



## **Jamaica Customs goes beyond its walls to educate and inform Stakeholders across Jamaica**

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To ensure stakeholders and customers across all spectrums of the society, are familiar with the processes and operations of the Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA), in recent years, the Customs team has been employing more face-to-face interactive engagements for its stakeholders.

One such engagement is the "Customs Meets the Community" Parish Engagement, aimed at further enhancing the agency's presence within parishes and communities. This stakeholder engagement which started in April 2017 saw employees within various branches of the agency travelling to various parishes across Jamaica, and making presentations to members of the public (generally at a Church Hall). It allowed for their questions and concerns to be addressed, and importantly, the agency was able to garner feedback, which remains a key element of all its engagements.

In March 2024, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency revamped this stakeholder engagement to a "Town and Community Tour Edition" which allows employees to take to the streets of towns and communities in keeping with our tagline 'reaching our customers where they are.'



The Jamaica Customs Agency team educating the public in Papine Square, Kingston, during our tour in August 2024, on the agency's various initiatives and advanced processes.

The various engagements not only benefit the agency, but entities that the agency has partnered with for the initiative, to include other Border Regulatory Agencies (BRAs), and key stakeholders.

One such stakeholder is the Social Development Commission (SDC) who remains a key partner in assisting and guiding the JCA in executing this community-based initiative successfully and effectively 'on the ground' with its in-depth knowledge of parish geography and demography.

Sherine Walker, Director of Governance at the Social Development Commission(SDC) shared that “the engagement between the Jamaica Customs Agency and the Social Development Commission, through the initiative, “Customs Meets the Community” has created several direct and indirect benefits for the SDC, which includes:

- Improved network with primary stakeholders such as local businesses (supermarkets, private car park operators), churches and schools;
- Informed and enhanced SDC databases;
- Increased visibility for the SDC;
- Income generation opportunities for local businesses.”

In concluding with high praises for initiatives such as this, she added that “the engagement highlights and reinforces the notion of SDC as a bridge that connects communities to the required good and/or services and vice versa.”

Another engagement, targeted at commercial and industrial customers is the Customs Business Interaction (CBI). Led by the Office of the CEO & Commissioner of Customs, Dr. Velma Ricketts Walker, the CBI enables a more personal interaction between executive members of both the JCA and its commercial and industrial stakeholders to further enhance the facilitation of trade, one of the agency’s mandates. The face-to-face meetings also help to boost the relationship between the agency and its customers.

Omar Azan, Chairman and CEO of Boss Furniture, having benefitted from the CBI, indicated that engagements such as this has allowed a direct avenue to address Customs concerns companies are having and receive faster resolutions to same, whether it has to do with the systems or internal documentation and the turnaround for it. This, he said, allows for better and freer flow of cargo which has had a positive impact on business.

He used the opportunity to show gratitude to the Jamaica Customs Agency for its “vast and great improvements in the way Customs operates...a lot more collaborative and working along with its clients. The communication lines are a lot more open, led by CEO, Mrs. Ricketts Walker and the entire team, where we feel comfortable enough to call and discuss anything, whether it is something we see, hear, or know of or if we have our own issues to manage. As business people in Jamaica, we are very thankful.”



Customs representatives engage in a round-table discussion with executives from Boss Furniture.

While Jamaica Customs will continue to utilise traditional media, and Social Media to keep customers informed, the entity is aware that these channels may not reach all our valued stakeholders and with this in mind, will continue to advance its stakeholder engagement capabilities to ensure customers are more aware, informed and educated, thus encouraging greater compliance, thereby fulfilling its mandates of trade facilitation, border protection and revenue collection on behalf of the Government of Jamaica.

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