

## Jamaican Entertainers Commit to Spotlight Initiative



Tanya Stephens performs her hit song "What a Day"



UNFPA SROC Director Alison Drayton (centre) enjoying performance

*"What a day when war becomes a thing of the past and peace, we will have it at last and life is finally worth its cost", sang*

international recording artiste and GBV survivor Tanya Stephens. She was performing at the national launch of the EU-funded and UN-led Spotlight Initiative against Family Violence, after sharing her own experiences of sexual violence.

Tanya's performance came after another popular recording artiste Tarrus Riley had soulfully delivered his global megahit "She's Royal" in support of the Agenda 2030 campaign to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. The launch at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Regional Headquarters took place in the capital city of



Tarrus Riley performs his hit song "She's Royal"

Kingston on Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> of March, after Jamaica's celebration of International Women's Day.

As a survivor of violence and an agent of change, Tanya invited the audience "to change the narrative". Her plea with the audience and Jamaica to "Stop being good on paper and get out there in the streets where we are suffering. We are suffering out there. It is a war and we are losing", was strongly applauded.

Video link - Tanya Stephens performs: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fI0\\_DTSDKE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fI0_DTSDKE)

The event gave stakeholders such as donors, civil society, academia, UN staff, GBV survivors and potential Spotlight Champions, a chance to network and express themselves openly. Involving globally recognizable recording artistes so early in the campaign was a deliberate strategy to include cultural expressions and celebrities into the messaging approach.

One survivor whose eight- year old son was murdered by her partner in January 2020 broke down while trying to share her story. She was unable to continue speaking and this may be a lesson that survivors need time to heal before participating in national launches such as these.

The UWI afternoon event was a follow up to the Ceremonial Signing and Official Launch of the Spotlight Initiative in the morning. This was led by Prime Minister Andrew Holness at the Office of the Prime Minister. Mr. Holness shared the troubling local statistics that, based on a 2016 Women Health Survey, 1 in 4 Jamaican women will likely experience physical or sexual violence.



*Two EU representatives (from right) sit next to two Parliamentarians*

The European Union is providing funds of approximately 8 million (EUR) with implementation activities being led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, in collaboration with UN sister agencies such as UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF. These activities will be rolled out in four target parishes: Kingston and St. Andrew, St. Thomas, Clarendon, and Westmoreland.

Speaking on behalf of the European Union, Latin America and Caribbean Director Jolita Butkeviciene delivered remarks about the Spotlight Initiative which is also being rolled out in Belize Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and Trinidad & Tobago. Regionally, the Initiative will focus on addressing all forms of family violence, which covers physical, social, sexual, economic and emotional abuse and acts of aggression within relationships that are considered as family connections or akin to family connections.

In a special message in her role as Member of Parliament, the Most Hon. Juliet Holness suggested the need for urgent changes in cultural norms, starting with institutions such as the church and schools. Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson-Smith reiterated the commitment of the Government of Jamaica to the Spotlight Initiative and Agenda 2030 in her remarks.

*Video link - Tarrus Riley performs:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ln8MoaP055A>

Director Michelle Gyles-McDonnough from the UN Sustainable Development Unit congratulated Jamaica on the integration of the performing arts in the campaign for gender equality and the reduction of family violence. She also referenced the afternoon's edutainment performances by adolescents from The Company Dance Theatre and The Ashe Company as a good communication strategy to mobilize all Jamaicans into action against family violence.

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