

**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES**

#### MONA, JAMAICA, WEST INDIES

**INSTITUTE FOR GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

**REGIONAL COORDINATING OFFICE**

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**Positive Fatherhood and Paternity Rights – Towards a Model for Development**

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The Institute for Gender and Development Studies - Regional Coordinating Office (IGDS-RCO) endorses International Men’s Day (IMD), with its focus on positive fathering, as this theme corresponds with the feminist struggle to change prevailing unequal gender power relations.

This year, the IGDS-RCO, in partnership with the Jamaica Male Advancement Network (JAMAN) will celebrate IMD with the hosting of a Webinar entitled **Positive Fatherhood and Paternity Rights: Towards a Model for Development**. Webinar presenters include Michael McAnuff-Jones, leader of a cross-denominational men’s ministry called *Mentoring a Nation-Man;* Dr. Michael Coombs, Public Health Specialist and Founder and Chair of the *National Association for the Family;* Michael-David, upcoming artist, who will provide entertainment and Captain Nickalious Beaumont, transformational leader with over 13 years’ experience in the military. The Webinar will be moderated by David Brooks, Host and Producer of the *Jamaican Dadz Podcast.*

IMD was initiated in 1991 when Professor Thomas Oates from Kansas came up with the idea of countervailing negative impressions of men in society with alternative responses, which highlighted their positive contributions to their families, communities and society. In 1999, Jerome Teelucksingh from Trinidad and Tobago, used his father’s November 19 birthdate to revive IMD that has been continuously celebrated since.

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies, RCO, in the recent years has conducted 2 research projects on masculinity, including the 2019, **Positive Fathering: A Bridge to Enhancing Family Unity and Community Cohesion in Jamaica**, led by Dr, Natasha Mortley. The research confirmed that there is a “link between Jamaican masculinities and fathering and how positive forms of fathering can be leveraged towards strengthening Jamaican families and creating safer and more cohesive communities.” Funded under the UNESCO Participation Programme, and administered through the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport and the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO, the study aimed to promote fathers as agents towards changing negative gender stereotypes, reducing gender­based violence (GBV) and fostering greater social cohesion and gender equality within their communities.

Speaking about these targets and the importance of focusing on fathers’ responsibilities and rights, Prof. Opal Palmer Adisa, University Director of the IGDS-RCO noted that in the focus groups she conducted in 4 parishes, the men repeatedly said they wanted to be more active in their children’s lives, improve their relationship with the mothers while working towards ending domestic abuse, and change men’s status in the family and community.

Prof. Adisa encourages support for the November 19, 2020 Webinar, which aims to popularise positive attitudes among men about the social responsibilities of fatherhood, to model care and commitment to all their children, and to end the widespread burden of single-headed households, which are largely led by women.

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