



**ROYAL ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES POLICE FORCE**

**Public Relations and Complaints Department**

**P.O. Box 835**

**Kingstown**

**Tel: (1-784) 485-6891 or (1-784) 485-6697 Fax: (1-784) 456-2816**

**E-mail: [policerelations@gmail.com](mailto:policerelations@gmail.com)**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

***ATIPU Leads the charge in the Fight Against Human Trafficking***

Hundreds of patrons gathered on July 30, 2024, for the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit (ATIPU) March and Rally, united in their call to end human trafficking. This initiative, spearheaded by the ATIPU of the Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF), aimed to raise awareness and foster community engagement on the United Nations Day Against Trafficking in Persons. Under the theme “Leave No Child Behind in the Fight Against Human Trafficking,” the event featured musical renditions, poem recitals, and various displays of youth talent, emphasizing the importance of protecting the most vulnerable members of society.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Ag) Mr. Trevor Bailey opened the event with remarks that highlighted the gravity of human trafficking, describing it as the second most profitable organized crime after drug trafficking. He stressed the importance of education, prevention, and prosecution in combating this heinous crime. Bailey called for a united front against all forms of criminal activity, noting that public awareness and vigilance are crucial in the fight against human trafficking. He also emphasized that the collective effort of the general public, law enforcement, and government agencies is essential to protect victims and bring traffickers to justice.

The day was commemorated with a poster competition that included participants from various age groups, showcasing their understanding and commitment to the cause. This competition served as a poignant reminder of the role youth play in raising awareness and driving change. The creative expressions displayed through the posters underscored the urgent need to educate young minds about the dangers of human trafficking and empower them to be advocates for change in their communities. Savannah Antrobus won first place in the 7-10 age group, followed by Kiarra Peter in second place, and Bria Durrant in third place. In the 11-18 age group, Zahndra Roberts secured first place, Vaurice John took second place, and Alyssan Ambrose came in third. The winners were

awarded Chromebooks and tablets, providing them with valuable tools to continue their educational journeys

“Vigilance, Compassion, Justice,” stated Mr. Kevan Glasgow, Social Worker in the Ministry of Health, as he delivered the social worker's narrative. He emphasized the necessity for every child to grow up in a safe environment and reminded the audience of their duty to protect children. Glasgow urged everyone to be advocates and lights in the darkness, ensuring that no child is left behind. He elaborated on the importance of community involvement in safeguarding children and the pivotal role of social workers in providing support and intervention for at-risk youth.

Speaking on behalf of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Mr. Philcol Jeffers highlighted the importance of recognizing victims and making sure their voices are heard. He commended the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the RSVGPF for their strides in raising awareness about human trafficking. Jeffers stressed the need to provide access to healthcare, psychosocial support, and essential services for victims. He also emphasized the importance of bringing traffickers to justice and strengthening local frameworks to combat trafficking. Jeffers called for continued collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure comprehensive support for victims and effective prosecution of offenders.

Counsellor Mr. Kesley Cambridge from the Child Development Division spoke about the crucial role of the family in providing a safe environment for children. He warned that without such an environment, children become vulnerable to trafficking. He encouraged listeners to report any suspicion of trafficking to the relevant authorities, emphasizing the need for vigilance to ensure the safety of all children. Mr. Cambridge also discussed the psychological impact of trafficking on children and the importance of early intervention and support to help victims recover and rebuild their lives.

Police Chaplain Mr. Adolphus Isaacs delivered a powerful charge, emphasizing that human trafficking is not a new phenomenon. He referenced its origin in the Bible, recounting the story of Joseph. Mr. Isaacs spoke with urgency about the need to protect the most vulnerable among us. Particularly children. He stressed that ending child trafficking is a critical responsibility and that parents must take care and guide their children to prevent them from becoming victims.

The event concluded with closing remarks by the Attorney General of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Hon. Mr. Grenville Williams. He spoke about the reality that human trafficking offenders prey on the vulnerable, usually women and children, constituting a severe violation of human rights. Williams made a passionate appeal to bring an end to human trafficking and highlighted the strides being made in law enforcement in terms of legislation and victim support. He emphasized the need for stronger laws and robust enforcement and reiterated the government's commitment to combat human trafficking. Williams also commended the RSVGPF for their excellent work in this critical area, urging the nation to remain vigilant and supportive of efforts to eradicate this crime.

The event was a resounding call to action, demonstrating the RSVGPF's commitment to eradicating human trafficking and protecting the nation's most vulnerable citizens. The ATIPU's

initiative showcased the power of collective effort and the importance of education, advocacy, and law enforcement in combating human trafficking and ensuring a safe and just society for all.

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