

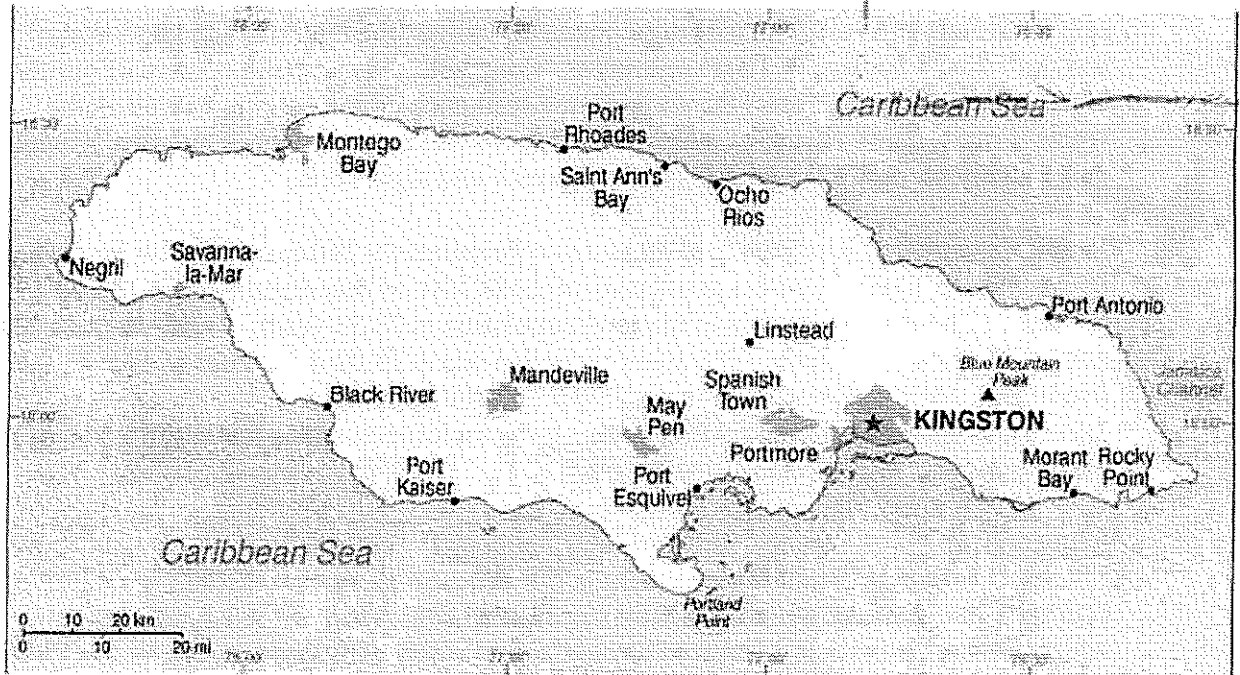
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

INCEPTION REPORT

JAMAICA

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An inception report submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Course on:
INTELLECTUAL IMPAIRMENT IN COMMUNITY
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Japan International Cooperation Agency

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INCEPTION REPORT

JAMAICA

General Information

Physical Features and Key Statistical Data

Jamaica is one of the largest English speaking countries in the Caribbean and forms a part of the Greater Antilles. The island is commonly called “the land of Wood and Water”, and the “Isle of Springs.” These references, along with the symbolic colours of our flag, black, green and gold, depict the strength and resilience of our people, as well as the warm climate, many rivers, beaches, mountain contours, grassy slopes and plains, which make lovely sceneries for paintings, photography and sight seeing.

Jamaica’s capital is Kingston, and measures approximately 240 kilometers in length and 85 kilometers in width, with a population of 2,698,800; of this amount, over 700,000 are urban. The life expectancy of the total population is 73.53 years. 71.54 years for male and 75.03 years for female. The infant mortality rate is 15.22 deaths out of every 1,000 live births. Maternal mortality rate is 95 per 100,000 live births.

Jamaica, in spite of its strong African ancestry is multiracial and is a true reflection of its hanging motto; “Out of many, one people.”

Education:

There has been significant improvement in our educational system that has increased the country’s literacy rate, which presently stands at 86.8%. Most of the island’s schools which are state owned and financed through the Ministry of Education, fall within three basic categories, and are as follows:

- ❖ Early Childhood Education for children between the ages 3-6 years
- ❖ Primary Education, 6 – 12 years
- ❖ Secondary Education, 12 -18 years

The School of Hope, through the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with other learning institutions, also offers special education and training for persons with various types of disabilities, including the intellectually impaired.

One of the factors that have indeed contributed to our educational achievement is compulsory education at the Primary level. This was made mandatory by the Government through the legislative provision of the Child Care Protection Act 2004, which states that every child has the right to education and that it is the duty of the state to ensure that education is free and compulsory at this basic level.

The government has also sought to ensure compulsory education, through the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) programme, which requires all children who are beneficiaries to attend school.

At the tertiary level, there are a number of Community Colleges, Teachers Colleges, vocational Training Centres and Universities. Primary and Secondary education have been free from tuition fees since 2007, however there is a cost attached to tertiary education. However, there are opportunities available for those who cannot afford further

education in the Vocational Training Arena, through the Human Employment And Resource Training – National Training Agency (H.E.A.R.T-NTA), and also through an extensive scholarship network for the various Universities.

Laws and Policies for the Rights of the Intellectually Impaired

Jamaica, on a whole upholds and defends the basic human rights of its entire people and is a signatory to several United Nations Conventions on a number of laws and policies, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), intended to protect the human rights of persons worldwide. Although there are no laws dealing specifically with the intellectually impaired, these persons' rights are also respected and protected under International Legislative agreements and nationally instituted laws and policies such as the Jamaican Constitution and our National Policy for Persons with disabilities. A National Disability Bill is currently in its ninth draft and will soon be returned to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel along with drafting instructions for the preparation of the tenth draft. When the tenth draft has been prepared consultations with the general public and stakeholder NGO's will be pursued with the aim of inviting comments on the draft bill. Following review, the bill will then be submitted to parliament for it to be tabled for passage into law. Upon passage, the bill will then become the National Disability Act. The passage of the Act will allow Jamaica to move towards full compliance with the provisions and requirements of the UNCRPD.

The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities offers similar protection and rights as other Legislative provisions and is more sensitive to the needs of disabled persons. The Policy also further guarantees and protects their rights, through specific guidelines and principles as these persons are among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the society. The goal of the Policy therefore, is to improve the status and condition of persons with disabilities, so that they can enjoy better quality of life in areas such as education, employment, health, housing, transportation and accessibility to all areas of the society.

The Principles which govern this Policy are based on the human rights of people with disabilities, which will enable them to enjoy the benefits of full citizens, and to carry out the obligations of full citizens of Jamaica. The purpose of the policy is to:

- ❖ Set guidelines and directions for the Jamaican government for the equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities;
- ❖ Assist government in strengthening its capacity to address disability issues as well as assist individual agencies to improve their capacity to address disability issues within their areas of functional responsibility;
- ❖ Provide a framework for agencies of government to cooperate in developing and implementing policies designed to provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities in all aspects of life;
- ❖ Assist government in implementing the United Nations' Standard Rules on the Equalization of opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

In addition, there are new legislative provisions to protect children and this includes children living with disability; for example, a disabled child has the right to special care,

education and training to help him/her enjoy a full and decent life and to achieve the greatest degree of self reliance and social integration possible.

Financial Assistance for the Intellectually Impaired & Other Persons with Disabilities

The government through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security takes the lead role in providing a range of social services and programmes. These programmes target the unemployed, the social welfare needs of the poor and less privileged families, the elderly and persons with various types of disabilities including persons who are intellectually impaired. Over 40,000 persons with disabilities have benefited from the Council for Persons with Disabilities since its inception in 1971. Since the establishment of the Early Stimulation programme for children with disabilities in 1975, 20,500 children have benefited. An average of 3,000 persons per year receive monetary assistance for tuition fees, uniform, books and medication. Presently, there are 23,600 individuals with disabilities benefiting from the PATH programme which is a monthly monetary assistance programme, administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

Since the start of the fiscal year 2008-2009 the Government of Jamaica has earmarked grant funding to be used in the assistance of Persons With Disabilities. The funds are utilized in two programmes:

1) The Economic Empowerment Grant programme which provides self help projects to individuals with disabilities or their caregivers.

2) The Assistive Aid Grant programme which provides financial aid to PWD's in purchasing assistive/adaptive aids (e.g. hearing aids, prostheses, glasses etc.) and also to help cover expenses for medical procedures (e.g. surgery, diagnostic tests etc.)

In 2008-2009 Jamaican fifteen million dollars (J\$ 15,000,000.00) was allocated, in 2009-2010 twelve million, eight hundred thousand dollars (J\$ 12,800,000.00) was allocated and a further twelve million, eight hundred thousand dollars (J\$ 12,800,000.00) has been earmarked for 2010-2011. To date over five hundred (500) persons have benefited from these programmes.

There are also Rehabilitation Grants for persons who wish to get involved in self help projects. Financial assistance also comes from private and non government agencies, aimed at cushioning the effects of poverty on the vulnerable groups which include persons with disabilities.

Services including CBR available for persons with Intellectual Disabilities

Services for PWID's include several governmental and non-governmental institutions. Governmental institutions include the School of Hope, Abilities Foundation, Ministry of

Education Special Education Unit, Early Childhood Commission, Early Stimulation Programme and the Assessment and Guidance training center. NGO's include the Jamaica Association for Intellectual Disabilities, 3D's, Jamaica Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, Combined Disabilities Association, Jamaica Autism Support Association, Maia Chung Autism Foundation, Jamaica Down Syndrome Foundation, Nathan Ebanks Foundation, Genesis and Promise Academies among others. Data regarding the number of persons served has however not been properly collated.

MY ORGANIZATION/Ministry of Labour and Social Security

VISION

To contribute to national development, through the provision of efficient and effective labour and social security services; within the context of a globalize economy.

MISSION STATEMENT:

To promote a stable, industrial climate through tripartite dialogue, ensure the highest standards of occupational safety and health at the workplace facilitate increased access to employment and effectively manage social protection programmes, including those for groups with special needs such as households below the poverty line, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security commenced operations in 1938, as an Employment Bureau. The Bureau was the first official response to the growing unemployment, which was spreading throughout Jamaica during that period. The relationship between employer and employee at the time was one of the master and servant. This gave rise to grave economic disparities within the population, as most persons received low wages and had poor living and working conditions. In response to a need for social programmes, which catered to all sections of the population, a planning team was established in the Ministry of Labour to develop a social security scheme. The Ministry obtained technical assistance from the International Labour Organization (ILO) to develop proposals for this scheme. The National Insurance Scheme Act was passed in 1965 and became effective April 4, 1966. When the Scheme was established, it incorporated the Sugar Workers' Pension Scheme. The Social Security Division of the Ministry which was called Welfare, evolved from this as programmes were added to address the needs of vulnerable groups within the society. On the other hand, the Labour Division is concerned with matters affecting individuals in their capacity as workers, employers and members of the country's labour force and has been able, through effective and strategic planning to lower the unemployment rate to 11.3%. Other services provided are industrial safeties, employment promotion, providing a source of income for workers who are injured on the job, retirement benefits, industrial disputes resolution, pay and conditions of employment, elimination of child labour and other related matters.

The objectives of the Social Security division are to:

- Modernize and improve the administration of the Social Security system for more efficient operation;
- Strengthen the social protection system in keeping with government's policy to reduce poverty;
- Adopt a developmental approach in the provision of social assistance benefits to promote human capital investment and thereby reduce dependence on the state;
- Ensure the operation of an efficient, objective and;
- Transparent Beneficiary Identification System for social assistance;
- Expand coverage under the National Insurance Scheme, by ensuring compliance, in accordance with the provisions of the National Insurance Act;
- Promote active and productive ageing and ensure the full participation of senior citizens in all aspects of national life;
- Ensure prudent management of the National Insurance Fund for long term sustainability and provision of improved benefits;
- Ensure equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities;
- Promote social integration of vulnerable groups and groups with special needs;

MY PRESENT POSITION AND DUTIES:

I am presently the Administrator for the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD), which is one of the departments of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. In my capacity, I have overall responsibility for the coordination and administration of the offices of the Council. My duties include:

- Developing and maintaining documentation of administrative policies and procedures
- Organizing and coordinating seminars and conference activities
- Conducting performance appraisals of personnel supervised
- Maintaining records of the fixed assets of the JCPD and ensuring that all furniture, fixtures, equipment and machinery are accounted for
- Preparing inputs to quarterly reports and the annual budget
- Administering the development of the JCPD website

- Liaising with the Public Relations Unit of the MLSS as well as the Personnel Department and the Media to ensure that the work and activities of the JCPD are effectively publicized and administered.
- Maintaining subscriptions for audio visual and Braille materials, journals and other related publications etc.
- Attending policy meetings with relevant government departments towards implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) - Vision 2030

Additionally, I am also a member of the National Advisory Board on Disabilities (NABD) which advises the Minister on issues pertaining to disability. Also, I am a director of an NGO, the Jamaica Down Syndrome Foundation where I have specific responsibility for the parents group based in Kingston.

DEPARTMENT IN WHICH I AM EMPLOYED:

Background

The Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities is the government department responsible for the welfare and rehabilitation of Persons With Disabilities in the island of Jamaica. The JCPD is a department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and funding for its operations come primarily through the Consolidated Fund of the Government of Jamaica.

The JCPD has been in existence since 1973 when it was started as the National Vocational Training and Rehabilitation programme which was primarily a rehabilitation programme for persons suffering from earlier outbreaks of polio. The Council has since expanded its role to include all persons with disabilities and was renamed the Jamaica Council for the Handicapped before assuming its present title. In 1975 the Early Stimulation Programme was started as a division of the JCPD with the mandate of improving the development of children with disabilities in the age group of 0-6 years old

Goals and Purpose of the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities:

- I. To provide rehabilitative care for PWD's in Jamaica
- II. To provide vocational training in the form of operating training workshops (both sheltered and production)
- III. To maintain a registry of disabled persons living in Jamaica
- IV. To prevent development of additional disabilities in its clients and the society in general, which would otherwise ensue without intervention;
- V. To act as a resource to other agencies serving PWD's, by providing consultations, referrals, intervention programmes and training;
- VI. To implement public education programmes, dealing with Prevention of Disabilities.
- VII. To house and operate the Early Stimulation Programme.
- VIII. To operate a hostel for young women who attend its training workshops but who need accommodation because of various factors (geographical, socio-economical)

- IX. To provide rehabilitative grants for PWD's who are interested in pursuing self help projects.
- X. To assist in covering educational expenses for children with disabilities and occasionally children of persons with disabilities.
- XI. To assist in processing personal income tax exemptions for clients who qualify for such tax exemption (based on the severity of the disability).
- XII. To process identification cards for PWD's (which allows them to access concessionary fares on public transportation) and also to provide disabled access parking stickers.
- XIII. To assist in making public owned building disabled accessible (building ramps etc.)
- XIV. To assist in the placement of PWD's in gainful employment.
- XV. Ensuring that the rights of PWD's are not infringed.

Referral and Registration:

Clients are referred to the Council from various sources but mainly from Hospitals, primary health care facilities, NGO's and concerned individuals. Clients are required to register with the Council by having a medical form detailing the nature of their disability completed by the relevant medical practitioners. Registration is voluntary. Currently fewer than 10,000 persons are registered with the JCPD but the estimated population of PWD's is approximately 270,000 persons.

Situation of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities:

1. Diagnosis is sometimes done in a clinical setting sometimes as early as at birth (e.g. Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Hydrocephalus etc.), however in most cases diagnosis is made much later when the child may begin to show developmental delays. Diagnosis may then be made when the child is sent to clinical assessment specialists or assessment centers (e.g. the Mico University child assessment center). In many cases no proper diagnosis is made, particularly in rural settings, and the child is just described as being 'slow'.
2. Education. Special Education schools exist across the island, the main ones being branches of the School of Hope which is government run. Private special educational facilities are also present although in very limited numbers. Integrated education is also available at some public and private schools however the prevailing situation is that many more school places are needed across the island. There is a dearth of institutions that offer appropriate and adequate educational opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities. Social stigmas against intellectual disabilities also compound the problem with many parents choosing not to seek appropriate help for various reasons.

3. Vocational Training and Job Opportunity. Limited opportunities exist for Persons With Disabilities in general and Intellectual Disability in particular. The Abilities Foundation and the Assessment and Guidance center are two organizations that offer some vocational training however they have an enrollment of less than 150 persons combined. Most of the other vocational training tends to take the form of apprenticeship. Employment of PWID's is estimated to be less than 1%.
4. Support Organizations:
 - a. Governmental: The JCPD is the main governmental support organization for PWID's. Other governmental social support services include the PATH programme and to a small extent the Poor relief departments.
 - b. NGO's. Several NGO's exist that serve PWID's, in fact the NGO community offers a higher level of support than the governmental channels especially in the area of residential facilities. The Mustard Seed Communities run by the Catholic church is one of the larger NGO's serving the disabled.

ISSUES TO BE SOLVED

Several key issues need to be tackled in order to conduct effective support for PWID's in particular and PWD's in general. These include:

- Data collection. A scarcity of data does not allow for the proper planning of support services for PWID's. The PWID subset is believed to comprise the largest segment of PWD's. However no accurate data exists in terms of numbers, distribution or type of intellectual disability. The design of the national census does not presently allow this data to be captured at present. A glimmer of hope in resolving this issue exists in the form of an upcoming IDB project which will seek among other things to more accurately capture the number of persons living with disabilities and distribution. This project is however limited in that it will not be able to conduct a thorough census but will have to rely on secondary data and statistical sampling. The project will seek to vastly improve the registry of PWD's currently housed at the JCPD.
- Education. More educational opportunities will have to be provided to PWID's in order to allow full inclusion in mainstream society, however current data gaps do not allow the appropriate planning for provision of adequate educational solutions for PWID's
- Vocational Training. More vocational training centers are required to be able to serve the existing population of PWID's. The National Developmental Plan includes a segment which will attempt to address this shortcoming however it needs to be expanded both in scope and detail in order to achieve desired goals. Scarcity of resources is a severe restraining factor in this equation however.
- Support Organizations. Support Organizations are in serious need of strengthening in terms of size, outreach and technical capacity. There is a serious shortage of qualified clinical personnel needed to attend to the needs of PWID's. Occupational therapists, speech pathologists, special education teachers, child psychologists and other necessary personnel needed for diagnosis, care, support and development for PWID's are in very short supply in the island and those

present tend to be in the private sector. This poses serious access challenges for caregivers who are in the lower socioeconomic strata. In addition, not many persons are gravitating towards training in these fields, especially in those fields which require overseas training such as speech and occupational therapists, and many of those who actually do the training tend to migrate overseas. Low public sector wages for these categories of workers also hampers recruitment of these personnel.

- **Public Education.** A vigorous, sustained public education campaign is needed to reduce/eliminate the societal stigmas associated with disability and in particular intellectual disability. This is also addressed under the NDP but will have to be increased in scope and intensity in order to achieve desired goals. Again resource constraints are proving to be a limiting factor in this endeavour.