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*Promotion of Inclusive Poverty Eradication and Productive Employment and
Decent Work Policies to advance Social Integration*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The creation of inclusive societies based on the principles of non-discrimination and a right-based approach to development, requires social intervention policies and strategies which take into account the situation of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, often characterised by high rates of poverty, unemployment and lack of access to economic resources, social services and other public goods. As a consequence, deliberate efforts must be made to provide these groups with equality of opportunity to secure sustainable livelihoods to meet basic needs and promote their full participation in social and economic development initiatives. The goal of inclusion, particularly, of the marginalized, is therefore of critical importance in the design of programmes to eradicate poverty and advance the productive employment and decent work agenda.

This paper focuses on the situation of, youth (especially the unattached), women, inner-city communities and other vulnerable groups in Jamaica, within the context of the question:

What efforts can be taken to ensure that policies to promote poverty eradication and productive employment and decent work are non-discriminatory and rights-based, provide for equality of opportunity, and facilitate the participation of all people in their formulation and outcomes, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons? (Question 7, EGM Aide Memoire, DESA)

II. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS – Poverty and Unemployment in Jamaica

The overall standard of living in Jamaica has been improving as measured by certain key socio-economic indicators shown below and the country is progressing toward achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. However, poverty and unemployment remain major problems especially for the most vulnerable social groups.

Jamaica at a Glance *



Population 2,682,100

Population Growth Rate 0.5% ; Life Expectancy at Birth 72.4%; Adult Literacy (15 and older) 86.0%
 Total Labour Force: 1,261,300
 Employed: 1,136,900
 Unemployed: 124,500; Unemployment Rate: 9.9%
 Male/female unemployment: Male: 6.2%; Female 14.5%
 Real GDP (JA\$M): 249,645
 GDP Per Capita: US\$4,147
 Real GDP Growth Rate: 0.7% ; Debt/GDP 108.2%
 Population below Poverty Line 9.9%

*2007 Statistics

Fig. 1

**Table 1: Incidence of Poverty by Geographical Area in Jamaica
1989-2002**

Area	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04
KMA	15.5	13.3	28.8	18.8	16.7	13.8	15.0	17.2	9.3	8.6	10.6	9.9	7.6	10.4	9.5	14.4
O/Towns	22.0	25.7	31.4	29.9	22.9	20.0	22.8	22.0	14.8	13.4	12.1	16.6	13.3	18.7	15.8	7.8
Rural	40.7	37.5	57.2	42.2	29.6	28.8	37.0	32.8	27.4	19.5	22.0	25.1	13.3	25.1	24.2	22.1
Islandwide	30.5	28.4	44.6	33.9	24.4	22.8	27.5	26.1	19.9	15.9	17.0	18.7	24.1	19.7	19.1	16.9

Source: Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions, Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN)

**Table 2: Percentage Population
Below Poverty Line – Jamaica**

2003	19.1
2004	16.9
2005	14.8
2006	14.3
2007	9.9

Source: Medium Term Policy Framework 2009-2012, PIOJ

The overall trend in the incidence of poverty has been declining since 1991 when it peaked at 44.6%, although there have been some fluctuations in the levels recorded in the Annual Survey of Living Conditions. While the incidence of poverty is more pervasive in rural areas as shown in Table 1, the character of urban poverty with its link to escalating crime and violence especially in inner-city communities has been a major source of social instability. Female-headed household are more likely to be in poverty and children and youth are disproportionately represented among the poor, mainly because poorer families also have a larger number of children. The elderly and persons with disabilities are also among those at risk of falling into poverty.

In respect of unemployment trend, women and youth are among the most disadvantaged in the labour market. Labour force statistics for 2007, indicate that of a labour force of 1,261,300 there were 124,500 unemployed persons, with females accounting for 65.4 per cent. This represents a decline of 4.9 per cent in the number of unemployed persons over the previous year and a corresponding decline in the average unemployment rate from 10.3 per cent in 2006 to 9.9 per cent in 2007, the lowest level recorded for the last 30 years. However, the female unemployment rate at 14.5 per cent continued to be more than twice that of the male rate which was 6.2 per cent. The youth (14-24 years) unemployment rate at 23.6 per cent was more than three times that of the adult unemployment rate which stood at 7.0 per cent. This is shown in the Table 3 below:

TABLE 3: UNEMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS, 2006-2007 (’000)			
	2006		2007
	ANNUAL AVERAGE	RATE (%)	ANNUAL AVERAGE
TOTAL	129.4	10.3	124.5
Youth (14-24 yrs)	49.9	23.6	51.3
Adults (25 yrs and over)	79.5	7.6	73.2
MALE	48.8	7	43.1
Youth (14-24 yrs)	20.7	17.4	20.3
Adults (25 yrs and over)	28.1	4.9	22.7
FEMALE	80.6	14.5	81.4
Youth (14-24 yrs)	29.2	31.6	31
Adults (25 yrs and over)	51.4	11.1	50.5

Source: Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, 2007, PIOJ

Many social problems, especially among the youth population, revolve around inadequate educational opportunities and limited scholastic attainment. This results in low levels of employment and increased frustration and anger. There is undoubtedly a link with poverty, the deterioration in community social infrastructure and the high levels of conflict within communities. There is therefore an urgent need to address these situations in urban poor as well as rural communities. If not strategically managed, it will undermine all other attempts of development within communities and nation states as a whole. Where youths are not actively engaged physically and mentally there is a greater possibility for them to become involved in unproductive lifestyles. The crime statistics for Jamaica indicate that the 16 – 25 age group account for 49.4% of all major crimes, with males representing 98.7% of those arrested. Unattached young men are often associated with street level violence, crime, the drug trade and substance abuse. Educational attainment and quality of training influence productivity, future job opportunities, earning power and the contribution of the individual

to society. Such opportunities are critical for both young men and women. The large numbers of young men in Jamaica who have not attained the necessary qualifications to move on to further studies or to acquire skills training, have limited access to employment opportunities which further hinders their social mobility. On the other hand, females, although at an educational advantage in that they outnumber the males in regards to matriculation for tertiary institutions and the attainment of post-secondary education and training, are still at risk. Young women, particularly those residing in rural agricultural and inner city communities, are oftentimes lured into at-risk behaviour as a result of limited access to employment prospects due to a lack of marketable skills. A recently conducted "CARICOM Youth Dreams" research Project confirmed that these issues impact young people throughout the region, though the level of severity varies among member states.

Unemployment and poverty, including the lack of access to adequate education and other basic social services, are among the major contributors to social exclusion and disharmony in society and there is therefore an inextricable link between poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all and the attainment of social integration goals.

III. POLICY RESPONSES

The development of effective social policies, strategies and other interventions, are necessary to break the cycle of poverty, economic dependency, deprivation and social exclusion for vulnerable groups and disadvantaged persons. Against this background, priority policies and programmes of the Government of Jamaica have included the following.

A. Poverty Eradication

The Jamaican Government in the mid 1990's adopted through a Ministry Paper tabled in Parliament, a comprehensive National Poverty Eradication Programme including strategic goals and objective, targets, indicators and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The initiatives listed below were among the major elements of the Poverty Eradication Programme:

- Strengthening of the social protection system to expand coverage for the poor and vulnerable groups. The major initiative introduced in this regard is the Reform of the Social Safety Net which commenced in 2001 with the design of a conditional cash transfer programme (PATH) to ensure better targeting of the poor and the linking of benefits to human capital investment. Specific target groups are children from birth to age seventeen, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities in poor households, as well as destitute individuals.
- Establishment of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) to address infrastructural deficiencies in poor communities, utilizing a participatory approach.
- Inner-city Housing Development Project
- Major expansion of highways and road network to support economic growth.

These core poverty eradication programmes were supported by the introduction of social policies and legislation to improve the status of children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

With the change of political administration in 2007, the abolition of User Fees in public hospitals and health centres and the removal of tuition fees at the Secondary School level to provide greater access of the population to basic social services and support existing poverty eradication strategies.

From the standpoint of redistribution and reaching the poorest and most vulnerable in the population, the Social Safety Net Reform Through the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH) has been one of the most successful elements of the Poverty Eradication Programme in terms of its targeting mechanism, although there have been concerns in terms of errors of inclusion and exclusion. The Beneficiary Identification System (BIS), for example, has had to be reviewed to address, among other issues, the disproportionate selection of households from urban centres including the Kingston Metropolitan area. This is linked to the complexity of having a single poverty measurement instrument that can adequately capture the distinguishing features of rural versus urban poverty. As shown in Table 4 (Appendix), there has been a disproportionate selection of the urban poor as programme beneficiaries.

B. Employment Creation and Decent Work Agenda

Since the World Social Summit there has been general consensus that the promotion of full employment within a system of fair globalization is central to the achievement of social development goals. The decent work agenda incorporating employment creation, workers' rights, social protection, social dialogue and equal opportunities, provides an excellent framework for ensuring policy coherency in the economic and social spheres. This integrated approach has been fully embraced by Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean in the implementation of various economic development initiatives, including those involving foreign direct investment or multilateral agreements.

DECENT WORK AGENDA

- Promoting and realizing standards and fundamental principles and rights at work
- Creating greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and incomes
- Enhancing the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all
- Strengthening tripartism and social dialogue.

Commitment to decent work is demonstrated by the ratification of the ILO Conventions on core labour standards, including the Conventions on the “Minimum Age of Employment” and the “Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour”. In addition, discussions surrounding the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) have included focus on the establishment of a “social floor” to encompass a range of provisions. A CARICOM Reciprocal Social Security Agreement is also in place to support the Free Movement of Skills in the region.

There are, however, a significant number of challenges which are of not only national, but also regional and international significance, which need to be overcome if the decent work agenda is to be fully realized. These include:

- The increasing size and complexity of the informal sector, including atypical and non-standard forms of employment relationships in formal establishments. This is reflected in the significant coverage gap in the social protection system. In addition, underemployment and the rising number of “working poor” are of critical concern.
- High levels of youth unemployment linked not only with the limited availability of jobs and the preference of some employers for workers with “experience”, but also structural factors such as the lack of symmetry between the curriculum of education and training institutions and labour market demands. The section on “Tackling the Poverty of Opportunity in Small Island Developing States” in the 2007 World Youth Report highlighted a number of pertinent issues relating to youth unemployment in Caribbean countries including Jamaica. As stated in the Report “the high rate of youth unemployment in the small island developing states represent a significant waste of productive resources and are the root of an array of socio-economic problems in these countries”.
- Gender inequalities in the labour market represented by higher levels of unemployment for females, especially young women. Paradoxically, in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean, this is occurring within a context where women are recording significantly higher levels of educational attainment than men, as represented in the current enrolment ratio of 82% females to 18% males on the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies in Jamaica.
- Need for active labour market policies to address among other issues, the constant retraining of workers, including older persons, to ensure flexible adaptation to the changing labour market situation within the context of globalisation, technological advances and the emergence of the knowledge-based economy.
- Continued discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment practices and the unwillingness of some employers to make reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, even where this is dictated by government policy guidelines.

- A complex range of labour migration issues such as the loss of the most educated and highly skilled workers to the developed countries after significant investments have been made to enhance human resource development in the sending countries; and the vulnerability of mainly low skilled un-documented migrants to exploitation, poverty and social exclusion in the absence of social protection for themselves and their families.

C Expanding Education, Training and Employment Opportunities for Young People

The National Youth Policy is being reviewed to ensure that it is informed by prevailing conditions and provides an effective framework to create opportunities, promote and enhance youth participation in all spheres of society and improve the lives of all young people, thereby enhancing their contribution to national development. Programmes for expanding education, training and employment opportunities for young people are central to the National Youth Policy. Among these are:

- Strengthening of the Education and Social Transformation Programme, including gender-appropriate measures to stem the pervasive underachievement of boys and reduce the drop-out rate of girls as a result of teenage pregnancies.
- Expanded social assistance benefits for poor household to facilitate children remaining in school especially at the secondary level.
- Revitalization of the Youth Employment Network (JYEN) which was established through a public private sector partnership under the auspices of the Jamaica Employers Federation as part of the UN/World Bank initiative to promote youth employment.
- Launching of a major skills training programme by the Labour Ministry in collaboration with relevant training institutions and national youth programmes.
- Expansion of Youth Information Centres and other facilities and programmes to meet the educational, social and cultural needs of young people and support their holistic development.

D. Community Development Initiative

A major community development initiative has recently been embarked upon by the Government in support of police action to stem crime and violence in volatile inner-city communities through social interventions. This initiative aims to:

- **Enhance Human & Social Capital** by skills training, parental education, youth development and educational support programmes, introduction of individual and group mentoring programmes and the establishment of uniformed groups and residential summer camps. These actions are intended to build social and community cohesion engender strong sense of belonging, foster strong positive values and strengthen social capital.
- **Promote Economic Enablement** through the introduction of meaningful employment and economic activities within the communities. Increasing the opportunities for employment of community residents particularly in the areas of marketable and competitive skills that can reduce the propensity to be involved in illegal and unethical economic ventures.
- **Provision of Basic Social Services to Improve Physical Infrastructure** of the community by conducting regular bushing of empty lots, removal of garbage and

the provision of proper waste disposal and proper lighting as a deterrent to criminal activities.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS – WAY FORWARD

In view of the strong linkages between employment, poverty eradication and social integration and the broader sustainable development goals, it is imperative that efforts be redoubled to address the challenging issues just outlined, as well as other factors which impinge on the realization of these goals.

The Report of the Secretary-General on Promoting Full Employment and Decent Work (E/CN.5/2008/4) provides a useful set of policy recommendations which could be adopted. These encompass the integration of economic and social policies, enterprise development taking into account the rural sector, training and skills enhancement, expanding coverage and effectiveness of social protection systems, and the strengthening of the institutional capacity to promote social dialogue and the regulatory framework for enforcement of core labour standards. The need for strengthened partnerships and collaboration at the international level is also highlighted in the report is of critical importance.

Other essential strategies and approaches necessary for successfully addressing these challenges include direct and special focus on the causes of youth unemployment and best practices to eliminate this problem as well as the mainstreaming of gender, age a disability in all employment policies and poverty eradication strategies as well as geographically differentiated strategies for rural and urban areas.

Appendix

Table4: Percentage Distribution of Programme of Advancement Through Health and education (PATH) Beneficiaries Compared with Distribution of Poor and Share in Total Population By Parish

Parish	Percentage PATH Beneficiaries in Parish	Percentage Jamaica's Poor in Parish (JSLC 2002)	Parish Share in Total Population*
Kingston & St. Andrew	8.16	20.9	26.9
St. Thomas	4.43	5.1	3.6
Portland	4.5	5.0	3.2
St. Mary	7.6	5.9	4.6
St. Ann	8.48	12	6.3
Trelawny	3.92	4.4	3.0
St. James	5.86	4.5	6.5
Hanover	5.45	1.8	2.8
Westmoreland	7.69	5.1	5.4
St. Elizabeth	11.08	5.8	6.1
Manchester	8.99	8.9	6.7
Clarendon	12.80	12.6	9.0
St. Catherine	11.04	5.8	16.0
Total	100	100	100

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Security Database and JSLC, 2002.

* Based on Population Census 2001