



YOUNG WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP JAMAICA

Components of the YWiLJA programme:

- A series of foundational training sessions on the programme's core themes
- A workshop to further enhance participants' understanding, skills, and ability to engage in different forms of leadership through the sharing of good practices with other women leaders
- Simulated parliamentary debate in the House of Representatives

From December 2022 to February 2023, 48 young women leaders from across Jamaica took part in Young Women In Leadership – Jamaica (YWiLJA), an in-depth training programme on transformational leadership, inclusive decision-making, and parliamentary procedure **organised by ParlAmericas, the Caribbean Women In Leadership (CIWiL)** in partnership with the **Bureau of Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport** and the **Houses of Parliament of Jamaica** around the celebration of International Women's Day 2023.

YWiLJA was the fourth in a series of national-level initiatives implemented in the Caribbean through a [joint ParlAmericas and CIWiL project](#), funded by the Government of Canada, focused on strengthening women's political leadership. A flagship component of the project, the YWiL programme is designed to support these leaders in building knowledge, skills, and networks necessary for their work as current and future changemakers. The first YWiL was hosted in [Trinidad and Tobago](#) in February-March 2020, the second in [Antigua and Barbuda](#) in October-November 2020 and the third in [Saint Lucia](#) in May-June 2022 in partnership with the national legislatures in those countries. An additional YWiL was also hosted in [Trinidad and Tobago in November 2021](#), led by the CIWiL Trinidad and Tobago chapter.

#YWiLJA



ONLINE TRAINING SESSIONS

Gender equality and the women's movement in Jamaica

The first YWiLJA virtual training session focused on providing an introduction to gender equality and women's leadership in order to support participants' advocacy on these themes and their preparation for the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting. This session was led by a distinguished panel of women activists and provided a comprehensive introduction to the role of power, responsibilities and values assigned to men and women and key resources to support understanding of gender equality. The session was moderated by Linnette Vassell, Member of the CIWiL Board of Directors. The following panellists shared their knowledge and experiences with participants on these themes:

- Dr. Nadeen Spence, Member of the CIWiL Board of Directors
- Judith Wedderburn, Member of the CIWiL Board of Directors
- Ayesha Constable, Co-founder of GirlsCARE
- Dylis McDonald, Project Coordinator, CIWiL Regional Secretariat



International frameworks related to gender equality and women's political participation:

- [The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(1995\)](#)
- [The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women \(1979\)](#)
- [The Sustainable Development Goals \(2015\)](#)

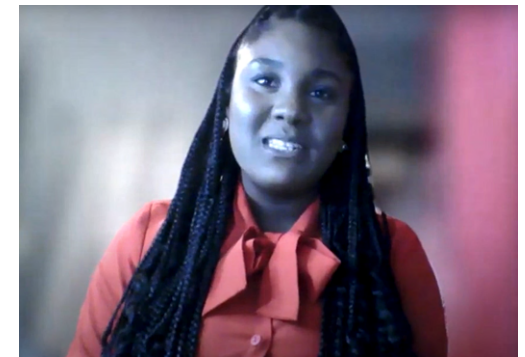


ONLINE TRAINING SESSION

Transformational Leadership

The second virtual training session focused on transformational leadership, which is the leadership model that forms the basis of CIWiL's flagship training programme and underlies the YWiL programme. The session was led by Dr. Rosina Wiltshire, gender and development specialist, and was moderated by Chrisette Benjamin, Program Officer - Gender Equality, ParlAmericas.

This session provided participants with an introduction to the history of the women's movement in the Caribbean region, principles of the transformational leadership approach, its importance in the context of women's leadership, and how this form of leadership helps to achieve positive change for, and in service of, all of society through its focus on restructuring harmful systems that create and uphold inequalities. Dr. Wiltshire emphasised that leadership is not a position you hold, but an everyday practice that begins with the self.



Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that contributes to change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change and enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms.

The model of transformational leadership starts at the level of individual transformation, before moving on to the group and institutional levels. It fosters a culture of accountability, justice, and transparency.

When applied to gender and leadership, this process leads to the redefinition of gender and power relations, and the strengthening of leadership that is bold and innovative and builds on the skills of women and men in society thereby enhancing gender equality.

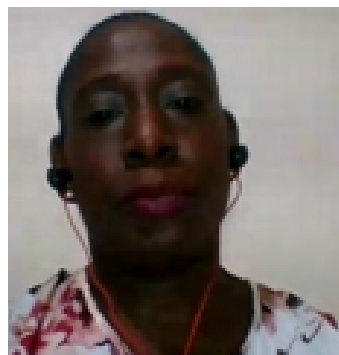
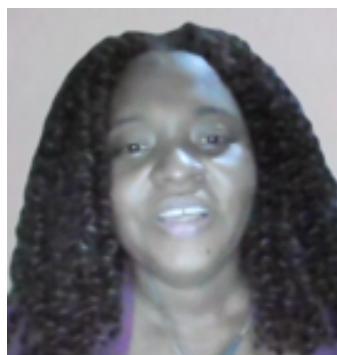
Learn more on [CIWiL's website](#).

ONLINE TRAINING SESSION

Parliament and how it functions

The third YWiLJA virtual training session focused on the role and function of parliament in order to support participants in their preparations for the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting, and as part of the programme's overall objective of encouraging young women's interest in pursuing public leadership. The session was led by members of the staff at the Houses of Parliament of Jamaica: Tashana Sewell Alcock, Director of Corporate Communications and Public Relations; Tracy Cohen, Assistant Clerk; and Captain Wayne Blake, Marshal.

The session provided a comprehensive introduction to the work of the legislature and the critical role of the parliament and parliamentarians in a democracy and in national development. Its content included an overview of the structure of the Parliament of Jamaica, discussion of the role of parliament and parliamentarians, and a summary of key elements of parliamentary procedure and processes.



See the following resources for information on parliaments:

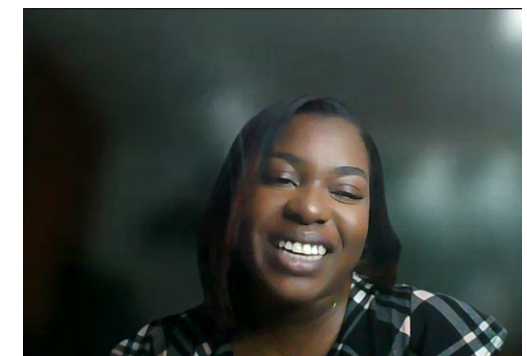
- [Agora Portal for Parliamentary Development](#)
- [Glossary of Citizenship and Democracy Terms](#) (Caribbean Elections)

ONLINE TRAINING SESSION

Applying a gender lens in decision-making

The fourth YWILJA virtual training session guided participants through discussions and exercises focused on applying a gender lens in decision making. Monique Long, Planning and Coordination Specialist, UN Women Caribbean, conducted a presentation that covered concepts related to gender and diversity, as well as engaged the participants in activities and discussions that explored gender roles and norms, gender analysis, intersectionality, and the role of power in maintaining long-standing gender inequalities.

A panel discussion then followed with presentations by Senator Natalie Campbell Rodrigues, Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality; Senator Gabriela Morris; and Tashana Clemmings, Acting Research Coordinator, Bureau of Gender Affairs, on their experiences in leadership and how they apply a gender lens in their work.



Adopting an inclusive approach to the consideration of legislative and policy issues – and the preparation of subsequent responses – is critical for decision-makers. Applying a gender perspective in developing solutions will help to ensure that these are responsive to the unique experiences of all individuals, avoiding “one-size-fits-all” thinking, and are particularly sensitive to the needs of under-represented or historically marginalized groups. When applied by legislators, this contributes to creating a legal framework that works in favour of as many people as possible and the implementation of actions that proactively respond to and redress inequalities.

Learn more in this handout on [gender sensitivity in legislation](#).

ONLINE TRAINING SESSION

Participating in a parliamentary debate

The final virtual session focused on supporting participants in preparing for their participation in the YWiL parliamentary sitting. The session was centered on presentations by Eilish Elliott, Project Manager - Gender Equality, ParlAmericas; Cindy Andrews, YWiL alumni; and Orville Levy, Co-chair, National Youth Advisory Council of Jamaica.

The presentations covered what constitutes an effective intervention in parliament and recommendations for how to conduct research and deliver a contribution. Participants were then given further guidance on how to practice learning on applying a gender lens in decision-making to the drafting of their parliamentary presentation. Time was also provided for participants and presenters to engage in dialogue to ensure any questions about the Sitting were addressed.



LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP - DAY 1

On February 10 and 11, the in-person leadership workshop provided an opportunity for further exploration of topics covered in the virtual sessions and exchange on effective strategies to positively impact communities and country. Day 1 of the workshop was facilitated by Dylis McDonald, Project Coordinator of the CIWiL Regional Secretariat.

It opened with remarks by Judith Wedderburn, CIWiL Vice-Chair, and Senator Natalie Campbell-Rodrigues, Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality. Tonni Brodber, Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, provided the keynote video address.

The rest of the program featured panels of leaders from various sectors sharing their knowledge and guidance in areas of important skill development, as well as engaging in dialogue with participants in response to points of interest.



Tonni Brodber, Representative of the UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean

“So now it is time for you to take up space. Ensure that your voice is heard especially on those issues that are important to you. Know that you are at the table because you should be and just by your very being you have a right to be at the table.”



Anande Trotman-Joseph, President of CIWiL

“This program is designed for young women just like you who are passionate and dedicated and who - if not already - are on the trajectory of being part of the change that your communities and nation needs.”



Senator Natalie Campbell-Rodrigues, Vice President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

“This YWiL JA cohort is a clear example of the statement, 'where there is women, there is power.' So I urge you young women leaders to continue walking in the power you have. Your voice, advocacy and action matters to further develop Jamaica!”



Building supportive communities and partnerships

A focus of the YWiL programme is on transformational leadership, inclusive decision-making, and leadership as service. As a reflection of that, the first panel, moderated by Nardia McLaren, Acting Director, Community Liaison, Bureau of Gender Affairs, focused on how to build meaningful relationships and partnerships to support participants in their leadership journeys, but also provided mechanisms for sustainable community engagement that can inform their work and projects.

The following panellists shared their knowledge and experiences with participants on these themes:

- Senator Janice Allen
- Sharon Hay Webster, former Member of Parliament for South Central St. Catherine
- Merline Daley, President, Jamaica Women's Political Caucus
- Patrick Lalor, Policy and Advocacy Officer, Jamaica AIDS Support for Life (JASL)



Overcoming challenges on your leadership journey

The second panel, moderated by Sophia Bryan, attorney and leadership advocate, focused on the unique barriers faced by women and experiences of resistance when working to transform inequalities and advance inclusion, particularly those in leadership positions. The panel provided participants with an opportunity to engage with women leaders on a discussion of these issues and gain knowledge that can be applied to their own leadership journeys.

The following panellists shared their knowledge and experiences with participants on these themes:

- The Honourable Juliet Cuthbert Flynn, MP, State Minister in the Ministry of Health and Wellness
- Senator Gabriela Morris
- Linnette Vassell, CIWiL Board of Directors
- Dr. Christine Hendricks, Executive Director, Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities



The day's activities concluded with an open forum on young women in leadership led by Dylis Mc Donald, Project Coordinator, CIWiL Regional Secretariat, and Chrisette Benjamin, Program Officer - Gender Equality, ParlAmericas.

The following are examples of key learning participants reported as having gained from the YWiL programme that they will apply in their ongoing leadership pursuits:

- Change and being a transformational leader starts with me. It is important for me to first accept that, apply it to my daily life, and embrace it.
- To serve others, I will need to serve me firstly. This means to take care of my wellbeing, my personal and professional character and to develop them firstly. This way, I can better serve others.
- To be more empathetic and confident.
- The discussion on networking throughout the YWiL programme was a key takeaway for me. I plan on making this a continuous practice on my journey to becoming a leader.
- In making decisions, especially those that do not impact only ourselves, we must take into account all the person who it will impact. As a leader it is imperative that all persons that we represent are always accounted for.
- I understood that our most vulnerable are not aware of certain programs that will be of great assistance to them and I plan to empower and enlighten these individuals the best way I can.
- One strategy that I will be using in my pursuit of public leadership and community action from participating in the YWiL JA programme is applying a gender lens to decision-making and ensuring that no gender is left behind.
- YWiL taught me how to galvanize support for my areas of interest by partnering with the people/entities who can reach people that I cannot.
- Some of the strategies and approaches discussed over the course of YWiL JA that I intend to apply in my pursuit of public leadership or community actions include: Creating my own space rather than finding boxes to fit in; stop smalling up myself, because I possess the potential to do great things; being sincere in everything that I do; always try my best to apply a gendered lens in decision making; constantly remind myself that whilst I am experiencing all that I am experiencing I am being built to serve; and learn how to say no.



LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP - DAY 2

The second day of the leadership workshop opened with remarks by H.E. Emina Tudakovic, High Commissioner of Canada to Jamaica. After her opening presentation, the High Commissioner engaged in a question and answer session with participants on her own experiences in leadership.

The rest of the program focused on working sessions to engage in practical activities on lessons learned and as well as engage in dialogue with participants in response to points of interest.

Personal development

The first working session of the second day of the workshop was centred on transformational leadership, building on previous sessions and discussions from across the leadership workshop. This session was led by Dylis Mc Donald, Project Coordinator of the CIWiL Regional Secretariat. Participants were engaged in reflection and dialogue that focused on personal development and planning for their own individual leadership journeys, with consideration to how they hope to share learning gained with their communities.



Exercise on applying a gender lens

This last session guided participants through discussions and practical exercises on applying a gender lens in decision-making. Following a discussion on power and leadership and how this can be exerted to have a positive impact, which was led by Dr. Nadeen Spence, the ParlAmericas team guided participants through a group activity in which they simulated committee discussions on specific policy issues to identify intersectional and gender considerations of the themes.

The session built on the virtual training session that introduced what it means to apply a gender lens in decision-making while incorporating the key concepts of transformational leadership.

The leadership workshop concluded with closing remarks by The Honourable **Olivia Grange**, OJ, CD, MP, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment, and Sport.



YWiL PRACTICE SITTING

On February 20, a practice session for the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting took place in the Houses of Parliament of Jamaica that focused entirely on supporting participants in their preparations for the official Sitting. Participants received briefings from legislative authorities on parliamentary procedure and then took part in a run-through of the full session.



YWiL PRACTICE SITTING



YWiL SITTING

On February 21, the Parliament of Jamaica hosted the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting in the Houses of Parliament, representing the first all-women sitting in the country's history. YWiL participants served as parliamentarians and officers of the parliament for a debate on a motion moved by the Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment, and Sport related to women and the economy.

The simulated motion proposed the development of a national action plan that prioritises gender equality and women's economic empowerment, with focused attention on four key areas:

- Developing programmes in the educational sector to strengthen women and girls' access to knowledge and training related to high-demand and emerging fields, including digital innovation and information technology and the care economy, and propel women's employability and economic empowerment/participation in the economy.
- Advancing digital transformation through policy, plans, projects and programmes/initiatives to address digital connectivity, affordability, accessibility, availability and literacy, and measuring the digital divide.
- Enacting legislative initiatives and public programmes on the care economy to guarantee decent employment for all care workers according to national and international labour standards.
- Developing a national mentorship programme in select communities to ensure that the rate of underachievement of boys, in external exams, is lessened within the next five years by at least 25%.



Watch the [Sitting of the YWiL House of Representatives](#) on the PBC Jamaica YouTube page.



The OECD defines **economic empowerment** as “the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth.”

UN Women identifies the benefits of economic empowerment for women as the following:

- “Women's economic empowerment is central to realizing women's rights and gender equality
- Empowering women in the economic and closing gender gaps in the world of work are key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- When more women work, economies grow
- Increasing women's and girls' educational attainment contributes to women's economic empowerment and more inclusive growth
- Women's economic equality is good for business”

Sources:

[Women's Economic Empowerment](#) (OECD Issues Paper 2011, pg. 6);
[Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment](#) (UN Women 2018).

YWiL parliamentarians' contributions offered their perspectives on the measures and priorities established in the motion in alignment with their assigned constituencies and portfolios. Interventions further took issues into consideration through a gender lens in their assessment and made effective use of research and guidance from peers and other experts, resulting in an engaging, thought-provoking, and intelligent debate.

Congratulatory remarks were offered by Alisha Todd, Director General of ParlAmericas; Dr. Angela Brown-Burke, MP; Marisa Dalrymple-Philibert, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives; the Most Honourable Juliet Holness, MP, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives; the Honourable Olivia Grange, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment, and Sport; and Nana Oye Hesse-Bayne, CIWiL Board Coordinator. Certificates were then presented to the participants in ceremonies facilitated by Dylis Mc Donald, Project Coordinator of the CIWiL Secretariat.





The Honorable Olivia Grange, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport

"You have all had a life-changing experience. Make today become the first day of the rest of your lives as you move forward to become leaders. You have started that journey today. You are leaders in your own right. And in future, I am sure I will have the pleasure of seeing some of you sitting in this House."



The Most Honorable, Juliet Holness, Deputy Speaker of the House

"Gender equity is not just about us as women wanting to forge ahead and holding anybody back. All the women in parliament today, as members, gave a saying in various different ways: "one hand can't clap." It requires us as strong women along with our men to be able to make our communities, our families, and our country the best place in which to live."



Dr. Angela Brown Burke, Member of Parliament

"I have been extremely impressed with the contributions that you have made, with the confidence and courage with which you have made your arguments... The future is definitely in good hands."



The Honorable Marisa Dalrymple-Philibert, Speaker of the House of Representatives

"At this time in our history, we are seeing the largest representation of women in parliament, with 31% of our parliament being women. We as women, you as the future, young women, must promise ourselves to build on this momentum to ensure that we continue to increase the percentage of women representing us in years to come. We must use our platform to empower our Jamaican sisters in every sphere of life."



PARTICIPANTS' NEXT STEPS

Inspired by their participation in YWiLJA, the young women leaders planned next steps for taking positive action in their communities, sharing their learning, and continuing their leadership development. Some of the commitments adopted included:

- Advocating on women's leadership and gender-responsive approaches to national development issues, including on social media and through the development and sharing with decision-makers of policy recommendations
- Sharing information gained through the program with others through public sessions and in personal conversations
- Incorporating learning on transformational leadership and gender equality into participation and decision-making in meetings, projects, social media, work, school, and advocacy
- Becoming a member of community groups and initiatives and taking on additional leadership roles and responsibilities in these spaces
- Launching new community initiatives, groups, or advocacy campaigns on issues of importance
- Joining political parties and seeking out roles in parliament
- Generating resources and partnerships to support community initiatives
- Continuing to develop personal leadership skills and capacities
- Encouraging others to take on leadership roles, inspiring them to be transformational leaders, and supporting them on their journeys
- Staying connected to other participants in the program to develop and implement activities together



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This activity was made possible with the generous support of the Bureau of Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Sport and Entertainment, the Houses of Parliament of Jamaica, and the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

CIWiL and ParlAmericas also wish to recognise and extend thanks to the Ministry of Education and Youth and UN Women Caribbean, peer mentors from past YWiL cohorts, the panellists and facilitators who shared their knowledge and time, and the numerous parliamentary representatives, non governmental organisations who contributed to the activity. Each of these contributions was essential to helping to make this historic event such a success.



YWiLJA was hosted as part of the ParlAmericas-CIWiL joint project, “Strengthening Women’s Political Leadership in the Caribbean,” supported by the Bureau of Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Sport and Entertainment, the Houses of Parliament of Jamaica, and the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

ABOUT CIWiL AND PARLAMERICAS



Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) is a non-political, multi-partisan, and independent NGO established to monitor, strengthen and increase women's political participation and leadership in the region through advocacy, networking, research and capacity building initiatives.

CIWiL aims to create a sustainable, effective, and efficient women's leadership base, and to achieve gender equality, through advocacy, networking, research and capacity building.

CIWiL is about creating a space of sharing, nurturing, and solidarity among women across the many gaps that divide us.

The mission of CIWiL is to be a flagship organization to support efforts to increase the number of women in politics, leadership and decision-making at all levels in the Caribbean through high-quality training, networking, research, analysis and advocacy.

CIWiL acts as a coordinating and implementing mechanism for a regional programme of work developed and delivered by a network of organizations and individuals, to advance women's transformational leadership.



ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system. Composed of the 35 national legislatures in North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, ParlAmericas promotes cooperative political dialogue, facilitates the exchange of good legislative practices, and produces tailored resources to support parliamentarians in their work. The International Secretariat of ParlAmericas is headquartered in Ottawa, Canada.

Through its gender equality programming, ParlAmericas promotes gender mainstreaming in parliamentary agendas and operations and, in close collaboration with civil society partners, advances women's political leadership, including that of the next generation of empowered women leaders.