



National UN Volunteer Stefan Morris serves with the Spotlight Initiative in the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) in Jamaica.

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Addressing gender-based violence in Jamaica through the Spotlight Initiative

At 29 years old, national UN Volunteer Stefan Morris serves as the Spotlight Initiative Communications Assistant within the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) in Jamaica. This initiative of the European Union and the United Nations is the world's largest targeted effort addressing violence against women and girls. In marking the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, we conversed with Stefan about his views on toxic masculinity, the challenges Jamaican women face and his contributions as a UN Volunteer.

Stefan leads the Spotlight Initiative's communications arm creating awareness of the programme through coherent communications and digital campaigns using messaging, data and infographics that tell the story of the programmes, services, results and impact.

In Jamaica, communications regarding sensitive topics such as gender-based violence and family violence must be handled with the utmost care. Stefan's work supports the broader rollout of the programme's communication through the recipient United Nations organizations. He spearheads the Communications Task Force comprising representatives of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women.

The [2016 UN Women survey](#) on women's health in Jamaica showed that 77 per cent of women find it is natural (or God-intended) that a man should be the head of his family; 70

per cent agree that a woman's main role is to take care of the home, and 31 per cent believe that a wife is obligated to have sex with her husband whenever he wants.

“ Ending violence against women and girls requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. Women, girls, men, boys, the State, civil society organisations and citizens all play an integral part. The UN's primary aim of *leaving no one behind* is the transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is evidenced through the effective work of the Initiative in moving the needle towards achieving SDG 5.

Stefan supports efforts by working on communications to escalate women's stories alongside educational messages. "I had the opportunity to convene a panel discussion under the theme Women in Leadership, Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 world," Stefan shares. "The forum brought together women parliamentarians to discuss gender-based violence and how they can leverage their political leadership and powerful positions to promote its elimination and foster greater gender equality," he continues.


We asked Stefan, "How do you live your UNV experience at the Spotlight Initiative being a man?" He replied, "I grew up in a single-mother household and have always advocated for women. As a man living in Jamaica, I can say that toxic masculinity is a destructive societal norm. Some of our men, from a younger age, are not taught to express emotions in a healthy manner and describe gender-based violence as simplistic and normal. My aim within the Spotlight Initiative is to empower men and boys, highlighting that they are a part of the solution to end gender-based violence in our society.

“ Working with the UN and the Spotlight Initiative helps me to better understand how we can raise awareness among men, so they know they are agents of change for domestic violence. That's why we bring them into our conversations and try to educate them on gender equality. Our women and girls deserve to live a life free from violence; family violence has no place in our society and the initiative is essential to sensitize and raise awareness among the Jamaican populace. --Stefan Morris, UN Volunteer Communications Assistant with UNRCO

"Remember, it's never a woman's fault that she experiences violence. The Spotlight

Initiative remains committed to promoting a culture of empowering rather than blaming and shaming, while intensifying efforts to curb the human rights infringement that is gender-based violence," Stefan concludes.

Just like Stefan, you can also advocate for women and girls. Sign up on our platform app.unv.org, complete your profile and apply to volunteer opportunities that advance the Sustainable Development Goal 5, gender equality.

 Latin America and the Caribbean

• 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence • International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women • Gender-based Violence

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 5: Gender equality](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)