

## 5. Jamaica

Ms. JULIETT PATRICIA BROWN

COUNTRY REPORT

TOPIC: MENTAL RETARDATION

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COUNTRY: JAMAICA  
ORGANIZATION: MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIVISION

The Children's Services Division provides care and protective services for the nations children. It directs and operates the National Foster Care Programme and is actively involved in the adoption process.

The Children's Services Division under the Ministry of Health, provides suitable placements in Child Care institutions for physically and mentally handicapped children. The disabled population in Child Care Institutions is reported to have grown to over Three Hundred (300) since 1989.

43 The institutions utilizes the services of other organizations that caters to various needs of the disabled population. This serves to be true mainly for the Kingston based institutions, as most services are centralized in Kingston. Each institution may become creative in providing their own methods of rehabilitation. In some cases these approaches are limited to the patron's training or experiences, which are not usually adequate to the total need of the retarded individual.

The general lack of knowledge and rehabilitative skills are addresses through seminars and training programmes provided by the Agency (Children's Services Division) or accessed through other independent bodies such as Developmental Disabilities, School of Hope and others.

Rehabilitation services in Jamaica for the mentally retarded persons have improved over the years, however, the process have been slow when measured against world trends.

Advocate groups have been successful in drawing attention to the needs of the mentally retarded population. It is estimated by the U.S.A.I.D./Private voluntary organization (PVO) study 198 that there are eighty one (81) Thousand handicapped which is eight (8) percent of the age 0-16 group in Jamaica, of this group the Situation analysis of women and children in Jamaica, estimates that only two (2) percent of the retarded group receive any specialized help or services.

The services offered to the handicapped are done mainly through Non-Government organizations (NGOs). This include early detection and rehabilitation. Seventy five (75) percent of these services are centralized in Kingston the capital city. This leaves many rural MRs without services.

The 3Ds project Jamaica's first community based rehabilitation programme is based in St. Catherine. This project provides rehabilitation and advocacy. It also assist families in accessing services in education placements, employment counselling and home training. This is also limited to that and other neighbouring parishes.

CAMROD (Commitment to all member regional and Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) in fostering new directions for people with disabilities). This advocacy group has created its own goals implementing strategies to achieve various goals according to the U.N. declaration on the rights of mentally retarded persons.

The Combined Disabilities Association (CDA) is a self help organization of persons with disabilities. It advocates on matters concerning welfare and development of all citizens with disabilities. They have been successful in getting Government to make a policy decision in reserving at least two (2) percent of jobs in the public sector.

45 They have obtained a housing policy with the National Housing Trust where five (5) percent of the houses built and or marketed by them be reserved for the disabled persons. They also aid in public awareness on disability issues.

While Combined Disabilities Association and other advocacy groups continue their campaign for the disabled it is reported that an alarmingly high number of school leavers graduate from educational institutions inadequately prepared for the world of work. They enter the job market as illiterates, semi-illiterates unskilled and semi-skilled individuals.

These persons may have had educational or mental disability needs that were not addressed or identified through assessment for the relevant placement.

The Jamaica five (5) year Development Plan in education and training (1990-1995) identified failing students as having mental physical and intellectual disabilities. The report stated that provisions for these students have been generally inadequate. It acknowledge the significant number of slow learners mildly retarded students in the regular education system whose needs are not being addressed (five 5 year Development Plan 1990-1995).

46 According to the results of a research study conducted by the writer, it was found that a sample set of students, from a Child Care Institution, had difficulty with academic work in the regular classroom. They were referred for formal assessment, and were subsequently placed in School of Hope where the environment catered to their exceptionalities. This resulted in their improvement in their learning and school performances. To date these students are currently participating in skills training or is being recommended for School of Hope skills training programme. It is hoped that these students will have received enough training to enable them a secure place in society.

The students success story came about as a result of an effective referral process. The referral process appears to be minimal and seem to be non-existent in the school setting. Mentally retarded persons are impacted upon negatively and leaves them with learning deficits.

There is therefore need for a more active referral process that will facilitate skills training and also more programmes to assist the adult and adolescent mentally retarded person access a stabled life in todays society.

47 Deeds Industries, School of Hope and the 3Ds projects are the few organizations that are contributing to some vital developmental needs in the life of the mentally retarded. The School of Hope caters to the children with mental retardation. Unit classes exists across the island in some primary schools or are independently situated at strategic points in Town areas across the island. There are over forty (40) such units islandwide. The school offers a skill training programme at its headquarters in Kingston. Graduates from this programme are placed in companies or industries who agreed to the employment of skilled mentally retarded persons.

Mico Care (Mico Child Assessment and Research Centre) caters to assessment and referral needs of the disabled persons. They are also involved in some rehabilitation exercises in educational, occupational, and psychological therapy. Special services for the disabled are as follows.

Mico Child Assessment and research in education 5 Manhattan Road, Kingston 5. Jamaica Association of Children with learning disabilities (J.A.C.L.D.) 7 Linster Road, Kingston 5.

Early stimulation project, 95 Hanover Street Kingston.

Jamaica Association of the Deaf (J.A.D.), 9 Marescaux Road, Kingston 5.

Three Ds projects, 14 Monk Street, Spanish Town.

Jamaica Association of persons with Mental retardation, School of Hope, 7 Golden Avenue, Kingston 7.

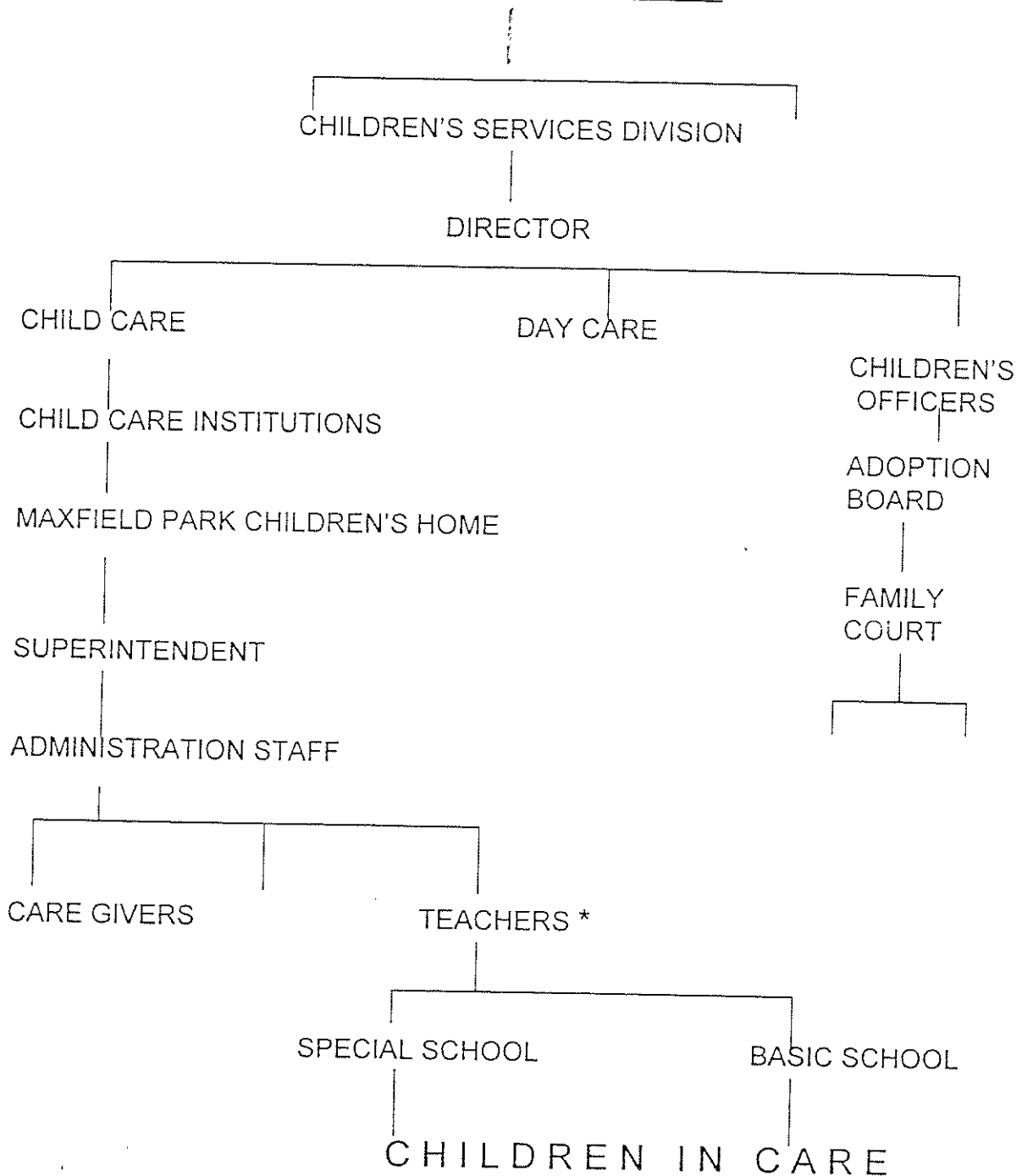
Salvation Army School for the blind, 34 Mannings Hill Road, Kingston.

My personal philosophy for the mentally retarded among the disabled in society is that the disabled should be afforded opportunity to achieving their highest potential in receiving education shelter social services and employment.



# ORGANISATION CHART

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH



\* Juliett Brown Supervises and participates in educational programmes for the Children in the Institution.