



**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, December 23, 2021

**‘Convicted but not condemned’, Minister Samuda Encourages Wards**

“**Be the best**” is the call-to-action given to wards of the state at the Rio Cobre and Hilltop Juvenile Correctional Centres, by Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda, Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of National Security.

“**My Christmas wish for you is whatever you want to do, make the best of it; What you want to do is not anybody’s business. If you wish to be a barber, it’s your call. If you want to be in business, that too is your call. All I ask is that you be the best at it,**” the Minister Samuda.

He added that “**they (wards) are convicted but not condemned, and we need to ensure that systems are put in place to allow them to rehabilitate themselves and find a future. Christmas is a very good reminder of that**”, continued Minister Samuda.

The Minister was speaking at the annual end-of-year, gift-giving treat for the wards, which was held by the Ministry’s We Transform Youth Empowerment Programme yesterday (Wednesday, December 22, 2021) under the theme ‘Christmas with a Difference’.

Approximately 180 wards of the state across the four juvenile correctional and remand centres – (Metcalfe, Rio Cobre/Hilltop, and South Camp) have so far been feted and presented with Christmas gifts.

In encouraging the wards to chart a new course that leads to success, Minister Samuda told them to think positively and to master the practical aspects of whatever skills they choose to acquire.

“**This Christmas is a time of reflection, where you consider what gift you want to give to yourself. No matter how you got in (state care), what is important is to ensure that you never come back, as all of you are bright enough to avoid that,**” the Minister said, as he urged the juveniles to refrain from activities that would allow them to return to state care after leaving the institution.

Meanwhile, in thanking the sponsors and mentors for their assistance, Minister Samuda pointed out that the completion of the Correctional Services’ Technical Working Group (CSTWG) Report has been the highlight of 2021. The CSTWG was tasked to conduct a comprehensive review of the operations of the juvenile correctional centres particularly, with focus on the ‘duty of care’ to the wards in relation to the appropriateness of disciplinary measures. It is also intended to provide timely access to the requisite educational and psychosocial interventions.

“**The CSTWG report gave us a roadmap that allows us to take these pointers to the Ministries of Finance, Education and Health – the exact issues where we need help and for them to see why we are making the particular requests, as it will help us get things right,**” he stated.

In commenting on the We Transform Programme, one ward of the State declared that it has provided an avenue for personal development.

“**I feel good to know that this empowerment programme has helped me change my outlook on life, education wise, and to deal effectively with my anger issues. I wish to thank everyone involved for this opportunity, as I want to make my mom proud,**” he noted.

(more)

Ella Garthy, the We Transform Programme Manager, said not only are they happy to have embarked on this initiative but that they believe that these activities are a part of the rehabilitation process. **“It’s important to us that they know that they are valued and important. We believe that the correctional centres are a place for rehabilitation, restoration and empowerment. This initiative aligns with this strategic goal,”** she noted.