Olivia Grange, CD, MP
Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport**

On the occasion of the

**61st Meeting of Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America
& the Caribbean – High Level Panel: "Towards a Care Society for recovery with Gender
Equality and Sustainability"**

September 29, 2021

Salutations

- **Madam Moderator**
- **Excellencies**
- **Esteemed Panellists:**
 - Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
 - Nadine Gasman, President of the National Women’s Institute (INMUJERES) of Mexico
 - James Heintz, Chair of the Department of Economics, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Board member of the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE)
 - Maritza Velásquez, General Coordinator, Asociación de Trabajadoras del Hogar a Domicilio y de Maquila (ATRAHDOM) of Guatemala
 - María-Noel Vaeza, Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)
 - Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia
- **Distinguished Delegates, All**

Introduction

It is my pleasure to join the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean as partners towards a Care Society for recovery with gender equality and sustainability.

The Government of Jamaica (GoJ) recognises the importance of ensuring that women and girls are provided with equal opportunities across all sectors, especially in the care economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of care for the sustainable life and the achievement of our development goals. Women are over-represented in the care and domestic industry, both paid and unpaid, and are subjected to gender inequalities and inequities which have become more pronounced amid the COVID-19 crisis.

The Corona-Virus was first identified in Jamaica in March 2020 and triggered a global health crisis. Each day brings new developments as we seek to "flatten the curve" and accelerate the full return of economic activity in Jamaica. Jamaica has an estimated 60,000 household workers and 6,900 registered with the Jamaica Household Workers' Union¹. These hardworking women and to a lesser extent, men, are the bedrock of many families. They carry out multiple roles of caregivers in

¹ https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/opinion/jamaica-8217-s-household-workers-in-the-spotlight_113290

several families in private homes, while taking care of their own families, and active involvement in community and other unpaid work.

Background

Unpaid care and domestic work are important to sustain families and communities on a day-to-day basis and from one generation to the next.

Globally, women and girls are responsible for 75% of unpaid care and domestic work in homes and communities every day². The International Labour Organisation (ILO) calculates that on average, women around the world perform 4 hours and 25 minutes of unpaid care work every day compared with 1 hour and 23 minutes for men³.

Overwhelmingly, the data indicates that women are the ones suffering the most due to the inequalities in care and are most likely to suffer due to increased trauma, being overworked and underpaid. They are also at risk of experiencing higher rates of sexual harassment and work place gender biases.

The GoJ highly values the development of human capital through strategic investments in our people, to ensure that they are empowered, to contribute to the

² Moreira da Silva 2019

³ Pozzan and Cattaneo 2020

transformation of our economies. This is extremely critical to ensure that we recover and build forward stronger.

Challenges faced^{4 5}:

As Minister with responsibility for Gender Affairs, I am aware of the many challenges faced by domestic workers, caregivers and other persons who are part of the Care Society in Jamaica. These include:

1. Caring for at-risk populations which create extra workload;
2. Reduced wages and working hours, or loss of employment due to decreased economic activity;
3. Restricted access to health care;
4. Increased vulnerability to several forms of physical, verbal, psychological and sexual abuse as well as sexual harassment.

Consequently, the Government of Jamaica is making significant investments in the recovery efforts so as to ‘build forward stronger’ and to mitigate the unprecedented social and economic shocks triggered by the pandemic.

A Gender-Responsive Approach:

⁴ <https://caribbeanmigration.org/blog/how-does-covid-19-impact-migrant-domestic-workers>

⁵ https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/-please-help-us-domestic-workers-raising-funds-for-colleagues-now-unemployed-due-to-covid-19_192539?profile=0&template=MobileArticle

The GoJ remains committed to achieving gender equality and reducing gender inequalities and with an appreciation of the importance of Care Work, Jamaica joins with our neighbours in Latin American and the Caribbean towards the recovery of the care society.

The Government introduced the COVID Allocation of Resources for Employees (CARE) programme to support Employees with Transfer of Cash (SET Cash). Temporary cash transfers were provided to individuals who lost employment over a specific period to support the poor and vulnerable with special COVID related grants⁶. Additionally, a special programme was developed for taxi and bar operators, barbers, hairdressers, market vendors, and domestic workers, who are not formally employed to receive a special sum.

The Budget for the gender portfolio was increased for the FY 2020/2021 to facilitate a gender transformative response through the following activities:

- Provision of additional grant funding to community-based organisations, including women and men’s advocacy groups, through Phase 3 of the Community Outreach through Partnership for Empowerment (COPE) Initiative, implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport;

⁶ <https://mof.gov.jm/mof-media/media-centre/press/2633-fiscal-stimulus-response-to-the-covid-19.html>

- Institutional strengthening and capacity-building to thirteen (13) communities/advocacy groups to bolster recovery efforts;
- Distribution of “Dignity Packages” and “Sanitation Kits” to ‘cushion’ the nutritional, health and overall impact on vulnerable families and to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and resource materials;
- Female and Male Helplines to provide psychosocial support, counselling and referrals, also to facilitate/field personal reports of intimate partner violence and other forms of GBV as well as provide support to victims of GBV as a third party;
- Increased social media presence, to provide messages regarding social distancing and other COVID-19 protocols;
- Addressing legal frameworks such as the **Sexual Harassment (Prevention & Protection) Act, 2021**, which is designed to provide protection against workplace vulnerabilities and to provide greater protection to workers, in educational institutions and in situations of accommodation (including landlord/tenant arrangements);
- Legal reform to facilitate the revision and amendment to existing legislation and enactment of new legislation to provide greater protection for men and women;

Building Forward Stronger

The United Nations Sustainable Development Gender-Transformative, Stand Alone Goal 5, addresses the need to value the care economy in order to tackle gender equality. Target 5.4: recognises the importance of unpaid care and domestic work.

The GoJ has therefore implemented specific policies and programmes to support and protect persons engaged in unpaid work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This facilitates a greater focus on rewarding and redistributing care work⁷ through initiatives such as:

- Government subsidies for workers affected by reduced work hours while school and daycare are closed due to the pandemic;
- Extending unemployment benefits or other cash transfer schemes to make provision for child care or other unpaid care work due to the pandemic.

We recognise the importance of “supporting an equal sharing of the burden of care between women and men” and as Minister with responsibility for Gender Affairs, I renew my commitment to continue to:

1. Expand social protection for those with care responsibilities;
2. Encourage greater sharing of unpaid care and domestic work;

⁷ UN 2020; Alon et al. 2020

3. Ensure that women's voices are heard and their economic recovery needs are met;
4. Place women at the core of economic recovery;
5. Create robust, resilient and gender-responsive care systems.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic requires us to utilise and strengthen Jamaica's Gender-Responsive Disaster Management Framework and causes us to assess risk levels, as well as the types of strategies which are most effective.

Excellencies, panelists, delegates, all, I believe that there is no limit to what women can accomplish.

I look forward to increased partnerships at the regional level, which is critical to synchronise the existing frameworks in gender and development. The outcome is a Care Society, a caring society, which is radical, robust and resilient for recovery with Gender Equality & Sustainability.