



Re The Joint Select Committee -Sexual Offences Act Review- 2017

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AWOJA THE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN JAMAICA

Based upon the current review as conducted by the Joint Select Committee as convened to:

Consider and review existing legislation which purport to, among other things, protect women, children, the disabled and the elderly from violence and abuse, being the Sexual Offences Act, the Offences Against the Persons Act, the Domestic Violence Act and the Child Care and Protection Act, with particular emphasis on the offences and punishment under these legislation with regard to: a) The murder of pregnant women; b) The assault of women, children and the elderly; c) Sexual offences against women, children and the elderly; d) Such other violent crimes against women, children, the disabled and the elderly as may be deemed to be necessary for the review.

To make recommendations for legislative amendment, not restricted to the stated legislation under review, for the better administration of justice and the effective protection of these special groups, as the Committee deems necessary.

The following recommendations are submitted for consideration.

It is recommended:

- ✦ to update the language to change the wording of the charge from "sexual intercourse" with a person under the age of sixteen' to 'statutory rape'.
- ✦ That an amendment to respective laws to: (a) allow for the provision of medical services, information and advice to minors under the age of sixteen without parental consent; and (b) expressly provide immunity from prosecution to healthcare professionals in select circumstances against aiding, abetting and facilitating offences concerning children under the age of sixteen.

- ✚ The provisions for **in camera** hearings be extended to the select vulnerable groups.
- ✚ The violation of elderly persons, **particularly women***, living in or in the care or residential care facilities and institutionalized facilities be recognized and criminalized
- ✚ The law on compellability be revised to allow for a spouse to be a compellable witness where the matter concerns a sexual offence committed against a child
- ✚ The language used throughout the Sexual Offences Act be gender neutral
- ✚ That all conditions under the clause for Martial Rape be eliminated.

AWOJA member organizations represented under this submission:

Baptist Women's Federation
Church Women United
Combined Disabilities Association Women's Group
Girl Guides Association
Jamaica Family Planning Association* [FAMPLAN]
Jamaica Household Workers Union
Jamaica Network of Rural Women Producers
Jamaica Women's Political Caucus*
Sistren Theatre Collective
Soroptomists International-Jamaica
WROC- Women's Resource and Outreach Centre
Woman Inc
Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

The Association of Women's Organizations in Jamaica (AWOJA) is an umbrella organization, established in 1988, which unites many of Jamaica's most long-established and influential women's organizations.

*Corrected copy

Thank You for all due consideration.