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PRESS RELEASE

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LET THE NATION'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION BE TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AGAINST CHILDREN – HTCC

- Hear The Children's Cry calls for a united national effort, offers specific tactics targeting violence, abuse, social issues, poor parenting
- Parents hold the key to Child Safety through better supervision and vigilance
- Parent Education a vital priority
- More rigorous Government action needed
- Collaboration between sectors, organizations critical

After a year of heartbreaking levels of violence against children, including over 40 child murders, deaths of young ones by fire, drowning, and in road accidents, among other serious tragedies and challenges, Child Advocate Betty Ann Blaine and her team at Hear The Children's Cry are calling on Jamaicans to recognize that the situation is not, in fact, hopeless for our young ones and those who love them.

Mrs. Blaine declares:

"Every single problem affecting Jamaica's children can be solved, but we need to unite, plan carefully and take effective action, and the time is perfect for this right now. People tend to make New Year's resolutions – let us all agree on this one: Let Jamaica's earnest resolve for 2020 be to keep our children alive and safe; to grapple with root causes and to work on creative and effective solutions."

Betty Ann Blaine founded Hear The Children's Cry in 2002 after a children's birthday party was peppered with bullets, killing one little boy and wounding others, in an inner city Kingston community. Far from giving up or becoming dispirited, she and her team of social workers, administrators and volunteers continue to work towards the day when no child in this country will die a tragic death, suffer any form of abuse or be deprived of their fundamental rights.

"The problems affecting our children today can be solved if we make this a united national priority," Mrs. Blaine says, advocating the following multi-level strategy, and encouraging all Jamaicans to get personally and professionally involved:

1) 2020 Parent/Child Protection Push

Parents hold the key to Child Safety by engaging in Positive Parenting. We encourage parents, grandparents, guardians and others caring for children to ensure:

Close Supervision of Children: This is more important than ever in these times of high levels of crime. Know where your child is at all times.

Effective Communication With Children: Remember to listen as well as talk with your youngsters, communication is a two way process. Also, respect your child and his or her opinions, wishes and dreams.

Love and Support for Children: Ensure your own children are cared for, and do what you can also for the other youngsters in your community.

More Involvement in the School Life of Children: It is not enough to equip your child and send him or her to school. Parents need to ensure children actually attend classes, monitor how they are doing in school, and what their teachers notice and are concerned about them.

2) More Rigorous Governmental Action

Hear The Children's Cry is once again calling for an important National Child/Youth Social Audit that would look specifically at living conditions in homes and communities, which continue to have a major impact on Jamaican children. This includes a range of extremely negative conditions, such as serious levels of poverty and woefully inadequate parenting skills.

More Effective Investigation/Apprehension/Prosecution of Offenders Against Children is urgently needed. The reality is that persons are committing crimes against children and walking Scott free in the society, including child murderers. The case of 11 year old Ananda Dean, perhaps the most well known child victim, is a disturbing example. Eleven years after her abduction and murder, nobody has been charged with that brutal and gruesome crime. The message is being sent that murdering a child is something you can get away with.

3) Intersectoral/Inter-Organizational Collaboration

Hear The Children's Cry is asking every single Jamaican organization, public, private and non-governmental organizations, including churches, to treat the crisis involving child safety, child welfare and the need for Parenting Education, as an urgent priority, and to put it at the top of their agendas for 2020.

"As Jamaicans, we all have the ability to save children's lives," Mrs. Blaine points out. Hear The Children's Cry wishes for all of Jamaica's children and their families, a new year of dynamic and meaningful improvements, leading to a safe and happy future.

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