

Greetings

- Dr. Marion Ducasse, Senior Medical Officer- Ministry of Health
- Representatives of the Ministry of Education
- Guest speaker Miss Choc'late Allen
- Students, teachers, fellow Scotiabankers
- Good morning and welcome.

Monument for Children

- Two weeks ago I attended the unveiling of a monument to commemorate the lives of children who slain under violent circumstances over the last 5 years in Jamaica. It was a very sad occasion to see a wall inscribed with over 400 names of children ages 0-17 years.
- But although it was a sad event, I felt a sense of hope, as the erection of the monument demonstrated that as a country, we have made an important step in recognizing how important and valuable our children are to us.
- It is Richard Evans who once said,
'Children will not remember you for the material things you provided but for the feeling that you cherished them.'
- I am hoping that among the many messages that this monument will send to the different groups in our society is that it we love our children and that together as adults were are making an effort to cherish them and keep them safe.

- As adults, we all have a responsibility for keeping our children safe – safe from sickness, safe from dangerous things and circumstances, and people who will harm them.
- The slogan of our HIV and AIDS programme at Scotiabank is *Speak Up! Speak Out!* We would like to apply this not just to HIV and AIDS but also to any form of danger that will cause harm, injury or death to our children or our neighbour's children.

Global Dangers

- Worldwide children seem to be the most vulnerable group when there are incidences of violence, disease, hunger and war.
 - In the United States, the Children's Defence Fund reports that, 'according to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3,006 children and teens were killed by firearms in 2005 and that the number of children and teens killed by guns since 1979 would fill 4,177 public school classrooms of 25 students each.'
 - In war torn areas of the middle-east like Lebanon and Israel, children witness very difficult living conditions. In a CNN interview in July 2006, the UNICEF Executive Director, Ann Veneman said 'preliminary estimates showed about 300 people were killed, about 700 injured ... about one-third of these were children'.

- Negative social and economic conditions such as family conflicts, inadequate education, insufficient protection and poverty have placed our children in harsh situations where they become victims, witnesses and even perpetrators of violence.
- In most cultures, victims and witnesses of violence are reluctant or afraid to speak out against the perpetrators. Many are afraid that seeking help will lead to more violence. We read of this everyday in our media.
- Many of our children are living in fear of violence and the fact that such violence occurs many times in their homes, makes the need to speak up and speak out more critical.
- **Keeping our children safe it is not just a private matter. It is a community concern... a national concern...a global concern.**
- At Scotiabank it is this concern that led us to support the Mayor of Kingston in erecting a monument in honour of our children.
- It is this concern that has brought us here today to launch the 3rd year of our Speak Up! Speak Out! Education programme

Scotiabank's Contribution

- Two years ago, Scotiabank took the decision to extend our corporate activities to promote positive social change through the Speak Up! Speak Out! Education Programme.

- This programme aims to build awareness among primary age children on the growing epidemic of HIV and AIDS.
- This programme is helping to guide students in knowledge sharing through research and interaction with their peers, and by showing sympathy and empathy for those affected and infected with the disease.

Generated Results

- We have found that due to this increased awareness children who have participated in the programme are now visiting HIV hospices on their own, showing care for others by launching food and clothes drives, and showing care for persons with the disease.
- We have trained parents and teachers through seminars and workgroups – our most recent Parenting Seminar was last month in Montego Bay with over 250 parents in attendance at a 4 hour event.
- Some schools have also conceptualized programmes on their own to maintain the level of awareness as well as to reach others outside their immediate school community.

Public Awareness

- Raising public awareness is therefore a key step towards keeping our children safe and reducing violence against children. At Scotiabank we are committed to playing our part in keeping our children safe. Hence our slogan '*you're safe with us*' is not just a catchy tagline, it's a mantra by which we live.

What we can do

- A critical element in achieving this safe environment for our children is to educate them, their parents, teachers and caregivers on what we can all do to tackle a growing concern.
- Parents have a responsibility to inform themselves about what they can do to keep their children safe. For example, utilizing the internet which has unlimited information and advice on parenting and protecting children.
- Parents have a responsibility to become involved in and support the schools which their children attend. By being involved you can influence decisions and help give teachers a stronger voice in lobbying for change to enhance or institute school security systems.
- Parents have a responsibility and an obligation to support organizations that are committed to protecting our children – like the security forces and the justice system. As adults we must demonstrate courage to become involved in systems designed to support our democracy.
- Parents and adults also have an obligation to report instances where they know children are being threatened or are at risk – it is a crime not to.
- As a parent of five, I have found that parenting has been one of my most challenging responsibilities, and one that never seems to end. It is a life-long commitment to shaping another human being into someone that will make a greater contribution to society than the parent.

Children can help themselves

- In our efforts to keep our children safe, we should not disregard their abilities to keep themselves safe, hence as parents we have a responsibility to encourage

them to participate in wholesome activities, to familiarize ourselves with their peers, and to educate them of the dangers that surround them.

- Children are smart and inquisitive. Most of all they have excellent memories – so tell some of the things they can do to keep themselves safe.

Practice being FREE

- I have a special message for the children here today, one I want you to remember and to share with your friends. The message spells the word FREE. How do you speak up and speak out against violence and abuse? What do you do if you are afraid?
 1. F is For FIND - Find a responsible adult who you know will protect you if you speak to them. If you remain silent you will become a victim.
 2. The R is for RUN. When you feel threatened by an adult or another child RUN for safety. RUN as fast as you can and scream for help.
 3. The first E is for EDUCATE. Educate and inform yourselves about the things and people that may harm you, such as illegal drugs, HIV and AIDS, criminals who will use you to commit crimes. Read as much as you can about these dangers and ask your parents and teachers about things you do not know. Encourage your school to participate in the Speak Up! Speak Out! Debating Competition so that you can also build you confidence as you will become more comfortable in speaking out!

4. The final E is for EXAMPLES - Look for people who are examples of safe and healthy living and plan to be like them. Persons who are not involved in crime and drugs and persons who are doing all they can to make sure that their children are safe and the country is a better place.

- You can help to free yourselves from some of the dangers and dangerous people who are prey on children. All children have the right to live free from violence and fear.
- The public, private and people partnership demonstrated in our Speak Up! Speak Out! Programme demonstrates a common and public commitment to breaking the silence on violence and abuse, building awareness and increasing education.

Speak Up! Speak Out!

- At Scotiabank, we are committed to encouraging our children to Speak up and to speak out to keep themselves safe. Can I encourage you to join us at Scotiabank in making our voices be heard in a concerted effort to improving the safety of our children and securing our future.
 - Speaking Up and Speaking Out is a civic responsibility we all have to continue to preserve Jamaica's future
 - Speaking Up and Speaking Out is your responsibility to your community.
 - Speaking up and Speaking Out will protect our own children.

- Speaking Up and Speaking Out is making a determined effort to prevent the KSAC from filling all the sides of that monument downtown with the names of our children.
- My talk to you this morning is Scotiabank's way of speaking up and speaking out about the importance of joining forces to keep our children safe.
- Let us all stand together as law-abiding citizens against violence, discrimination, intimidation and fear. Four hundred names of children on a wall is enough to jolt us as a people of how we are destroying our future.
- Speaking Up and Speaking Out is about teaching our children how to protect themselves:

It was Aristotle who said,

Those who educate children well are more to be honoured than they who produce them; for these only gave them life, those the art of living well.

Let us not remain silent ...Speak Up, Speak Out!

Thank you.