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EU facilitates discussion on rehabilitation programmes in prison between officials in Jamaica and Belize

Rehabilitation programmes in prisons will be the centre of discussions during a three day working visit by the Chief Executive Officer of the Kolbe Foundation in Belize, Mr. Earl Jones. Mr. Jones whose visit is sponsored by the Delegation of the European Union in Jamaica will meet with several Government officials between Tuesday, May 6 and Thursday, May 8 to share his experience with rehabilitation programmes in Belize's sole prison as well as observe programmes being undertaken in some of Jamaica's main penal facilities. Mr. Jones will meet with Minister of National Security, the Hon. Peter Bunting, Commissioner of Corrections Jevene Bent, representatives from the Ministry of Justice and Carla Gullotta, Chairperson for Stand Up for Jamaica.

The Kolbe Foundation is a private, non-profit organization which was in 2002 approved by the Government to manage the country's sole prison, the Belize Central Prison with the goal of reforming the prison system. According to Mr. Jones *"the absence of rehabilitation and community reintegration programmes increases the opportunities for inmates to improve criminal skills.....The changing of the inmate's criminal mentality or behaviour begins with the process of rehabilitation. The opportunity or privilege to work, whether in the kitchen, medic centre, industrial zone, chopping gang, or cleaning the bathroom, must be earned."* As a result of the programmes, he says the recidivism rate for the Belize Central Prison currently stands at 15%.

The rehabilitation programmes at the Belize Central prison focus on personal development, addiction rehabilitation, and behaviour therapy; The prison also offers work experience in different fields at the facility covering tailoring, electrical, woodwork and agriculture. The institution also runs a school which offers inmates the opportunity to improve their academic and vocational education; some inmates are also offered training as Medical First Responders and Emergency Medical Technicians who are then assigned to the prison's clinic.

The EU has been working with Stand Up for Jamaica, UNICEF and Rise Life Management since 2011 to support rehabilitation programmes in penal facilities, including juvenile centres. Current elements of the EU supported rehabilitation programme include: Classes from the Remedial to the CSEC Level, Heart Certified Skills Training, a music training programme, the operation of a radio station which streams live, a computer training programme, counselling for those incarcerated as well as inmates' children.

For more information:

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