



LADY JUSTICE

The Bench & Beyond

ECAWJ Newsletter

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From Reform To Reality:

Implementing Justice in Practice



What's Inside?

Feature Interview: Ms Stan | Criminal Justice Reform | Specialised Justice & Protection | & more

From Reform To Reality



Reform is often most visible at the moment of announcement. A new law is enacted, procedural rules are introduced, a specialist court is launched or an institutional commitment is publicly declared, and while these moments matter, they are only the beginning because the true test lies in what follows: whether the law can be accessed, whether procedures are understood and applied, whether institutions have the people and resources to sustain them, and whether the promised improvements become part of the ordinary experience of justice.

This third issue of *The Bench and Beyond*, under the theme **“From Reform to Reality: Implementing Justice in Practice,”** turns to that difficult space between intention and implementation. Across the contributions, one message is consistent: reform does not become real simply because it has been written into legislation, rules or policy. It becomes real when institutions are prepared to carry it.

Senior Magistrate Veronica Thomas traces the development of domestic violence legislation in Antigua and Barbuda and shows how specialised procedures, trained support

officers, same-day hearings and State-funded legal representation have strengthened protection for victims. Yet progress remains incomplete where enforcement is weak or sustained support is unavailable.

Justice Ann-Marie Smith’s examination of the Sexual Offences Model Court makes a similar point. Specialised procedures, technology and witness-support measures can transform the experience of vulnerable court users, but their success still depends upon the police, prosecution, social services and other institutions within the justice chain moving with the same urgency.

That need for coordinated action is central to Adlai Smith’s account of the implementation of the Needham’s Point Declaration in St. Kitts and Nevis. Legislative reform, active case management, restorative justice initiatives and interagency structures show what can be achieved when criminal justice reform is treated as a shared national responsibility rather than a courtroom project.

The article on implementation of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC) Criminal Procedure Rules examines the same challenge from another angle. Rules designed to promote fairness, expedition and active case management must still overcome established habits, procedural

non-compliance and limited resources. Their success depends upon every participant accepting new responsibilities and embracing a culture in which cases are progressed rather than permitted to drift.

Our feature on Verlinda Stanislas-Pierre, known throughout the Court in Saint Lucia as Ms. Stan, brings these themes together through a career spanning more than three decades of institutional change.

Her reflections emphasise that reform must be carried by people and that procedures must be documented, responsibilities clearly assigned and staff trained, not merely to perform a function, but to understand and improve it. In her words, they become the “guardians of the reform initiative.”

Her experience gives practical expression to the central lesson running through every contribution in this issue: reform succeeds when vision is matched by leadership, resources, coordination, training and people committed to carrying it into daily practice.

That human dimension is carried forward in Chantelle Petty’s account of the ECAWJ’s Step Challenge. Judicial officers and court staff perform demanding, often sedentary work, making their wellbeing essential to concentration, resilience, sound judgment and the sustained improvement of the institution.



Meet The Executive of the ECAWJ



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Taken together, these contributions show that reform is not a single event or completed destination. It is a continuing discipline and a willingness to keep testing whether a system is serving the

people for whom it was designed. The movement from reform to reality is achieved, not by proclamation, but by persistence, with each process properly implement-

ed, each institution strengthened and each person better served to bring the justice system closer to the promise contained in the reform itself.

Built to Endure: The Quiet Work of Institutional Reform

**Mrs. Verlinda
Stanislas-Pierre**
aka Ms. Stan

Interview conducted
by Danielia Chambers,
Deputy Chief Registrar,
and written by Justice
Cenac-Dantes

This feature draws on an interview conducted by Deputy Chief Registrar Danielia Chambers, written follow-up responses provided by Verlinda Stanislas-Pierre, and the author's own experience of working with her during her service as Court Administrator and Criminal Division Manager.



Verlinda Stanislas-Pierre, a Choiseulian and Saint Lucian public officer, known to generations of colleagues simply as “**Ms. Stan**”, first entered the Registry of the Supreme Court in Saint Lucia in 1993, at seventeen years old. More than three decades later, her career remains rooted in Saint Lucia’s registry services, where she now serves as Registrar of Civil Status. I came to know and work with her years later, during my own service as Registrar, when she served first as Court Administrator and subsequently as Criminal Division Manager. Even then, what distinguished Ms. Stan was not a desire to be identified with reform or to receive recognition for it, but an instinctive concern with making systems work properly, consistently and for the benefit of the people who depended upon them.

To understand the significance of that work, one must first picture the Registry she entered.



AI generated photo of what the Registry may have looked like.

The Registry was then housed in the old courthouse on Peynier Street in Castries and brought together the High Court, Civil Status, Companies, and Deeds and Mortgages. It was an office or-

ganised almost entirely around paper, physical files and manual processes.

“I recall hearing the clicking of the typewriters,” Ms. Stan says, “because that’s what was being used, mainly typewriters.”



AI generated photo of what the setting may have looked like.

On an ordinary working day, Ms. Stan recalls, attorneys and clerks lined up at the Registry counter to hand documents across for filing. Each document was date-stamped and placed in a cabinet, from which another officer would later retrieve it and match it to the correct case file in the vault. Incoming work was logged by hand in registers, while stacks of paperwork moved through the office for filing and distribution.

The process was labour-intensive and depended heavily on the care, knowledge and memory of individual officers. As she explained, the process did not always operate smoothly. Documents were sometimes misfiled or misplaced, and some did not reach the court file in time for a judge to review them. The system was almost entirely manual, with every stage requiring someone to physically move the document from one place to another and record what had been

done by hand.

“What stood out most was simply the volume,” Ms. Stan later recalled, describing “stacks of paperwork being filed and distributed to attorneys, and registers used to log all incoming work by hand.”

At that time, the Registry’s role was largely reactive. Officers received, recorded and preserved documents, but the responsibility for moving a case forward rested principally with the parties. If an application required a hearing date, the file might have to be sent elsewhere within the Registry before that date could be assigned. If no procedural step was taken, a file could remain inactive until an attorney or litigant returned to it.

It was into this system that Ms. Stan arrived as a clerk and accounts clerk.

She had not planned a career in law, court administration or public service. At school, she had concentrated on chemistry and biology and intended to pursue work in the medical field. After deciding not to proceed immediately to community college, she received two offers of employment on the same day: one in accounts in the private sector and the other in a clerical position at the Registry. Her mother and a friend encouraged her to choose the Registry.

What began as a first job became a professional life spanning more than three decades at almost every level of the registry and court administration. Yet the memory that remained most vivid from those early days was not the unfamiliar legal terminology, the vault or the physical weight of the files. It was

the manner in which she was received.

She remembers most fondly her supervisor, Mrs. Gasper, who guided her patiently through the processes she was expected to follow and helped her understand, not only what had to be done, but why it mattered. Ms. Stan remembers “*a sense of coming to an organization and getting a sense of belonging.*”

That experience shaped the way she would later receive new staff, train officers and lead teams through periods of institutional change. It taught her that an employee who understands the work and feels connected to the institution is more likely to take responsibility for the standards the institution is trying to uphold.

The Registry also taught her very early that administrative work could not be separated from the people affected by it. Accuracy mattered because an error in the Registry could affect a litigant, an attorney or the progress of a case. Timeliness mattered because delays behind the counter could become delays in the administration of justice. Procedure was not merely bureaucratic formality, but a means of protecting fairness and consistency.

The work required officers to remember, as Ms. Stan put it, “*the people and the faces behind the cases and the files.*”

That connection between the system and the person it serves would remain central to her understanding of reform.



— At a Glance: — Ms Stan's Career Timeline

Verlinda Stanislas-Pierre | Saint Lucia



AT A GLANCE

- Over 25 years in registry and court administration
- Called to the Bar in 2015
- Led and supported major registry modernisation and reform initiatives

PROFESSIONAL FORMATION

- 1996–1998
Certificate in Business Administration, UWI
- 1998–2001
BSc Management Studies, UWI
- 2010–2012
LLB, University of London
- 2014–2015
Postgraduate Diploma in Law / BPTC, University of West Bristol

Growing with the institution

Ms. Stan's career did not follow a path she had imagined at seventeen. She progressed from clerk and accounts clerk to professional cadet, Court Administrator serving as a contract consultant to the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court for a 3-month period on the implementation of JEMS (Judicial Electronic Management System), Criminal Division Manager, Adjudicator and, ultimately, Registrar of Civil Status.

While working, she pursued qualifications in business admin-

istration and management studies before completing a law degree and the Bar Professional Training Course. She was called to the Bar of England and Wales in July 2015 and to the Bar of Saint Lucia shortly thereafter. Each role widened her understanding of the justice system.

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“My progression, I think, through the court system, to a certain extent, mirrors the evolution of the institution.”



As Court Administrator, she became intimately familiar with the daily operations required to support judges, registrars, courtrooms, attorneys and litigants. As Criminal Division Manager, her work extended beyond the walls of the High Court Registry and required coordination with the Magistracy, the police, prosecutors, the prison and the other agencies upon which the criminal justice system depended. Her legal training later gave her another perspective, allowing her to see court procedure, both as an administrator responsible for making the system function and as a lawyer conscious of how an administrative failure could affect counsel and clients.

The observation captures the unusual nature of her professional journey. Many of the roles she occupied arose during periods of reform, restructuring or technological change. As Ms. Stan moved through the institution, the institution itself was changing around her.

She entered a Registry of typewriters, paper files and handwritten registers. She would later help build one in which cases were actively managed, events and deadlines were tracked electronically, specialised divisions were developed and technology increasingly supported access to justice.

She did not merely witness these changes. Much of her career was spent in the difficult and often unseen space between the announcement of a reform and its successful implementation.

For Ms. Stan, that is the real meaning of moving from reform to reality. During the interview, she described it as taking a vision or objective and “*breathing life*” into it through the frameworks, procedures, training and systems required to make it work for the people it was intended to serve.

When the Registry stopped waiting

The implementation of the Civil Procedure Rules (CPR) in 2000 marked one of the most significant changes in the administration of civil justice in the Eastern Caribbean.

Before the CPR, Ms. Stan recalls, “*the Registry’s role was essentially to file paperwork and place documents on files.*” Active case management was limited and, as she explains, “*only happened if a specific application or action required a date, and even then, the file had to be forwarded to the then Court Administrator’s office for that date to be set,*” a process which “*created a real backlog in scheduling.*” The difficulty affected defences, applications requiring hearing dates and fixed date claims, all of which had to be accommodated within a system that was not yet designed to monitor and progress cases actively.

The CPR altered the philosophy of civil litigation. The Court was no longer expected to wait passively for the parties to determine the pace of a case. Judicial officers were required



Old Courthouse, Castries Saint Lucia. Credits Saint Lucia National Archives

to identify issues, establish time-tables, give directions and ensure that procedural obligations were met. The Registry, in turn, could no longer operate only as the custodian of the court file.

“The CPR changed the court of-fice’s role fundamentally,” Ms. Stan explained. *“It was no longer simply responsible for filing paperwork; it became the facilitator of the entire litigation process.”* The practical work required to produce that transformation was extensive.

Ms. Stan remembers the determination of the then Chief Justice, Sir Dennis Byron, and the clarity with which he presented the reform as a means of improving efficiency, effectiveness, fairness, impartiality and timely access to justice. She remembers being inspired and eager to take on the new challenge. His leadership gave the reform direction, but the principles contained in the Rules still had to be translated into the ordinary work of the Registry.

Judges and Registrars trained Registry officers, supervisors reinforced that training, and staff had to become familiar with new forms, deadlines, consequences and responsibilities. Existing roles were reconsidered and workflows redesigned because the administrative structure needed to support active case management did not yet fully exist.

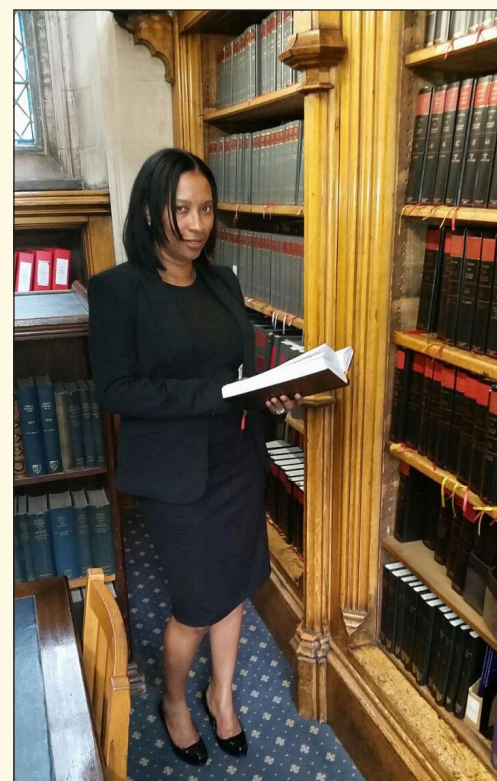
One of the clearest changes occurred at the Registry counter. *“When I became Court Administrator, one of the first changes I made was to move that date-setting function to the front office at the point of filing, so documents could be returned to the attorney’s file the same day.”* The available court dates were kept at the front office, enabling the officer receiving a defence or application to assign a hearing date immediately upon filing. This removed an unnecessary stage from the process and helped to reduce the backlog in scheduling.

Although modest in appearance, the change removed a significant

point of delay and illustrated Ms. Stan’s approach to administration: identify where the process is slowing the work and redesign it so that responsibility is clear and the next step occurs without unnecessary movement.

Date-setting was only one part of the new system. Once a matter was placed on the weekly schedule, an officer reviewed the file and the last court order to confirm whether the relevant directions had been complied with. Fixed date claims, defences and applications were scheduled promptly. Enforcement proceedings were recorded in the file, entered in the relevant register and tracked electronically. Claims that had remained unserved for six months could be identified and placed on a cause list for a status hearing rather than being allowed to remain dormant indefinitely.

JEMS became an important tool in that transformation. Ms. Stan assisted with identifying and build-



Law Library at Lincoln’s Inn London, England

ing out the actions and events required to track case progression and procedural timelines. The system enabled officers to see where a matter stood, identify the next expected step and prepare cause lists based on information recorded electronically.

The change was profound and the Registry was becoming capable, not merely of preserving the history of a case, but of monitoring its future.

Ms. Stan also compiled desk manuals *“to standardise the process and give staff clear guidance on efficient case management and proper documentation.”* Every desk, including filing, case management, clerical, interpreters, bailiffs, vault and secretarial functions, was given its own manual. Together with training sessions involving judicial officers and court staff, the manuals helped ensure that officers understood their responsibilities and that the standards introduced by the CPR became part of the Registry’s normal workflow. As Ms. Stan explains, the objective was to embed the new processes in the staff’s day-to-day activities so that they could become *“guardians of the reform initiative.”*

The CPR also required a cultural adjustment from legal practitioners. Ms. Stan recalls that practitioners had been accustomed to a *“slow-paced culture”* in which they took the lead in progressing cases, but now had to adjust to *“a culture of timeliness, efficient case management [and] meeting those timelines.”* Forms were sometimes filed in the incorrect format or with incorrect headings, while the filing of a defence

could immediately produce a case management date. Practitioners therefore had to organise their offices more carefully because cases were now being monitored and dates assigned promptly. As Ms. Stan explains, sole practitioners could sometimes find themselves listed *“in two or three different courtrooms at the same time”*, requiring them to improve



Outside Lincoln's Inn

their time management and make greater use of technological tools. Registry staff, meanwhile, often found themselves acting as the intermediary between practitioners making requests and judicial officers responsible for enforcing the Rules.

Implementation therefore required continuous engagement rather than a single round of training. Problems had to be identified, discussed and, where appropriate, corrected.

Ms. Stan’s approach to resistance was direct. She welcomed candid feedback from staff during imple-

mentation. *“Express your opinion, tell me what is wrong. Don’t tell me everything is okay,”* she told them. She did not interpret criticism as disloyalty to the reform. Officers sometimes believed that a particular process could not be carried out or that the prescribed document was unsuitable, and she regarded those concerns as matters to be examined rather than suppressed. Management nevertheless had to explain why the requirements were important and provide whatever guidance, training or retraining was needed. As she puts it, where the Rules required a particular step, *“it’s not an option, it’s something that must be done,”* but the responsibility of the manager was to support staff and give them the confidence and practical assistance necessary to do it.

Staff were permitted to question the method and identify weaknesses, but the objective of effective implementation remained. Leadership therefore required a willingness to listen without losing sight of the standards the institution was required to achieve.

Over time, the new procedures became ordinary procedures. Standards that had initially required repeated explanation were incorporated into daily workflow, and officers who had first needed guidance became capable of sustaining the system themselves.

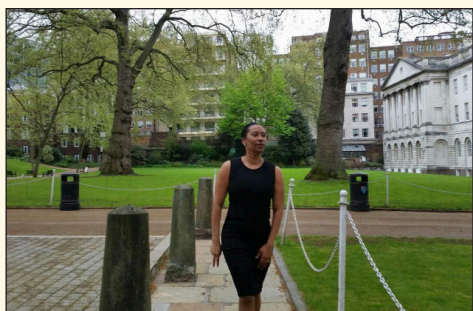
For Ms. Stan, this is how reform becomes part of an institution rather than remaining dependent on its original champions.

When good ideas lack permanent structure

When Ms. Stan was asked what dis-

tinguishes reforms that succeed in practice from those that struggle, she drew upon both the mediation pilot project and the later Criminal Division reforms. Her response was concerned, not merely with whether a reform had been formally introduced, but with whether the people, resources and institutional arrangements necessary to sustain it had developed alongside it.

The mediation pilot introduced in Saint Lucia in 2002 was completed successfully and, by 2003,



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court-connected mediation had moved beyond its pilot phase. A new Practice Direction extended the program across the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court's Member States and Territories, placing mediation within the Court's established framework for the resolution of civil disputes. The formal transition therefore occurred relatively quickly. Embedding mediation fully within the working culture and daily operations of the Court proved more gradual.

In its early stages, much of the coordination for Saint Lucia was undertaken by a small dedicated team operating from the Court of Appeal. Although that arrangement provided the administrative support necessary to begin the program, its physical and operational distance from the Registry may also have made it more dif-

ficult for Registry staff, practitioners and litigants to experience mediation as an integral part of the ordinary progression of a civil case. A reform managed from outside the Registry's daily workflow could appear separate from the institution rather than embedded within it.

The program was intended to ease pressure on the courts by enabling matters capable of settlement to be resolved with the assistance of a mediator, leaving judges and practitioners to devote more time to disputes that genuinely required adjudication.

Ms. Stan recalls that there was some initial reluctance to embrace the process and that, that hesitation was not confined to one group. Staff had to understand how mediation fitted within the management of cases, litigants had to be persuaded that it offered a meaningful opportunity to resolve their disputes, and some practitioners had to become satisfied that mediation would complement, rather than diminish, their professional role.

Over time, its practical benefits became clearer. Mediation could identify and resolve matters that did not require the full expense and formality of a trial, allowing practitioners, like judges, to concentrate their time on heavier and more substantially contested litigation. In that sense, mediation did not deprive lawyers of worthwhile legal work. It helped distinguish cases requiring adjudication from those in which the parties could reach a satisfactory resolution with appropriate assistance.

"Mediation is still continuing," Ms. Stan observes, *"but one of*

the things I found about mediation, it should have been a permanent structure of the High Court from the beginning."

Her concern is best understood, not as suggesting that mediation remained legally or procedurally temporary. It had already become an established court-connected program. Rather, during her time at the High Court, she would have liked to see it become embedded sooner and more completely within the Registry's ordinary case-management structure, with stronger commitment and buy-in from staff, litigants and practitioners.

In the model she envisaged, suitable cases would be identified and



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referred at an early stage, mediation would be routinely and clearly explained to litigants, sessions would be scheduled and monitored efficiently, and the program would be supported by dedicated personnel, reliable funding and effective data collection. Successful agreements could be formalised, and unsuccessful matters would return promptly to active litigation.

Ms. Stan's reflection therefore illustrates the difference between establishing a reform formally and embedding it fully. The Rules and Practice Direction may create the framework, but the reform becomes part of institutional life only when staff understand and support it, liti-

gants recognise that it is a process designed for them, practitioners participate constructively, and the program is integrated into the Registry's ordinary management of cases.

Building the Criminal Division While Operating It

The creation of the Criminal Division in 2008 and 2009 provides a different example of the distance that can exist between establishing a reform and equipping an institution to implement it. The new Criminal Procedure Rules created a distinct division and introduced a more active system for progressing indictable matters, but the personnel, workflows and supporting infrastructure required to operate that system did not exist at the outset.

As Ms. Stan explains, *"The Criminal Division Rules created the Division, but the structure needed to support it properly wasn't there from the start."* An already stretched Court Office was therefore required to absorb a substantial new body of work with resources and staffing that were, in her words, *"frankly, scarce."*

The scale of the change became apparent almost immediately. Under the former preliminary inquiry system, the High Court had received approximately 50 to 100 indictable matters from the Magistracy each year. In the first year under the new Rules, that figure

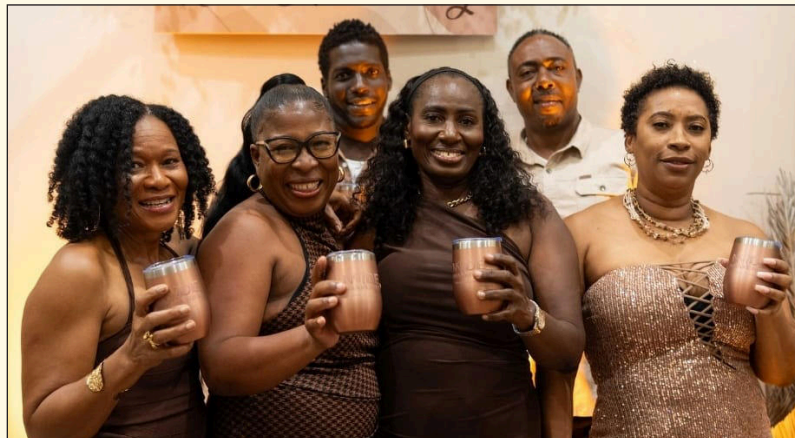
increased to approximately 450 to 500.

"That influx wasn't anticipated," Ms. Stan recalls, *"and the Court Office found itself managing more than 400 plus cases without the structure in place to support that volume."*

The increase represented far more than a larger number of files. Staff had to prepare cases for sufficiency hearings from indictments received from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, issue summonses to witnesses, prepare remand warrants, process

their respective stages. Judicial officers were also placed under considerable pressure. It soon became clear that a single judge could not manage sufficiency hearings, pre-trial case management and trials at that volume. Additional judges and, later, a Criminal Master were introduced, although the expansion in judicial resources was not always matched by a corresponding increase in the staff required to support courtroom processing.

The response could not await the creation of an ideal structure. *"We had to pull resources together,"* Ms. Stan explains. Assistance was sought from the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court because the existing staff structure could not accommodate the volume of work. Within the Registry, roles and workflows had to be reconsidered while the Division continued to operate.



Ministry of Justice Christmas party with staff

bail matters, assist with omnibus conferences and witness orientation, maintain court records and prepare the orders arising from case-management hearings, trials and jury selection. Sufficiency hearings were held as frequently as the caseload required, rather than occurring only two or three times each year as they had under the former system.

The effects extended throughout the justice system. Registry officers faced a greatly increased case-management workload, while the Magistracy, police, prosecution, prison and other agencies were required to manage the same enlarged body of active cases at

Ms. Stan advocated for the introduction of case managers and saw the initial appointment of two officers to those positions. The creation of the post of Criminal Division Manager provided direct administrative support to the Managing Judge, while case managers assumed responsibility for actively monitoring and progressing matters. The Division relied upon training and retraining, staff discussions, group feedback sessions, desk and procedure manuals, and the close review of cases and workflows to identify gaps as they arose.

Technology also became part of the supporting structure. The Division's processes were incorporated into JEMS, enabling officers to manage

cases electronically and prepare cause lists from the events recorded in the system. The value of the technology, however, depended upon the staff, responsibilities and procedures surrounding it. It did not replace the need for officers to prepare files, track cases, communicate with other agencies and ensure that courtroom processing continued without interruption.

One practical change demonstrates the significance of examining a system at the level of its individual procedures. While reviewing courtroom processing within the Magistracy at the direction of the Managing Judge, Ms. Stan discovered that the adjourned hearing date was not being recorded on the remand warrant. She recommended that every remand warrant contain a returnable date, *“so that defendants on remand always had a confirmed court hearing date.”* The change helped to prevent defendants from remaining at Bordelais beyond the period contemplated without a confirmed date for their return

to court.

The demands placed upon the staff were considerable. *“This often meant work continued after the designated 4:30 pm,”* Ms. Stan recalls. Yet it is the collective institutional result, rather than the personal burden, that she identifies as the principal achievement of that period:

“What I am most proud of is that our team took a unit without the supporting structure and built it into a functional system.”

By the time she left the Criminal Division, the workflows the team had developed were operational and had been incorporated into JEMS. The Division had acquired case managers, clearer responsibilities and a more effective administrative structure for supporting the Managing Judge and courtroom processing. It has since expanded from a division served initially by one judge, and later by a judge and a Master, to one supported by several judicial officers, with a further backlog court established in 2026.

The Criminal Division also deepened Ms. Stan’s understanding that criminal justice reform cannot be implemented by the Court in isolation. The Division depended upon the Magistracy, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the police, forensics, probation services, Bordelais Correctional Facility and other institutions, each of which controlled a different part of the process.

“The Court has evolved so significantly over the years,” she observes, *“but those other agencies, have they evolved significantly?”*

Her question identifies an enduring difficulty in justice reform. A court may improve its own systems, introduce technology, appoint additional officers and strengthen case management, but the benefits of those reforms will remain limited unless the institutions with which it must interact are able to progress at a comparable rate. For Ms. Stan, this is why successful reform requires more than the creation of rules or a new administrative division. It requires clear structures, adequate human and technological resources, continuing training, regular monitoring and a coordinated commitment across the entire justice system.

Rebuilding Civil Status

The transformation took place incrementally. Ms. Stan describes the Civil Status reform initiative as the most demanding of her career because she inherited a largely manual system and had to secure the support of policymakers for the funding, technology, staffing and legislative changes required to modernise it. *“I have had to lead those changes, create the vision, assess the system, realise that it needed a lot of work, and then set the way forward to get the buy-in of the policymakers,”* she explains.

A central part of that work was the introduction of the Vital Records Management System in 2021. The system now supports the electronic registration, management and production of civil status records, with secure audit trails. Working with the Division of Public Sector Modernisation, the Registry integrated the system with the DigiGov platform, enabling members of the public to



A lighter side

apply and pay online for birth and death records, with marriage records intended to follow.

Technology was only one part of the reform. Work manuals were created, the structure of the department was reviewed and new positions were proposed, including a Civil Status Assistant to manage civil status records and a Rectification Officer to manage rectification applications. A legislative review was also advanced, with a draft bill intended to establish clearer requirements and standards for the Registry's functions. Funding was secured for staff to support a sub-office in Vieux Fort, an important step towards decentralising a service historically concentrated in Castries.

For Ms. Stan, the clearest measure of the transformation is the difference it has made to the ordinary applicant. *"Improved service delivery and increased customer satisfaction stand out as the biggest differences,"* she observes. The online platform, together with Service Bureau agents who assist applicants in submitting requests through DigiGov, has meant *"fewer customers standing in line"* and fewer persons having to attend the Civil Status Registry in Castries merely to begin the application process.

The change is also visible in the speed with which requests can now be handled. *"The Registry conducts a search within seconds,"* Ms. Stan explains, whereas searches previously took *"hours or even days."* Applicants are then provided with a response or guidance on the next steps by email or text message, generally within

eight hours of the online transaction being processed. She identifies these as among the reforms that *"have made the greatest difference to the ordinary citizen"* and have helped to extend access to services beyond the main Civil Status office.

The Registry's figures provide a further measure of that progress. Rectification matters declined from approximately 12,000 case files each year to about 2,500 in 2025. That reduction did not result merely from processing applications more quickly. Ms Stan attributes it to *"cross-agency work"* that included training Status Officers and Civil Status Officers in best practices to ensure that records were accurately registered, together with the review of deposited records to verify the accuracy of the information they contained.

Late-registration matters also fell from approximately 350 annually to about 60 in 2026. Ms. Stan explains that the Registry engaged with health-care facilities to ensure that accurate registration details were transmitted to Civil Status promptly and in accordance with the governing legislation.

The significance of these reforms lies, not only in the reduction of backlogs but in the change in the Registry's approach. It was no longer concentrating solely on correcting defective records after an error had already affected the citizen. By training the officers responsible for registration, reviewing deposited information and working

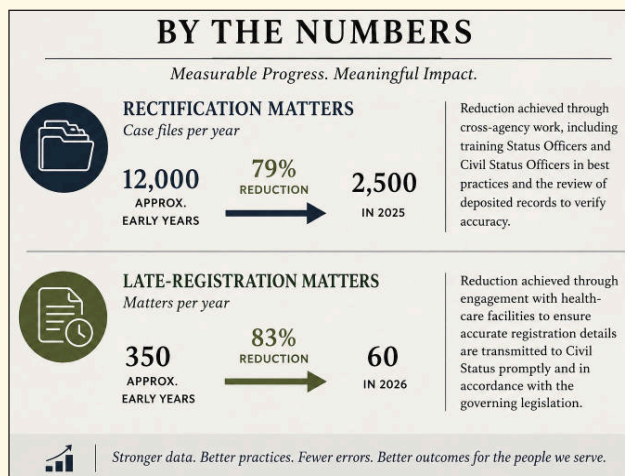


After call to the Bar

with health-care institutions, the Registry was increasingly addressing the causes of errors at the point at which the records were created. As Ms. Stan puts it, *"At the end of the day, what you want to ensure is that whatever system that you create, it benefits the people."*

Building people as well as processes

Although Ms. Stan speaks frequently about workflows, manuals, standards, technology and institutional structures, her understanding of reform is not mechanical. Systems are built, operated and preserved by people, which is why she regards mentorship, coaching and training as *"very, very, very important for continuity."* These measures, she explains, help to *"build the officer as well as the institution"* and en-



able staff to become *“the guardians of the reform initiative,”* ensuring that new standards and practices take root and become embedded in the culture of the organisation.

Technology, in her view, does not render staff redundant. It can streamline tasks, improve reporting, increase transparency and widen access, but people must still enter accurate information, operate the systems, interpret the law, assist applicants and respond when difficulties arise. *“A system is what you put into it,”* she says.

Successful technological reform therefore requires staff to understand both its purpose and its practical benefits. Ms. Stan rejects the suggestion that technology makes human resources redundant. *“People think it’s taking over their job, but it’s not,”* she explains. *“A system is what you put into it, and people need to understand that.”* In her view, technology and staffing *“complement each other”*: technology can streamline processes, increase accountability and transparency, and enable work that once took hours to be completed *“with one stroke of a key,”* but leaders must first secure the confidence and cooperation of the people expected to use it. *“Sometimes we introduce systems, and we expect the persons we work with to just embrace it,”* she observes, when what is required is *“having discussions with them, hearing what they’re saying, and allaying... their fears.”* The responsibility of leadership is therefore not merely to introduce the technology, but to explain how it supports rather than displaces employees and how their roles remain essential to

the effective operation of the system. The same principle applies to institutional reform more broadly.

Leadership must provide direction, establish standards and secure the resources necessary for implementation. As Ms. Stan puts it, *“Reform would fail if leaders*



CLARCIEV meeting in Brazil for Civil Registry, Identity and Civil Statistics don’t accept it.” Their responsibility is not merely to endorse the initiative, but to establish its objectives, guide staff through the transition and ensure that the new procedures become part of the institution’s daily work. Policymakers must also be persuaded to provide the necessary staffing and financial support, since a reform may struggle where *“you don’t have the resources to inject into it,”* whether those resources are human or technological. Judicial and administrative officers must support staff through guidance and training, while the institutions affected by the reform must be capable of working together. Ultimately, as Ms. Stan explains, *“reforms take root where there’s genuine buy-in from everyone involved, and where the leaders of a reform act as its champions.”*

Without that alignment, a reform may exist in law or policy without becoming part of the permanent life of the institution.

Ms. Stan’s leadership style combines firm standards with an unusual willingness to hear disagreement. She expects the work to be done, but also believes that leaders must provide staff with the support required to do it. Integrity, credibility, good judgment, clarity and adaptability are, in her view, essential qualities during periods of transition.

Ms. Stan also believes that a leader must be prepared to advocate for staff. *“You have to be the champion of your workers,”* she says. *“You may have to fight causes for your workers that they don’t even know that you are fighting for them.”* For her, this advocacy does not displace the objectives of the institution, it is part of achieving them. *“You must be interested in the worker as well as the objective of the organisation,”* she explains, *“so you have to help create a balance.”*

Mentoring, coaching and training are central to maintaining that balance and to ensuring that the institution does not become dependent upon the knowledge or experience of any one officer. Ms. Stan describes them as very important for continuity because they *“help build the officer as well as the institution.”* Through that process, staff become *“the guardians of the reform initiative”*, develop a sense of belonging and help to make the organisation more resilient.

The objective is not simply to teach officers how to perform the work as it presently exists. *“You help build them into becoming leaders*



Civil Status birthday surprise

towards the next thing,” she explains. “They too can take a part in shaping. They can continue being innovative.” Knowledge is therefore preserved, not by leaving procedures in the hands of a few experienced officers, but by documenting the work, training others to understand it and equipping the next generation to question, improve and carry it forward. In this way, Ms. Stan says, reform standards and innovations are able to “take root” and become “embedded in the culture of the organisation.”

Her description of trained officers as the “guardians of the reform initiative” also recalls one of the earliest lessons of her career. Mrs Gasper did more than take the seventeen-year-old clerk through the procedures she was expected to perform. She showed her the importance of helping newcomers understand the work, experience a sense of togetherness and acquire what Ms. Stan remembers as “a sense of coming to an organisation, getting a sense of belonging.” The mentorship Ms. Stan received at the beginning of her career thus became part of the leadership she later offered to others.

A new officer who is properly received, trained and given a sense of belonging is more likely to value the institution and assume responsibility for its standards. Over time, the person who was mentored becomes the mentor, and the officer who once learned the procedure becomes the person who teaches it to someone else.

At that point, the reform is no longer carried only by the person who introduced it. It has become part of the culture of the institution.

A career grounded in service

Ms. Stan’s career also spans a period of considerable change in the place of women within the justice system. Women now occupy senior administrative and judicial positions throughout the Eastern Caribbean, including at the high-

est levels of the Court.

Ms. Stan regards this progress as evidence that “the justice system for women is more inclusive now”, with women occupying senior administrative and judicial positions across the region. She is equally clear, however, that the qualities required for leadership are “not exclusive to women”, since “men too can contribute equally to the process.” What women may bring, she explains, is “a different perspective” that can help to expand the institution and shape how it adapts. Because society is made up of both men and women, she believes that institutions need an equal cross-section of both and are strengthened when their different perspectives are represented in leadership and decision-making.

Her advice to young women entering the Registry or public service is grounded less in personal advancement than in service. They should bring passion, drive and standards

The Registry: 1993 and Today	
THEN: 1993	NOW: The Modern Registry
 Old courthouse on Peynier Street, Castries	 Active case management and front-office date setting Structured workflows ensure timely scheduling and better coordination across the Court.
 One Registry serving the High Court, Civil Status, Companies, and Deeds & Mortgages	 JEMS electronic case tracking and monitoring Real-time tracking, digital files and dashboards improve visibility, accountability and efficiency.
 Typewriters, handwritten registers, and paper files	 Electronic case management with JEMS Integrated system supports filings, hearings, orders and secure digital records.
 Attorneys and clerks lined up at the counter to file documents	 Specialised divisions and stronger administrative structures Creation of the Criminal Division and other specialised teams for focused case handling and improved outcomes.
 Documents date-stamped, placed in cabinets, then matched to files in the vault	 Registry of Companies is now a standalone office Companies registration and compliance services operate as a separate, dedicated office.
 A largely manual process, with delays, misplaced documents, and limited case management	 Civil Status is now a distinct department Separated from the Registry to provide dedicated leadership and focused public service.
 Hearing dates often had to be sent on to the Court Administrator to be fixed	 Civil Status modernised: digital records & online services Digitised records, online applications, and e-payments increase convenience and transparency.
	 Faster searches, reduced backlogs Improved indexing and digital access deliver quicker responses and fewer delays.
	 Improved public access and clearer processes Service charters, guidance, and multiple access channels make it easier for the public to get the service they need.
What Changed?	



Ms. Stan and Staff - Opening of the Law Year

to their work, while remembering that the people approaching the counter come from the same communities in which public officers themselves live and to which they will return when they require public services.

“Treat persons how you’d like to be treated,” she advises. “Come in, give it your best, and it will be rewarding.”

Her own journey from teenage clerk to Registrar and legal professional demonstrates the opportunities that public service can provide, but she does not present that journey as easy. It required continued study, long hours, sacrifice, adaptability and a willingness to accept difficult assignments.

When asked what emotions arise as she reflects upon her career, she identifies gratitude and humility.

“I’ve been asked countless times why the public service,” she says. “And I say it’s satisfaction of helping persons in whatever way I can. I love the challenge. I think

any system, anything that you have, any initiative can be made more efficient, more effective.”

The reward lies in knowing that the system has been improved, even incrementally, for the people who depend upon it.

Leaving something capable of continuing

Ms. Stan is reluctant to describe reform as the accomplishment of one person. When asked what she hopes people will remember about her contribution, she turns almost immediately to the judges, registrars, supervisors, clerical of-

ficers, administrative staff and the many “dream teams” with whom she worked.

“I would prefer persons remember the team,” she says. “If they remember me, remember the team that I worked with.”

The response is consistent with the systems she has spent her career building. An institution that depends upon the personality, memory or energy of one individual is not yet a durable institution. Processes must continue when staff members move, leaders change and a new generation assumes responsibility. This is why Ms. Stan’s work repeatedly returns to the same tools: **documented procedures, defined roles, clear standards, training, electronic records, accountability and mentorship.** Together, they allow the institution to preserve what has been learned.

After more than three decades, she remains conscious of what is unfinished. The Civil Status reform program continues, the legislative review remains important, and justice-sector agencies do not always evolve at the same pace. Funding and human resources continue to limit the reach of reform.



CLARCIEV meeting in Peru for Civil Registry, Identity and Civil Statistics

Nevertheless, the Registry she entered at seventeen is no longer the Registry of typewriters, hand-written registers, filing counters and loose documents waiting to be matched with files in the vault. The Court Office has moved from receiving cases to actively managing them. Specialised divisions have developed, technology supports filing and tracking, and Registry officers perform functions that did not exist when Ms. Stan began her career. Civil Status has moved from manual searches, crowded lines and accumulated backlogs towards electronic records, online applications, decentralised services and clearer standards.

The public generally encounters only the system as it exists today. It does not necessarily see the years of training, repeated explanation, consultation, revised workflows, funding requests, late-night work and institutional negotiation required to produce it. *“The ordinary person sometimes, they don’t know how much work and effort goes into ensuring the transformation of the court system,”* Ms. Stan observes.

The history matters, because functioning systems can appear inevitable once they are established, but they were not inevitable. They were built by people willing to identify gaps, test solutions, train others and continue working even when the resources available did not match the scale of the task.

Ms. Stan remains optimistic about the generation following her. *“They are a generation that is technologically inclined,”* she observes. *“They are able to bring fresh ideas and various innova-*

tions” and are willing to *“challenge outdated practices”* and *“think outside the box.”* She is confident that they will continue modernising the Court so that it becomes increasingly responsive to society. They will not begin

where she did. In her view, *“the Court is well placed,”* and the next generation has inherited *“a good enough system that they can continue building on,”* while ensuring continuity in the Court’s continuing evolution.

Her hope is not that they preserve every procedure unchanged, but that they continue building on what has already been established. *“Whatever system that you inherit,”* she says, *“it can be made better. You just have to build on the layers.”*

For Ms. Stan, public service is both a duty and a privilege. The responsibility is to perform the work properly while one is there and to leave behind an institution capable of serving the next person more fairly, efficiently and consistently. That is perhaps the clearest account of her contribution.

Over the course of more than thirty years, Ms. Stan has worked in the places where reform becomes operational reality: at the filing counter, in the scheduling process, inside the case-management system, within the wording of a desk manual, behind a request for additional staff, during a training session, in the redesign of a remand warrant, and among the vital records through which the State formally recognises the lives of its citizens.

She has not merely observed the transformation of the Registry. Through the systems she helped create, the people she trained and the standards she worked to embed, she has helped ensure that the transformation can continue after those who first carried it forward have moved on.

Implementation of the Criminal Procedure Rules in Practice

“Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better¹.”

The regional roll out of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (Criminal Procedure) Rules 2026 (the Rules) has been met with this exact spectrum of responses.

The Rules seek to overhaul a historically untamed area of legal practice. For decades, criminal practice has been characterized by a culture of delay, rooted in outdated procedures like preliminary inquiries and an adversarial system that favours procrastination.

The Rules fundamentally remedy this by introducing major reforms, including the imposition of timelines to facilitate the swift progression of matters, changes to the procedures for the committal

of accused persons like sufficiency hearings and paper committals, and provisions that mandate early, robust case management.

The Rules also give practical expression to broader regional mandates. They align with the spirit of the Needham’s Point and the George-Bridge Declaration which both underscore the urgent Caribbean-wide necessity to eradicate judicial backlogs, embrace criminal justice reform and restore public confidence in the rule of law. The Rules have come into effect in the majority of the OECS member states, with a few remaining territories expected to fully transition by the end of the year.

The staggered regional roll out has generated quite the buzz around criminal law, piquing the interest of younger practitioners and renewing that of seasoned ones, who for some time have kept criminal practice in their rear-view. Practitioners have long lamented that criminal practice was no longer lucrative, due to the length of time matters took and what has been described as the resulting diminishing

returns. It is anticipated however that the new reforms will restore the confidence of practitioners and the public alike in the criminal justice system.

The core philosophy of the Rules



Written by Tamara Foster
Criminal Master, Saint Lucia

is grounded in a dual mandate of ensuring that criminal proceedings are fair and dealt with expeditiously. Fairness and expediency from a practical perspective demand transparency and a rigorous system of accountability and early preparation.

Saint Lucia pioneered the implementation of Criminal Procedure Rules from as far back as 2008. The transition was not fully embraced in its initial stages and the challenges were ventilated through litigation.

In the decision of **Anthony Walcott vs The Attorney General of Saint Lucia SLUHCv2009/0972**, the constitutionality of several of the Rules was tested, as it was argued that the Claimant’s constitutional right to a fair hearing was infringed because of the new statutory regime for disclosure and restrictions with respect to cross-examination.

Principal Reforms Under the Criminal Procedure Rules

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 |  Active judicial case management | 2 |  Clearer timelines and stronger compliance |
| 3 |  Earlier scrutiny of cases through sufficiency hearings | 4 |  Improved disclosure and trial readiness |
| 5 |  Greater coordination between the Court, Registry, prosecution and defence | 6 |  A stronger culture of efficiency, fairness and expedition |

¹ King Whitney, Jr.

Wilkinson J, in denying the declarations sought and dismissing the constitutional motion, relied on dicta from the Privy Council in **Hilroy Humphreys vs The Attorney General of Antigua and Barbuda No. 8 of 2008** specifically at paragraph 9 where Lord Hoffman remarked:

“.... In the Board’s opinion, it is a mistake to argue, that because the old system provided a fair hearing, the change or abolition of some element of that system results in the new system being unfair. Systems of criminal procedure may differ widely without being unfair. The question is not the extent to which the new committal proceedings differ from the old preliminary inquiries but whether the new system of committal proceedings and trial, taken as a whole, satisfies the requirements of s 15(1).”

Wilkinson J’s decision marked the judicial endorsement required to unreservedly transition.

For Saint Lucia, transforming the philosophy of the Rules from “*reform on paper*” to “*reality in the courtroom*” required legislative amendments, continued training and sensitization and the introduction of new judicial roles like the Criminal Master.

The Criminal Master is deployed as a case management judge tasked with conducting Sufficiency Hearings and all pre-trial case management.

By shifting the administrative and procedural heavy lifting away from the trial judges, it allows judges to focus more intently on trials and results in their faster completion. The criminal master

ensures that when a matter finally reaches a trial judge, all pre-trial issues of arraignment, disclosure, admissibility and witness needs have been adequately addressed and the case is trial ready.

As a judicial officer on the front-lines, my application of the Rules has not been without challenge, the greatest of which has been addressing the issue of procedural non-compliance in the absence of express sanctions. Feeling sometimes like the proverbial toothless tiger, I have been forced to find creative ways of enforcement to adequately give effect to the overriding objective, while managing the competing rights and interests of parties. This challenge taught me that driving change does not require sanctions to achieve compliance. Cultivating court operations, steeped in the example of discipline and standards from the bench is a catalyst for shifting culture.

The reality is that the implementation of the rules will not be without challenge. The islands of the region are all plagued with constrained human and financial resources and in large part, the seamless implementation of the rules demands the injection of funds into our justice systems.

However, collaboration and commitment from the stakeholders is far more important.

The police and prosecution must accept that they bear the heaviest burden of compliance, as the onus largely falls on them to meet strict timelines. The Defence must



acclimatize to the expectation of disclosing their case early to ensure pre-trial issues are dealt with promptly. Litigants must be co-operative and the Bench must embrace the mandate of impactful proactive management and protection of processes.

Each island is challenged to devise an implementation strategy and adopt a change in mindset that recognizes the overriding objective of the rules which is to deal with cases justly.

“Driving change does not require sanctions to achieve compliance. Cultivating court operations, steeped in the example of discipline and standards from the Bench, is a catalyst for shifting culture.”

- Tamara Foster

As we continue to combat the unacceptable crime situation in our region, may I be so bold as to suggest that a confident approach must prevail to achieve a modern and equitable justice system.

Let the Criminal Procedure Rules be inspiring, because the challenge exists to make things better.

From Declaration to Delivery

How St. Kitts and Nevis Is Advancing the Needham's Point Criminal Justice Reform Agenda

By Adlai Smith, Director of Public Prosecutions, St. Kitts and Nevis.



Timeline: From Declaration to Delivery





Adlai Smith (Mr.)
Director of Public Prosecutions
St. Kitts and Nevis

When the Needham's Point Declaration was adopted in Barbados in October 2023, it could easily have become another handsome regional statement: solemnly signed, politely praised, then placed on a shelf to gather the soft dust of good intentions. But in St. Kitts and Nevis, the Declaration has been treated less like a ceremonial document and more like a compass pointing the Federation from delay to delivery, from silos to systems, and from criminal justice as crisis management to criminal justice as national reconstruction.

That distinction matters. Across the Caribbean, criminal justice reform is no longer a lawyer's

luxury or a judge's administrative preference. It is a public necessity. The Declaration itself begins from a blunt regional reality: intolerable delays, excessive remand periods, rising and complex criminality, and the failure of piecemeal reform to meet a problem that is social, economic, institutional and deeply human. It calls for crime to be treated as a public health emergency; for modern laws to confront modern crime; for plea bargaining, paper committals, judge-alone trials, restorative justice, victim participation, witness protection, legal aid, public defenders, case progression, and rigorous performance standards.

In other words, Needham's Point did not ask Caribbean States merely to talk about reform. It asked them to build it.

St. Kitts and Nevis has sought to answer that call with unusual urgency. In his address to the CCJ Academy for Law Biennial Conference in November 2025, Attorney-General Garth Wilkin framed the Federation's reform journey around three catalysts: political will, the Needham's Point Decla-

ration as the reform guide, and empirical data showing that violence was spreading through communities with the characteristics of contagion. Crime was characterised not simply as conduct to be punished after the fact, but as a social infection to be interrupted before it multiplies.

That public-health framing is now central to the Federation's approach. In a State of just over 50,000 people, the Attorney-General's presentation recorded an average of 22 homicides per year between 2009 and 2024. It also reported a dramatic recent reduction: as of the end of November 2025 six homicides since October 2024, a 73 percent fall, with gun-related homicides down sharply year-to-date. These figures are not offered here as a final verdict on the reforms; crime statistics require careful longitudinal analysis. But they are powerful enough to suggest that something significant is shifting in the security landscape. The first major move was institutional. St. Kitts and Nevis established a Justice Committee, co-chaired by the Resident High Court Criminal Judge and the Minister of Justice, with representation from the High Court Criminal Division,



Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, Magistracy, Police High Command, Prison High Command, DPP's Office, Social Development, and the Criminal Bar. That may sound bureaucratic, but it is actually one of the most important reforms. Delay often lives in the cracks between institutions. Files stall because one agency waits on another. Disclosure slips because responsibility is blurred. Trial dates collapse because the court, Crown, defence, police and prison are not moving to the same rhythm. The Justice Committee's value is that it turns separate lanes into a common road.

The second move was legislative and here the pace has been striking. The Attorney-General's presentation described "*aggressive legislative reform*" comprising 14 laws and amendments, each intended to answer a weakness in the justice chain. This is where St. Kitts and Nevis has most visibly attempted to convert Needham's Point from regional roadmap into domestic machinery.

At the sharp end of violence, Parliament amended the Firearms Act and the Offences Against the Person Act to significantly strengthen penalties for illegal firearms, attempted murder, shooting offences and serious violence. The logic is plain: a system cannot speak softly to gun violence while communities live loudly with its consequences. The Gang legislation amendments similarly responds to the Declaration's call for modern laws against gang-related criminality. These measures do not, by themselves, solve the social roots of crime; but they send a clear signal that the State is no longer using old tools against new threats.



The Justice Interference Prevention Act addresses another danger: the quiet corrosion of the courtroom itself. In small societies, witnesses, jurors, court staff, prosecutors, magistrates and judges can be known, approached, intimidated or pressured. Once fear enters the justice system, truth begins to retreat. The Act criminalises intimidation, harassment, threats, bribery and harm aimed at persons involved in legal proceedings. That is directly aligned with Needham's emphasis on witness protection, witness support and safeguarding the administration of justice.

The Judge Alone Trials Act, later amended in 2025, is another significant reform. Needham's Point recognises that jury trials remain

the dominant mode, but also recommends that judge-alone trials be considered where possible. St. Kitts and Nevis has embraced that option for appropriate cases, particularly where delay, complexity, public interest, documentary or digital evidence, or jury interference may threaten the fair and effective administration of justice. In July 2025, the Government reported that since the original legislation came into force, 33 criminal cases had been completed in the High Court: 17 by guilty plea and three by judge-alone trial. The same report said one high-profile murder trial was saved from collapse after an unlawful attempt to influence a juror. The matter was converted to a judge-alone trial. That is reform meeting reality in the courtroom.

The Voluntary Bill of Indictment Act is another attempt to cut through procedural thickets. It empowers the DPP, in appropriate serious cases, to bring matters directly to the High Court without the need for preliminary hearings or paper committals. This is particularly important where cases involve vulnerable witnesses, serious fraud, or the

KEY SENTENCES

“The Justice Committee's value is that it turns separate lanes into a common road.”

“The court's time is no longer treated as a waiting room. It is treated as a working room.”

“Not paper reform. Not podium reform. But practical reform.”

01

KEY ENACTED OR AMENDED MEASURES



- Firearms Act (amended)
- Offences Against the Person Act (amended)
- Gang legislation amendments
- Justice Interference Prevention Act
- Judge Alone Trials Act (amended 2025)
- Voluntary Bill of Indictment Act
- Plea Negotiations and Agreements Act (2025)

02

NEXT PHASE OF REFORM



- Extradition Act (proposed reforms)
- Evidence Act (proposed reforms)
- Theft, Fraud and Forgery Bill
- Sexual Offences Bill

public interest in expedition. The point is not to sacrifice fairness for speed; the point is to prevent fairness from being strangled by delay.

The Plea Negotiations and Agreements Act, passed in 2025, gives structure and supervision to what too often happens informally. Done correctly, it can secure early accountability, spare witnesses unnecessary trauma, involve victims in the sentencing process, reduce backlogs, and reserve full trials for matters genuinely in dispute. Needham's Point specifically calls for effective plea bargaining and early guilty plea schemes. St. Kitts and Nevis has answered that call by creating a regulated framework involving prosecutorial discretion, judicial oversight, defendants' rights and victim participation.

But perhaps the most important feature of the St. Kitts and Nevis model is that it is not built only around punishment. The Citizen Security Secretariat, the 90-Day Campaign Against Violence and Crime, ELEVATE programme, social development interventions, school engagement, and community conversations show the other side of the same coin. The Federation has begun to treat violence as patterned, preventable and in-

terruptible. The metaphor used by the Attorney-General is apt: where violence spreads like disease, the response must stabilise, diagnose, interrupt, treat and prevent relapse.

That is why the restorative justice, criminal mediation and child justice work matters. Training supported through the PACE Justice Project has placed restorative justice, alternative dispute resolution and child justice within the wider reform agenda. This aligns with Needham's call for diversion, rehabilitation, reintegration, problem-solving approaches, and restorative justice for appropriate cases. It also reminds the public that a strong justice system is not one that prosecutes everything in the same way.

There is also an emerging story to be told about active and aggressive case management. The most recent April Assize Term of the High Court provides perhaps the clearest example of reform moving from legislative language to courtroom life. Justice Patrick Thompson Jr. set an ambitious target: 15 trials to be conducted by the end of July. By the end of June, at least nine had already been completed with a further 2 in process. That figure, while preliminary, is significant. It means that almost two-thirds of the target had been reached with a month still to go, and it signals a judiciary, prosecution and defence bar increasingly alive to the discipline of active case progression.

This is where the quiet craft of case management becomes as important as the loud clang of new legislation. The cases are not be-

ing left to drift like untethered boats in Basseterre Bay. They are being followed, filtered and forced forward. Constant status checks are used to determine whether witnesses are ready, whether disclosure is complete, whether legal issues must be argued, whether pleas are likely, and whether trial time should be spent only on what is truly contested.

A central feature of this approach is the narrowing of factual issues. Where matters are not genuinely in dispute, they are reduced into agreed facts. That simple discipline saves witnesses from unnecessary attendance, spares the court from wasted time, and allows trials to focus on the real battlefield between Crown and defence. Evidence is therefore called with purpose, not merely by habit. The result is a cleaner, sharper and more efficient trial process. The court has also adopted a rhythm of constant engagement. If a matter is not actually being tried, it is being reviewed. If it is not being reviewed, legal arguments are being heard. If arguments are not ready, updates are required. The point is plain: the court's time is no longer treated as a waiting room. It is treated as a working room.

Justice Thompson has also brought an unmistakable edge to case management. Directions and deadlines are not treated as polite suggestions. The court has regularly warned parties that non-compliance with case management directions, avoidable adjournments, or unnecessary delay may attract costs consequences; and, where appropriate, costs orders have in fact been issued. That matters. A modern criminal justice system cannot ask the public to trust its timelines if its own participants are free to ignore them without

consequence. Case management without enforcement is a calendar; case management with consequences is control.

The same momentum is visible in Nevis. There, Justice Iain Morley has, but for one trial remaining on his list, practically cleared his criminal list. That achievement should not be treated as a minor administrative footnote. In a small jurisdiction, every trial completed, every plea taken, every old matter removed, and every list reduced represents a real release of pressure from the justice system. It means fewer victims waiting, fewer witnesses losing faith, fewer accused persons living under unresolved charges, and more judicial time available for the cases that truly require it.

Sentencing indications have also become an important part of this culture of realism. They allow defendants to understand, in concrete terms, the likely peril of proceeding to trial where the evidence is strong. Used properly, they do not pressure the innocent; they inform the realistic. They help defendants, counsel, victims and the court understand the likely consequences of contested litigation, and they encourage early resolution where a plea is appropriate.

This is Needham's Point in motion. The Declaration called for modern criminal justice systems that reduce delay, encourage early guilty pleas, promote active case management and ensure that scarce judicial resources are used wisely. The April Assize Term shows St. Kitts and Nevis attempting to do precisely that.

The St. Kitts and Nevis story should therefore be told with confidence, but not complacency. The reforms are real. The direction is right. The momentum is visible. But there remains a lot to be done. To this end, the Director of Public Prosecutions Office is currently helping to lead the next charge in the Federation's criminal justice modernisation agenda, particularly with respect to reforms to the Extradition Act and the Evidence Act. Those reforms are important because serious crime is increasingly digital, transnational, evidentially complex, and dependent on swift cooperation between States.

Against the backdrop of recent significant developments in the field of artificial intelligence, the DPP's Office has also placed before the relevant authorities for consideration a modernised Theft, Fraud and Forgery Bill, as well as a new Sexual Offences Bill. These proposals recognise that a twenty-first century justice system cannot prosecute twenty-first century criminality with outdated statutory tools. Fraud has evolved, financial crime has become more sophisticated and digital evidence now sits at the centre of many prosecutions. Sexual offending requires laws that are clear, survivor-sensitive, evidentially workable, and aligned with modern understandings of consent, exploitation and vulnerability.

This continuing law-reform work is significant because it shows that St. Kitts and Nevis is not treating Needham's Point as a one-off legislative sprint. It is building a reform pipeline. The aim is not merely to pass laws quickly, but to ensure that the legal framework keeps pace with the realities

facing investigators, prosecutors, courts, victims, accused persons and communities.

That may be the most important lesson St. Kitts and Nevis offers the region. Needham's Point was never simply about passing laws. It was about changing the habits of justice. It was about making courts less sluggish, prosecutions more focused, policing more professional, witnesses safer, and communities less captive to cycles of violence.

In his Biennial address, the Attorney-General put the matter plainly: the Caribbean does not need miracles; it needs coordination, courage and shared duty. St. Kitts and Nevis has not solved every problem. No serious reformer would pretend otherwise. But it has shown that even a small State can move from diagnosis to design, from design to delivery, and from delivery to early measurable impact. That is the promise of Needham's Point. Not paper reform. Not podium reform. But practical reform. St. Kitts and Nevis has taken the Declaration off the page and put it to work. The next chapter must prove, with data and discipline, that the work is changing lives.

About the Author

Adlai Smith is the Director of Public Prosecutions for the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis. His legal career spans more than two decades and includes private criminal defence, senior public prosecution and legislative reform. He began practice as a criminal defence attorney before serving for fifteen years as Crown Counsel in Antigua and Barbuda, where he prosecuted complex criminal matters on behalf of the State. From 2019 to 2023, he served as Director of Law Reform and Special Legal Projects, leading legislative and policy initiatives within the Ministry of Legal Affairs. He assumed office as Director of Public Prosecutions in 2023 and continues to advance criminal justice reform across the Federation.

Domestic Violence Legislation in Antigua and Barbuda: Reform to Reality

As a Family Court Magistrate, there are few orders more consequential than an interim protection order in a domestic violence matter. Such an order is obtained upon an application for urgent and immediate relief by a victim of domestic violence, usually a litigant in person, and may be made even outside the ordinary days and hours of the Court.¹ The **Tot Lampkin case**² from Trinidad and Tobago is but one example of the real-life, life-or-death consequences that must be considered when deciding whether to grant a protection order.

It may be argued that there is an inherent imbalance in the manner in which domestic violence cases are initially addressed, in that an interim order may be granted following an ex parte hearing at which the magistrate hears only the applicant's account of events. However, this approach is justified by the urgent need to safeguard the constitutional rights of victims of domestic violence against the very real danger that may exist behind closed doors at the hands of those closest to them. United Nations statistics consistently demonstrate that women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence. Accordingly, the scales of justice must carefully balance competing interests while ensuring that the most vulnerable receive effective protection.

It may be tempting to take for granted the current legal framework that specifically addresses the needs of victims of domestic violence. However, it is important to remember, that until relatively recently, the only meaningful avenue of redress was through the criminal justice system and, to a limited extent, through the civil courts for those with sufficient financial resources.

In Antigua and Barbuda, the first major step towards reform came with the passage of the **Domestic Violence (Summary Proceedings) Act, 1999** ("the 1999 Act"). This legislation dramatically altered the legal landscape by providing victims of domestic violence with direct access to the court through summary proceedings. In practice, however, inadequate resources, limited training, and insufficient public education and sensitisation programmes significantly hindered its effective implementation.

By way of example, when the Family Court was established in 2012—some thirteen years after the enactment of the 1999 Act—many legal practitioners, and even court staff, remained uncertain as to the proper procedure for obtaining a protection order. Consequently, the newly established Family Court initially received only one or two applications for protection orders each month.



Written by Veronica E. Thomas
Senior Magistrate, Antigua and Barbuda

The enactment of the **Domestic Violence Act, 2015** ("the 2015 Act") sought to build upon the foundation laid by the 1999 legislation. Most notably, the 2015 Act expanded the definition of domestic violence beyond physical abuse to include verbal, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse.³ For the first time, cyberstalking through the use of the internet or other electronic means was expressly recognised as an act of domestic violence.⁴

The 2015 Act also empowered the Court to make interim monetary relief orders⁵ and emergency monetary relief orders⁶ against perpetrators in order to address the financial consequences of domestic violence. In addition, the legislation introduced the concept of a "domestic relationship,"⁷ thereby broadening

¹ Section 5(6), Domestic Violence Act, 2015.

² *Tot Lampkin*, High Court of Trinidad and Tobago, Claim No. CV2021-03178, Mohammed J., 16 May 2024.

³ Section 2(1), Domestic Violence Act, 2015.

⁴ Section 2(2), Domestic Violence Act, 2015.

⁵ Section 7(2)(ii), Domestic Violence Act, 2015.

⁶ Section 7(2)(iii), Domestic Violence Act, 2015.

⁷ Section 2, Domestic Violence Act, 2015.

Issues Affecting Effective Reform

Why reform may fall short in practice



Inadequate resources



Limited training



Insufficient public education and sensitisation



Weak enforcement of protection orders



Limited victim support services



Funding constraints affecting rehabilitation programmes

the category of persons entitled to seek relief. Significantly, the definition is gender-neutral and, although the issue has not yet been judicially determined, it could arguably extend protection to same-sex couples. Whether this was the intended policy objective remains open to debate.

The establishment of the Family Court, together with a dedicated Family Court Magistrate and specialised support staff, created the opportunity to refine and streamline procedures within a specialised judicial framework. Support officers from the Directorate of Gender Affairs were identified and trained to assist litigants in person in preparing domestic violence applications using the prescribed forms. These officers also accompany applicants to ex parte hearings, providing much-needed emotional and psychological support throughout the process.

Additionally, support officers facilitate referrals to the Legal Aid

Department, following the policy decision that all victims of domestic violence should receive legal representation funded by the State during the inter partes stage of proceedings.

Although not expressly provided for in the legislation, the establishment of the Family Court also led to the development of a number of policies and practices that significantly strengthened the protection afforded to victims. Among the most important is the guarantee that every ex parte application is heard on the same day that it is filed. Applicants also receive the assistance of police officers attached to the Court, who facilitate same-day service of interim protection orders and serve as a liaison between the Court and the police in relation to the reporting of breaches and enforcement of protection orders.

Inter partes hearings are conducted virtually, thereby eliminating the need for victims and respon-

dents to occupy the same physical space during proceedings. The implementation of these enhanced systems and procedures, operating alongside a supportive legislative framework and specialised court, has resulted in a steady increase in demand for the Court's services. Indeed, by the end of June 2026, more than forty applications had already been filed for that year.

Notwithstanding these significant advances, considerable room for improvement remains. This is particularly evident in the area of enforcement. It has often been observed that, without effective enforcement, a protection order is little more than a piece of paper. Although the legislation strengthens enforcement by criminalising breaches of protection orders and providing for prosecution before the criminal courts, there remains what can fairly be described as a lukewarm response to the investigation of reported breaches, as well as to the prosecution and conviction of offenders.

There is also an urgent need to expand support services for victims. Emergency shelters equipped with appropriate security measures and financial aid, particularly where children are affected are two such measures which merit consideration. Equally important is the development of court-supervised rehabilitation programmes for offenders. Initiatives such as TWM (Together We Must) Emerge, which provided psychosocial support and rehabilitation to court-referred offenders, demonstrated considerable promise but proved short-lived because of funding constraints. Such programmes deserve sustained State support as part of a holistic response that seeks, not merely to restrain offending behaviour but to

From Application to Protection



achieve meaningful behavioural change.

Another area requiring urgent legislative reform is the extension of statutory protection to persons in intimate partner relationships who do not currently fall within the existing definition of a domestic relationship. Without such reform, a significant category of victims remains vulnerable and without access to the protections intended by the legislation.

Ultimately, reform in this area of the law must be viewed, not as a destination but as a continuing journey. Policymakers must remain responsive to the evolving needs of society and, in particular, those of its most vulnerable members. Meaningful reform requires ongoing dialogue among legislators, judicial officers, law enforcement, social service providers, and civil society so that emerging challenges may be identified and addressed in a timely and effective manner.

The experience of Antigua and Barbuda demonstrates that legislative reform alone is insufficient. Lasting and meaningful change is achieved only when progressive legislation is supported by specialised institutions, effective procedures, properly trained personnel, and sustained political commitment. The evolution of Antigua and Barbuda's domestic violence framework illustrates how carefully designed reforms, reinforced by practical systems of implementation, can translate legislative intent into tangible protection for those who need it most.



Reform in Practice

1



What the legislation created

- Protection orders and interim relief
- Broader definitions of domestic violence
- Monetary relief provisions
- Recognition of wider domestic relationships

2



What the Family Court developed administratively

- Same-day *ex parte* hearings
- Trained support officers
- Police-assisted service of orders
- Legal aid referrals
- Virtual *inter partes* hearings

3



What remains incomplete

- Stronger enforcement of breaches
- Emergency shelters
- Financial support for victims
- Sustained rehabilitation programmes
- Protection for some intimate partner relationships

The Sexual Offences Model Court: Antigua and Barbuda



Written by Ann-Marie Smith
Judge Antigua and Barbuda

Why the Court was needed

In January 2018, the JURIST Project announced that Antigua and Barbuda had been selected for the establishment of a Sexual Offences Model Court, developed in partnership with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. The Court was officially launched at the High Court in St. John's on 21 January 2019 and was intended to provide a specialised, coordinated and victim-centred response to sexual offence cases, particularly those involving children and other vulnerable witnesses.

The reform responded to persistent weaknesses in the justice chain. These included poor investigative and evidence-gathering practices, lengthy delays, weak coordination among the institutions responsible for investigation, prosecution, adjudication and victim care, and insufficient data to measure court performance. Of particular concern was the risk that survivors would abandon cases because the process of seeking justice could itself become a source of re-victimisation.

At its launch, the Model Court was therefore conceived, not simply as a new courtroom, but as a different way of handling sexual offence cases: one designed to reduce delay, strengthen witness protection, improve inter-agency coordination and provide a more gender-responsive and sensitive justice process.

From model to operating court

The Model Court operates within Antigua and Barbuda's existing le-

gal framework. Its principal statute is the Sexual Offences Act,

A specialist court can improve the experience of vulnerable witnesses, but its success depends on far more than a dedicated judge or courtroom. It requires the entire justice chain to work.

Sexual Offences Model Court: At a Glance

Antigua and Barbuda

1



Why the Court Was Needed



Delays in sexual offence cases



Poor investigation and evidence-gathering practices



Weak coordination across the justice chain



Risk of re-victimisation of complainants



Limited data for accountability and reform

2



What the Model Introduced



Dedicated judge and courtroom



Specialized case-management procedures



Special measures for vulnerable witnesses



Video-link testimony facilities



Witness orientation and support services



Inter-agency coordination and data monitoring

3



What Remains To Be Done



Reduce delays from police file submission and committal



Strengthen witness support services



Provide ongoing specialized training



Improve resources and system-wide support

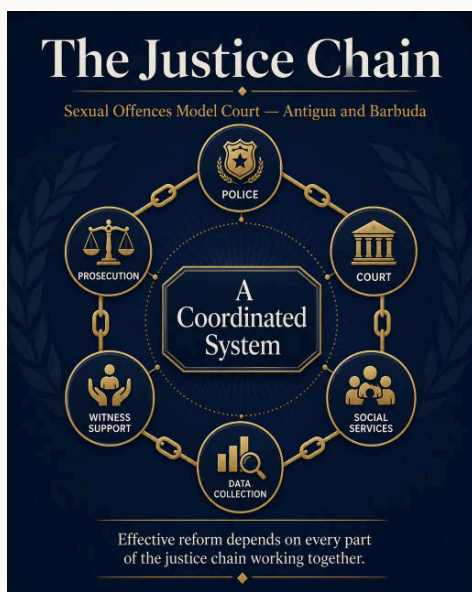


Build stronger data collection and evaluation

A specialist court must function as a coordinated justice system, not merely a dedicated room or judge.

1995, while Statutory Instrument No. 4 of 2014 regulates case management procedures. The Court also draws on the Model Guidelines for Sexual Offence Cases, first launched by the JURIST Project in 2017 and revised in 2023.

Those instruments are given practical effect through specialised case-management procedures, a dedicated High Court judge and courtroom, special measures for vulnerable witnesses, video-link testimony, witness orientation, support services and coordination



also been merged with the wider Criminal Justice Reform Committee.

What remains to be done

The Court's experience also shows where the next phase of reform must concentrate. Resources and support for court users remain limited, and the Special Victims Unit of the Police requires ongoing specialised training. Better and more consistent data collection is needed, together with regular evaluation capable of showing, not only how many cases are processed, but whether the reforms are improving outcomes and the experience of those who use the Court.

The way forward must therefore be system-wide. Stronger coordination is required among police, prosecutors, the Court, victim-support and counselling services, child-protection agencies and the Family Court. The development of regional data-sharing and best-practice networks, joint training and certification programmes, and coordinated funding and technical assistance would strengthen the Model Court's ability to operate as part of a broader criminal justice response.

Further victim-centred innovations may include expanded use of victim impact statements, specialised procedures for vulnerable witnesses, more child-friendly court environments and, where appropriate, restorative approaches. These developments will require sustained political commitment, engagement with civil society and the legal profession, adequate funding, and meaningful systems of performance monitoring and

LEGAL FRAMEWORK | Sexual Offences Act, 1995 • SI No. 4 of 2014 • Model Guidelines (2017, revised 2023)

with other agencies. The result is a structure intended to reduce trauma while moving cases through the system more efficiently.

A coordinated justice chain

The central lesson of the Model Court is that specialisation within the courtroom cannot, by itself, repair weaknesses elsewhere in the system. A well-managed trial still depends upon timely police files, effective prosecution, properly supported witnesses, functioning social services and reliable information about how the system is performing. The Court must therefore operate as one part of a connected institutional response.

Progress, but persistent delay

Court users have responded positively to important aspects of the new model, particularly the use of special measures and the availability of a support person during proceedings. These changes matter because they reduce the risk that vulnerable witnesses will be

further traumatised by the process through which they seek justice.

The principal difficulty, however, remains delay. The current docket still includes matters in which the allegations date from 2022 or earlier. The causes arise at different stages of the justice chain, including late submission of police files and the length of time required for matters to be committed to the High Court. This demonstrates the limits of reform concentrated only at the trial stage: a specialist court cannot dispose of a matter efficiently if the case reaches it late.

There are nevertheless continuing efforts to strengthen the system. Judicial officers are pursuing amendments to the Sexual Offences Act under the umbrella of the Needham Declaration Criminal Justice Reform Committee, and a Witness Support Unit is being developed to assist prosecutors and police officers with witness care. The stakeholder committee originally established to monitor the Model Court and collect data has

accountability.

From reform to reality

The Sexual Offences Model Court has already changed important aspects of how sexual offence cases are handled in Antigua and Barbuda. It has introduced a more specialised and sensitive process, strengthened the use of special measures and made the needs of vulnerable witnesses more vis-

ible within the justice system. Yet its experience also confirms that a specialist courtroom cannot, on its own, overcome delays or weaknesses elsewhere in the process.

Its long-term success will depend upon sustained resources, continuing training and an integrated response across every institution in the justice chain. The Model Court is therefore best understood, not as a room or a single judicial as-

A specialist court succeeds only when the justice system around it is capable of working with the same purpose.

signment, but as an ongoing reform project whose effectiveness depends upon the quality of the system surrounding it.

Source notes

1. JURIST Project: announcement of the Antigua and Barbuda Sexual Offences Model Court.
2. Contemporary reports on the launch of the Model Court in January 2019.
3. Revised Model Guidelines for Sexual Offence Cases in the Caribbean Region.

Every Step Counts



Written by Chanelle Petty-Barrett
Registrar for Anguilla

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. The simplistic truth of this well-known maxim seems obvious. Goals are reached by taking small, consistent steps. As the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court progresses its reform agenda through the implementation of initiatives to improve the administration of jus-

tice, shouldering these initiatives are judicial officers, doing the unglamorous work of shaping, championing and shepherding the reforms. The work of a judicial officer is not confined to the bench, it involves examining the deeper issues confronting the court and proposing solutions, serving on committees, facilitating training and supporting the proverbial axle that keeps the wheels of justice turning.

The Court's ability to thrive and fulfil its mandate is dependent on the wellbeing of its judicial officers. Judicial well being is therefore not simply a phrase to be tossed around casually at annual conferences but should be viewed as critical to the effective functioning of the court.

Last year, 8th March, the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court's Association of Women Judges (ECAWJ) marked the Internation-

al Day of Women's Judges with a series of activities including a Step Challenge. Individual judicial officers and registry staff registered and took on the challenge of walking and tracking their steps daily. While the activity was fun for those involved, it put the spotlight on a bigger issue, that is, the importance of judicial officers and their staff finding time to incorporate physical activity into their daily routine. As judicial work is mainly sedentary and involves long hours on and off the bench, a conscious effort must be made to be physically active. The Step Challenge demonstrated, in a tangible way, that with just a little effort, judicial officers and their staff can walk their way to better health.

The benefits of walking are well researched and documented. Walking is said to be one of the most accessible and effective forms of exercise. Accessible because, unless physically incapacitated, anyone can do it at absolutely no cost, without any special equipment

and by easily incorporating it into their daily routines; and effective because it has numerous health benefits.

Health Benefits of Moving More

1. Sharper Focus Movement supports concentration and mental clarity.	2. Better Mood Regular activity can help reduce stress and lift mood.
3. Heart Health Brisk walking supports circulation and cardiovascular health.	4. Better Blood Sugar Control Post-meal movement can help reduce glucose spikes.
5. More Energy Frequent movement helps combat fatigue from sedentary work.	6. Stronger Joints & Muscles Daily movement helps maintain strength and mobility.

Small movements throughout the day can make a meaningful difference.

In addition to burning calories and assisting with maintaining a healthy weight, walking improves health in ways that are not immediately apparent. The British Heart Foundation in an article entitled 6 surprising health benefits of walking published on 3rd June 2024, summarised the results of research conducted by the University of Cambridge, University of Edinburg, University of Illinois and other agencies which reviewed studies on the benefits of walking. The research concluded that:

- Eleven minutes a day of brisk walking reduces the risk of heart disease, cancer and early death;
- Walking helps to improve balance; and as a weight-bearing exercise, it slows bone loss and reduces the risk of osteoporosis;
- Brisk walking increases white blood cells and strengthens the immune sys-

tem;

- Walking increases the flow of blood, oxygen and nutrients to the brain which improves memory, alertness and brain health;
- Natural chemicals are released when walking which make people feel happy and positive; walking in nature also reduces stress and anxiety.
- Walking helps to improve sleep quality enabling people to sleep better and for longer.

The information shared by the British Heart Foundation finds support in an enlightening article by Ungvari, Fazekas-Pongor, Csiszar and Kunutsor entitled **The multifaceted benefits of walking for healthy aging: from Blue Zones to molecular mechanisms** published on 26 July 2023 in GeroScience¹. The researchers looked at the determinants of healthy aging in the blue zones, i.e. regions of the world where people reportedly live longer, healthier lives than anywhere else; the five blue zones being Okinawa in Japan, Sardinia in Italy, Nicoya in Costa Rica, Icaria in Greece, and the Seventh-day Adventist community in Loma Linda, California. These regions have the highest concentration of centenarians and their lifestyles have been studied to determine the factors contributing to their longevity and healthy aging. The researchers found several factors contributed to this phenomenon such as diet, social connectedness and physical activity. They noted in particular that physical activity, especially regular walking is a part of their daily lifestyle. The

researchers found that:

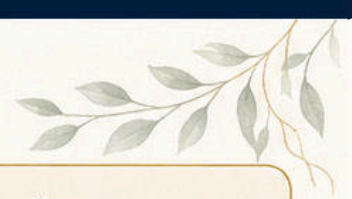
“.... Walking’s favourable effects on cardiovascular risk factors are attributed to its impact on circulatory, cardiopulmonary, and immune function [and] meeting current physical activity guidelines by walking briskly for 30 min per day for 5 days can reduce the risk of several age-associated diseases.”

The findings of the research are clear. A simple, but powerful exercise, accessible to everyone, walking can potentially change how we show up daily and our quality of life as we age.

Making judicial wellbeing more than buzzwords but a daily commitment, the ECAWJ launched another Step Challenge this year on an even larger scale, again in celebration of International Day of Women Judges. This time, it was a competition between teams from various islands. There was no limit to the number of teams per island, but each team could only register a maximum of ten persons. The goal was simple – the team with the most steps wins. The competition was open to all female judicial officers, court staff and members of the bar. The response was overwhelming.

Sixteen teams registered for the ECAWJ Step Challenge 2026 which was held from 10th to 14th March 2026.

¹ GeroScience 45, 3211–3239 (2023).

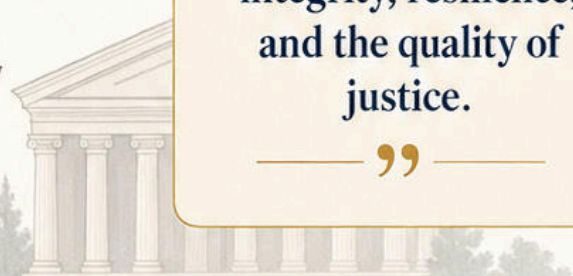


Judicial Wellbeing: A Matter of Justice



Key insights from the 2025 CAJO-CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Report

Judicial wellbeing is not a luxury. It is essential to integrity, performance, and public confidence in the administration of justice. The 2025 CAJO-CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Report shows a judiciary under sustained strain, with heavy workloads, limited resources, and unhealthy workplace cultures affecting those who serve within the system. At the same time, the report reminds us that wellbeing is strengthened by supportive relationships, meaningful connection, and practical institutional action. The message is clear: healthier judicial officers and judiciary staff help to build healthier judicial systems.



“

Judicial wellbeing is not a private concern. It is central to judicial integrity, resilience, and the quality of justice.

”

BY THE NUMBERS



81%

said heavy workloads contributed to stress, anxiety, and non-wellbeing



73%

said limited resources contributed to stress, anxiety, and non-wellbeing



44%

experienced exclusion from discussions



34%

reported overbearing leadership



69.5%

wanted support for building networks and interacting with other judges



68.8%

wanted education and training on maintaining health

MOST COMMON EFFECTS OF STRESS



Fatigue



Sleep disturbances



Irritability



Muscle tension



Isolation



Burnout

WHAT SUPPORTS WELLBEING?



Social relationships



Hobbies



Personal time



Health

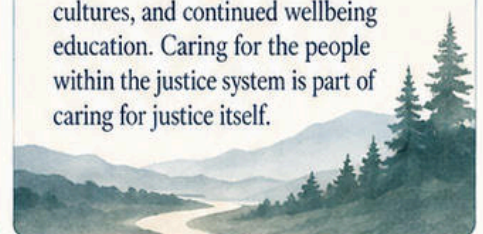


Personal beliefs

THE TAKEAWAY



The report calls for practical action: better resourcing, supportive leadership, healthier workplace cultures, and continued wellbeing education. Caring for the people within the justice system is part of caring for justice itself.



Maintaining Physical Readiness for Judging



14+ GYM-FREE OFFICE MOVEMENTS

Simple movement resets to support energy, posture, circulation and focus throughout the workday.

1 Walking during judgment reflection

Use movement to clear the mind while thinking through a decision.



2 Standing conferences or walking meetings

Hold internal discussions on your feet when appropriate.



3 Intentional use of stairs

Choose the stairs over the elevator when possible.



4 Stretching between matters

Release physical tension between courtroom sessions.



5 Brief movement resets

Take short movement breaks during intensive judgment-writing.



6 Standing while reading

Review long briefs or transcripts at a high desk or podium.



7 Walking in place at your desk

March lightly in place for a quick circulation boost.



8 20 office-chair squats every hour

Stand up and sit down with control to break up sitting time.



9 Calf raises after any meal

Perform calf raises after meals to help reduce insulin spikes.



10 Shoulder rolls and blade squeezes

Reset posture and ease desk tension.



11 Seated leg extensions

Extend each leg under the desk to improve lower-body circulation.



12 Neck rotations

Use slow, controlled neck stretches to release stiffness.



13 The long route strategy

Take a longer path to the registry, library or common areas.



14 In-person consultations

Walk to a colleague's chambers instead of emailing or calling.



15 Hydration resets

Refill a smaller glass or bottle more often to prompt extra steps.



16 Wrist and forearm stretches

Ease typing and handwriting strain.



PRACTICAL REMINDER

Movement need not be dramatic to be beneficial. Small, regular resets throughout the day can help support stamina, concentration and wellbeing.

POWERHOUSE POSSE 1 Saint Lucia - Tamara Foster V. Georgis Taylor-Alexander - Kelly Thomson - Danika Bourg - Karleen King - Anne Martelly - N'deva Richards - Natalie Gregg - Rechanne Browne - Chantal Saltibus	STEP WARRIORS 2 St Vincent and the Grenadines - Cybelles Cenac-Dantes - Shanika Pope - Rachel Nanton - Lynmarie Nichols - Kathy Peters - Jade Lewis - Melanie John - Akeshia Spence - Rosine Khan - Sherene Quow	REAL TIME RUNNERS 9 Territory of the Virgin Islands - Marrissa Deane - Florita Lake - Lorraine Rabsatt - Desiree Pemberton - Stacy Glasgow - Cara Spann - Lisa Donovan - Shara Pollock - Dianah George - Allana-J Joseph	STEPPING SISTERS 10 Antigua and Barbuda - M.E. Birnie Stephenson - Cecile Hill - Veronica Thomas - Laurie Freeland Roberts - Ricki Camacho - Fanella Francis - Karon Josiah - Antoinette Joseph - Eulonis Deniscia Thomas - Tracy Samuel
HOT STEPPERS 3 Saint Lucia - Michelle John-Theobalds - Daniella Chambers-Sylvestre - Jodi-Ann Masters-Singh - Abigail Lansiquot - B'Knell St. Cyr - Chante Phillippe - Natasha Fitz-Christophe - Yeeveda Guinness - Lubia Hilaire - Kimberly Cenac-Phulgence	PACESETTERS 4 Saint Lucia - Bianca Dalton - Shania Maharaj - Ishara Deopersad - Stevie Spence - Alima Alexis - Marcellina Edward - Anselma Fadlin - Cedricka James - Stephie Kodra - Zannia Plummer-Gabriel	BVI STEPPERS 11 Territory of the Virgin Islands - Tracey Vidale - Krystal Fenty - Marbelly Daniel - Eloise James - Kendra Powell - Mariah Callwood - Cadjah Collins - Lauralee Laurent - Vincia Peter - Sad'e Harrigan	THE STEP SQUAD 12 Anguilla - Chanelle Petty Barrett - Renee Joseph - Lavan Hoyoung - Erica Edwards - Nakishma Rogers - Merline Barrett - Keesha Carty - Navine Fleming - Yvette Wallace - Tonae Simpson-Whyte
SUPREME STRIDERS 5 Grenada - Paula Gilford - Agnes Actie - Melissa Garraway Nelson - Donnika Maxwell - Shanna Mitchell - Shelly Wildman - Jillian Williams - Vern Ashby - Catherine Charles - Patrice Lambert	THE SUGAR CITY STEPPERS 6 St Kitts and Nevis - Tamara Gill - Rhonda Nisbett-Browne - Nisharma Rattan Mack - Violet Williams - Shelley Isles - Cleopatra Perry - Shalisha Welcome - Azure Liburd - Miselle O'Brien - Sherry-Ann Liburd-Charles	BVI TROTTERS 13 Territory of the Virgin Islands - Annette Williams Sylvester - Annisha Jacobs McClean - Joi Ann Thomas - Natalie Agard - Samantha Penn-Howard - Kehulani Isaacs - Breisleigh Rabsatt	BVI STRIDERS 14 Territory of the Virgin Islands - Tiana Pusey - Nyobi Padmore - Kimba Smith - Candace Job - Marie-Lou Creque - Donyelle Hodge
SPICE FITNESS CREW 7 Grenada - Francine Foster - Kindra Maturine Stewart - Esther Forsyth - LaToya Joseph - Lisa Vincent - Julie Rodney - Terrisha Julien - Aloma Cato - Donica Mitchell - Danisha Fortune	NATURE'S LITTLE SECRET 8 Territory of the Virgin Islands - Vareen Nibbs - Theresa Hadad - Pamela Rymmer - Reba Weston - Tamareli Hodge - Kaleena Cruickshank - Angelica Teelucksingh - Jerema Vanterpool - Anessa Tobin - Anneka Williams-Lettsome	THE ENFORCERS 15 St Vincent and the Grenadines - LaTeisha Sandy-Marks - Jai-Len Williams - Natalia Ollivierre - Kaylia Toney - Carla James - Geshell Peters - Cheyenne Bacchus - Kezi Francis - Chrisann Mofford - Renee Simmons	BAR STEPPERS 16 St Vincent and the Grenadines - Moureeze Franklyn - Zita Barnwell - Heidi Badenock - Patricia Marks-Minors - Ranelle Roberts - Jemalie John - Rene Baptiste - Shernell Hadaway - Maxron Holder

Each day each member tracked their steps using a smart device, took photos of the device at the end of the day (i.e. before midnight), forwarded the photo to their team leader who then sent the information before 7:00am each day to the two persons responsible for tallying the daily scores. Top scores for each day were announced the following day.

From the announcement of the top score for day one – a stunning 247,662 steps - it was clear that this competition was no walk in the park. Teams uttered their disbelief and despair. The gauntlet was thrown down and the teams had to either rise to the challenge or accept their place on the sidelines. The competition was fierce! Each day, the top score got higher – 293,077 steps; 281,142 steps; 303,300 steps; 410,931 steps. Teams pushed themselves to unbelievable limits. They walked together and individually; they gath-

ered in rooms to walk in place and encourage each other; they organised and strategized as to how they could get in more steps. Notably, on one occasion, a team member logged over 30,000 steps in one day! Regardless of their scores or chances of winning, teams continued to show up and push through every day. There was a remarkable show of commitment to finishing the challenge - win, lose or draw.

On 16th March 2026, a special virtual ceremony was held to announce the winners of the challenge. Teams waited with bated breath for the announcement. While the number of steps amassed by some teams was intimidating, the challenge still turned out to be a source of encouragement for many. Members expressed their appreciation for the initiative and how it challenged them to be more physically active, with many pledging

to continue. The teams that won bragging rights for the Step Challenge 2026 are displayed in the table graphic on the next page.

The impact of the Step Challenge went beyond the activity itself. It seems to have raised a level of awareness among participants that has led to similar activities being held in some of the islands since the conclusion of the challenge.



Step Challenge Score Sheet

10–14 March 2026

Daily team totals and final standings



1st Place

Hot Steppers

1,533,969



2nd Place

Step Warriors

1,348,886



3rd Place

Stepping Sisters

975,070



4th Place

The Sugar City Steppers

920,587



5th Place

Spice Fitness Crew

821,626

Rank	Team	10 Mar	11 Mar	12 Mar	13 Mar	14 Mar	Total
1	Hot Steppers	247,662	293,077	279,717	302,582	410,931	1,533,969
2	Step Warriors	168,306	226,014	281,142	303,300	370,124	1,348,886
3	Stepping Sisters	126,710	169,860	219,142	201,077	258,281	975,070
4	The Sugar City Steppers	117,960	167,013	175,961	203,492	256,161	920,587
5	Spice Fitness Crew	136,047	175,786	154,587	180,571	174,635	821,626
6	The Enforcers	96,052	134,703	207,958	153,751	146,372	738,836
7	Powerhouse Posse	128,977	156,228	140,326	143,152	124,820	693,503
8	BVI Steppers	92,616	110,290	146,322	92,875	80,384	522,487
9	Nature's Litte Secrets	117,121	121,093	90,716	82,848	71,559	483,337
10	The Step Squad	109,170	107,301	85,052	89,920	81,764	473,207
11	Supreme Striders	49,249	64,318	67,829	68,593	95,067	345,056
12	BVI Striders	51,672	72,503	65,565	43,474	78,837	312,051
13	Pacesetters	43,413	71,210	70,366	46,496	54,837	286,322
14	Real Time Runners	41,632	26,946	66,525	62,519	69,867	267,489
15	Bar Steppers	10,172	24,348	31,071	39,428	31,966	136,985
16	BVI Trotters	25,795	46,196	29,597	7,099	13,239	121,926

The Step Challenge reminded us that every step counts. Though it is unlikely that such a high number of steps is attainable on a regular day, we ought still to be mindful of the relationship between step count and health outcomes. In an August 2025 article in the Lancet Public Health journal entitled **Daily steps and health outcomes in adults: a systematic review and dose-response meta-analysis**² written by Professors Ding, Nguyen, Nau et al on this very issue, the researchers noted that:

“Although 10 000 steps per day, an unofficial target for decades without a clear evidence base, was associated with substantially lower

risks for all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease incidence, cancer mortality, dementia, and depressive symptoms than 7000 steps per day, the incremental improvement beyond 7000 steps per day was small, and there was no statistical difference between 7000 steps per day and a higher step count for all the other outcomes. Therefore, 7000 steps per day might be a more realistic and achievable recommendation for some, but 10 000 steps per day can still be a viable target for those who are more active. Importantly, even a modest step count was associated with lower risk. For example,

4000 steps per day compared with 2000 steps per day was associated with substantial risk reduction, such as a 36% lower risk in all-cause mortality.... Similar to current moderate-intensity to vigorous-intensity physical activity recommendations, the message that every step counts for those who are able should be emphasised as a core public health message, regardless of the specific quantitative target.”

Given the potential the Step Challenge holds for continuing to bring attention to the importance of physical activity for judicial wellbeing, it is recommended that

² Ding D, Nguyen B, Nau T et al, *Daily steps and health outcomes in adults: a systematic review and dose-response meta-analysis*, The Lancet Public Health, 2025.

it should remain a permanent fixture on the ECAWJ's calendar. In the article referenced earlier by Ungvari et al, the researchers concluded that:

“Step count is a strong and consistent predictor of clinical outcomes....Overall, walking is a simple and effective intervention that can be easily integrated into daily routines to promote healthy aging and prevent chronic age-related diseases....its health benefits are substantial and are irre-

spective of age, sex, race, or geographical location. Incorporating regular walking into daily routines should be encouraged as a key strategy for healthy aging and disease prevention.”

That's enough reason to keep stepping.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

What the Step Challenge meant to participants

“The Step Challenge showed me that every step counts. It kept me active, increasing my energy and making everyday activities easier. It reminded me that small, consistent steps can lead to big changes.”

*Ms. Lynmarie Nichols Service
Bureau Agent St. Vincent Registry*

“The challenge reminded me that looking after my health is not a luxury but a necessity... and proved that sometimes the smallest steps can lead to the biggest changes.”

*Ms. Yvette Wallace Anguilla Bar
Association*

“The ultimate priceless benefit was the enhanced team spirit... [and becoming] more connected to nature and to each other”

*Francine Foster Chief Magistrate
(Ag.) Grenada*

ON THE HORIZON

1. Creative competition for gender based violence October/November 2026
2. Annual judicial training February 2026 (venue TBA)
3. 9th Biennial CAJO Conference 19-21 November 2026 Guyana
4. IAWJ 2026 conference in Montreal, Canada
5. 60th anniversary activities for all jurisdictions to celebrate 60 years of the ECSC.
6. International Women's Day 8th March 2027
7. International Day of Women Judges 10th March 2027



Justice Zainab Jawara-Alami
Judge Dominica

Five Minutes With a Member

and as a child I saw a lot of important looking people dressed in black in my house. I was drawn to the law because I saw, through those experiences, how much of an impact the legal process had on my father. I was also an avid reader as a child and had a natural affinity for the social sciences, so perhaps it was not surprising that I eventually went on to study law. My decision to join the Bench was shaped by having lived through 22 years of dictatorship, when the rule of law was silenced and important institutions were weakened. When my country emerged into a new democracy, strengthening those

institutions, particularly the Judiciary, became an important priority. There was a call for judges, and I was one of the 6 who answered it because I wanted to be part of that change and contribute to rebuilding confidence in the rule of law and an independent Judiciary.

2 The best professional advice I received was very simple: **“Know your law, and take one case at a time.”**

The advice sounds simple, but with the volume of cases that come before the Court, it is easy to lose sight of both. You have to know

1 I think my interest in the law started at home, in The Gambia. My father was involved in numerous cases before the courts, many of them against the Government,

the law, but you also have to give each case the attention it deserves. There is always another case waiting, but for the people before you, the case you are dealing with is the one that matters most. So I remind myself to give the case before me my full attention, do the best I can with it and then move on to the next one. It has proved to be simple advice, but probably some of the most useful advice I have received in my career.

3 Quite honestly, the best way to recharge is to do absolutely nothing for a little while. After a long day, I have learned to appreciate the value of quiet time and not feeling that I always have to be doing something. Other times I watch a Netflix series whilst on an exercise bike three times a week.

4 One change I would most like to see is for alternative dispute resolution, particularly mediation, to be a compulsory first step before a matter proceeds to litigation, except where the nature of the dispute makes ADR inappropriate. I appreciate that mediation itself is voluntary and parties cannot be forced to settle. However, I believe the attempt at mediation should be compulsory. Parties should at least be given the opportunity to sit down, have a conversation and see whether their dispute can be resolved before resorting to litigation.

5 Something my colleagues might be surprised to learn is that I play the West African drum. There is something about the rhythm that is both energising and relaxing, and it is a great way to clear my head.

The Final Word

You have reached the end of the issue. Before you close it, see how well you have followed the journey from reform on paper to reform in practice.

HOW WELL WERE YOU READING?

1. From rule to reality. New procedural rules are only one part of effective reform. Which of the following is most likely to determine whether reform succeeds in practice?

- A. The language of the rules alone
- B. The number of provisions contained in the rules
- C. How judges, practitioners and court users understand and apply them
- D. Whether the previous rules are completely discarded

2. Specialised justice. The experience of a specialised Sexual Offences Court invites us to look beyond whether a reform has simply been introduced. What is the more important question?

- A. Whether the court has a distinctive name
- B. Whether the initiative has translated into a more effective experience of justice
- C. Whether every jurisdiction adopts an identical model
- D. Whether the court operates separately from the wider justice system

3. Declarations and delivery. A declaration of principles may set an important direction for institutional change. Its longer-term significance, however, is best assessed by asking:

- A. Whether its recommendations have influenced practice over time
- B. How widely it was reported when adopted
- C. How many recommendations it contains
- D. Whether every recommendation was implemented immediately

4. True or False? Judicial reform is complete once a new rule, policy or institutional initiative has formally been introduced.

TRUE / FALSE

5. Complete the thought

Reform becomes reality when _____.

There is no single correct answer. In one sentence, identify what you believe turns institutional aspiration into meaningful change.

ONE LAST QUESTION FOR YOUR REFLECTION:

If this issue has examined the distance between reform and reality, what do you think the judiciary should be asking next?

_____.

1. C
2. B
3. A
4. False

Answers

2026 Activities Across Our Islands: Antigua & Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines

A pictorial summary of ECAWJ activities across the Eastern Caribbean.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Panel Discussion
THE ROLE OF THE LAW IN SUPPORTING THE FAMILY

Moderator
JUSTICE ANN-MARIE SMITH
Judge, Grand Court, Eastern Caribbean
Former Chair, Caribbean Law Association

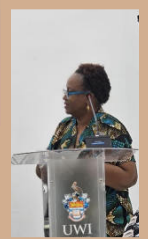
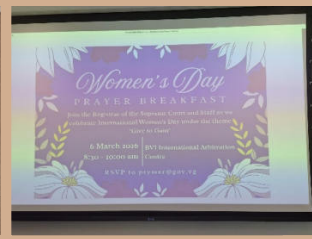
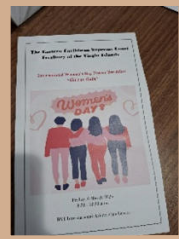
Panelists
JUSTICE BERNIE STEPHENSON
Judge, Grand Court, Eastern Caribbean
ANNETTA JACKSON
Chair, Caribbean Law Association
JOANNE MASSIAN
Attorney at Law

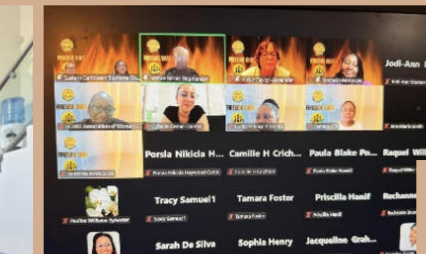
04 MARCH
6:00 PM

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES FIVE ISLANDS CAMPUS

International Women's Day PROGRAM

- 9:00 AM** Welcome Remarks
- 9:15 AM** Presentation by Dr. Adis King
- 9:55 AM** Questions
- 10:10 AM** Presentation by Ms. Defrica Thorpe
- 10:40 PM** Questions
- 10:55 AM** ABCS of Persons by Sherma John
- 11:25 AM** Questions
- 11:40 AM** Vote of Thanks
- Refreshments





ECAWJ
FIRESIDE CHAT
THE WOMEN BEHIND THE SCALES
AS A FEMALE ECSC JUDICIAL OFFICER

With Moderators: Chief Registrar, Michelle John-Thompson and Deputy Chief Registrar, Tameka Chambers-Sabido

DATE: THURSDAY, 12TH MARCH 2026

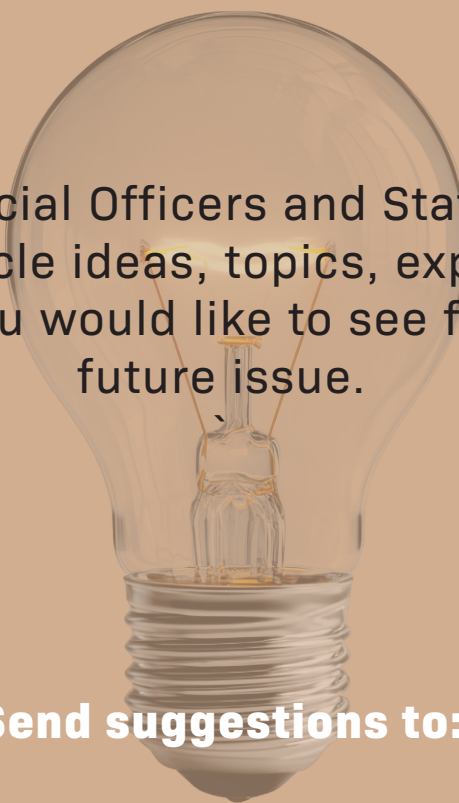


ECAWJ Inter-Island Virtual Step Competition
GET UP!! MOVE!!
STEP!!
Join us for an exciting 5 day



Share Your Ideas With Us

Have an idea for our next issue?
We would love to hear from you.



Judges, Judicial Officers and Staff are invited
to share article ideas, topics, experiences or
initiatives you would like to see featured in a
future issue.

Send suggestions to:

ecscwomen22@gmail.com

Subject: Newsletter Issue

The Executive of the ECAWJ extends sincere gratitude to everyone who made our third All-Women Judges Newsletter a reality.

Special Thanks To:

The President — for always being ready to lend a hand, even at very short notice.

All contributors — who generously submitted material to enrich this issue.

Our Newsletter Team — who enthusiastically brought this issue to life.

Stephen A. Dantes — for crafting our beautiful layout and design.

Your contributions have made this issue not just possible, but meaningful. Together, we've created something truly special again.

Rules may begin reform. Institutions may give it structure. But it is through practice, experience and sustained commitment that reform becomes reality.

**Regional Mediation Coordinator
Debra Maloney**

In memory of Debra Maloney, Regional Mediation Coordinator, whose professionalism, warmth and dedication enriched the ECSC and all who worked with her. Her contribution to the Court and the lives she touched will not be forgotten.



**St. Kitts & Nevis Bailiff
Christian John Arthurton II**

In memory of Mr Christian John Arthurton II, who gave 25 years of dedicated service as Senior Bailiff and was known for his professionalism, integrity and quiet strength. His contribution to the Court and his example of public service will long be remembered.



LADY JUSTICE

The Bench & Beyond

