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FY 2009 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE GOALS

The Governments of the United States and Jamaica have enjoyed a long-standing partnership with mutual visions for a peaceful and stable democracy. While Jamaica has made notable strides on many social indicators, significant challenges threaten to undermine economic, social, and political stability. Jamaica struggles with a persistent fiscal deficit and a heavy debt burden. High unemployment rates, persistent crime, corruption, and a cumbersome business environment are some of the factors that hinder Jamaica's global competitiveness. Although Jamaica has achieved near universal primary and secondary education enrollment, these advances have been overshadowed by the relatively poor performance of students. Lack of education is perceived to be one of the major drivers of crime and political instability in the country. Frequent natural disasters also affect critical sectors such as agriculture. Varying socioeconomic challenges exacerbate Jamaica's ability to support well-needed public services, such as education and health care.

In the economic growth portfolio, United States Government (USG) assistance supports streamlining business processes to encourage greater investments and make it easier to do business. In addition to promoting workforce development, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) promotes sustainable agriculture practices that encourage increased production, while discouraging practices that harm the environment and promoting sustainable livelihoods, particularly among rural communities. In promoting peace and security, USAID is supporting community-based policing and greater involvement of community residents in fighting crime. In increasing citizens' participation, USAID is supporting strengthening civil society organizations and encouraging greater youth engagement in civic affairs. USAID is supporting national anticorruption efforts to stem corrupt practices in all sectors. The education sector continues to support improved performance among students in literacy and numeracy. In the health sector, USAID provided technical assistance to the National Family Planning Board and the Statistical Institute of Jamaica to conduct reproductive health surveys, providing much-needed data on HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes, and risk behaviors. USG resources supported HIV/AIDS workplace policy development and strengthened institutional capacity within the private sector.

HIGHLIGHTS BY PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Peace and Security

USG efforts emphasize capacity building and institutional strengthening. There has been significant progress in community-based policing. USAID has assisted the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) in mainstreaming community-based policing as the center of an institution-wide philosophy and culture change program. Support to the JCF included:

- Training the senior and middle-command police officers responsible for 19 divisions across the island
- Development of a training manual and monitoring and evaluation system
- Incorporation of community-based policing approaches in gang prevention strategies
- Development of key publications such as leaflets, flyers, and posters on community-based policing, anticorruption, and tips for community safety

With USAID support, there has been an increase in awareness among community stakeholders about their respective roles in community safety and security. Results from 2008 Latin American and Public Opinion Poll surveys in Jamaica indicate that 85 percent of the public support the police, which provided a boost in morale among the JCF and dispelled beliefs that there was very little or no support for the police.

In an effort to support the Government of Jamaica's (GOJ) efforts to deal with gangs and violence in schools, USAID is supporting training school resource officers, guidance counselors, and administrators in the JCF and the Ministry of Education in investigation and gang prevention programs.

Governing Justly and Democratically

In continued efforts to build capacity and integrate planning and partnership, USAID established Jamaica's National Integrity Action Forum (NIAF) to help tackle what public opinion polls state is the second biggest challenge for Jamaica: corruption. The NIAF brings key anticorruption reform champions together, and the group has already made significant progress and has been clearly established as a key component in Jamaica's national integrity system. The NIAF has been critical in building a supportive network and motivating action among key reform champions, while engaging a cross-section of the media, religious leaders, and bipartisan support among the political leadership. USG resources also supported a national public education campaign for an anticorruption helpline.

USAID is also supporting an emerging coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) desirous of engaging youth and securing their participation in a good governance and civic education program.

USG support has contributed to notable progress in community transformation, particularly as it relates to community safety and security, including:

- Development of community safety and security plans in 58 communities
- Community profiles developed in partnership with the Social Development Commission

These actions help to support the JCF in mapping community-based policing needs and promote greater understanding between the police and residents. These collaborative approaches have helped to increase the capacity of key community-based structures.

In supporting at-risk youth, USAID partnered with an e-learning company, GoGSAT Limited, in using its web-based learning program to help over 4,000 children successfully matriculate to high school. The challenge was that many students were at risk of dropping out of school for several reasons, including underperformance on the Grade Six Achievement Test, which determined their placement in high schools. Once they dropped out, they would become more vulnerable to gang recruitment. In addition, through a USG-supported and specially developed interactive module on safety and security, the children were educated on community safety and security issues in addition to the Math and English coursework. This partnership has been a best practice that promises to generate further partnerships in this area and continued support to at-risk youth and gang prevention activities.

Investing in People

Modernization and transformation in the education sector continue to be among the top priorities of the GOJ. The Government has set 100 percent literacy by 2015 as the goal for all primary schools. USAID supported the Ministry's long-term strategy through its Expanding Educational Horizon's (EEH) project, which targeted improved literacy and numeracy in selected schools and NGOs. EEH contributed to these efforts by increasing access to economic opportunities for the poor via increased literacy, and the development of sustainable community and business partnerships. Achievements include:

- Procuring and distributing hardware, software, and other learning materials for schools and NGOs such as Alpha Smart, Write-Out Loud software, multimedia projectors, and laptop computers
- Training resource teachers in each of the 71 project schools to deliver on-site and cluster training sessions
- Training of administrators, such as territorial education officers, principals, vice-principals, senior teachers, coordinators, and directors of NGOs, in instructional leadership to improve accountability at their institutions
- Introducing the Jamaica School Administrative Software (JSAS) to 600 public schools to improve the accountability of school administrators and support overall school management
- Providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Education to enhance the capacity of the JSAS to make it ready for implementation in all 1,000 public schools in Jamaica, and introducing a web-enabled version to make it even more accessible by multiple users simultaneously

USG resources also supported:

- 73 Parent Teacher Associations and governance structures
- Improving the performance of boys to alter the negative trend of underperformance of male students

- Increasing the number of private partnerships and the amount of funds leveraged by schools to improve educational quality

U.S. foreign assistance in Jamaica supports social, economic, domestic, and international security, education, family planning, and HIV and AIDS. HIV and AIDS fits contextually within the Investing in People program area.

In FY 2009, the Division of Reproductive Health in the Centers for Disease Control had provided technical assistance to the Jamaican National Family Planning Board and the Jamaican Statistical Institute to conduct the 2008-2009 Reproductive Health Survey, incorporating an extensive HIV module. Assistance included sampling design, questionnaire development, pretest, interviewers' training, data management, and analyses of selected HIV indicators. Successful completion of data collection and analyses on HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes, risk behaviors, testing, and counseling was achieved.

The HIV/AIDS program also supported workplace policy development and strengthening institutional capacity within the private sector:

- In FY 2009, with technical assistance from Futures Group, 10 member companies received technical assistance in HIV-related policy development.
- Ten member companies of the Jamaica Business Council on HIV and AIDS (JaBCHA) received training in workplace policy development, basic HIV, and sexuality.
- In addition, 549 staff of member companies, including members of the Executive Committee of JaBCHA, received training in HIV-related stigma and discrimination reduction.

Economic Growth

To achieve real economic growth, Jamaica must increase its ability to compete effectively in liberalized global markets, particularly in an era of rapid technological change.

To improve the business environment, USAID has been assisting the GOJ through a Cooperative Agreement with the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce (JCC) to create a Development Approval Centre that seeks to reduce the time it takes to get development approvals in Jamaica.

- The JCC “Legs and Regs” Development Approvals Process Project evolved from the Development and Investment Manual Project, where a “Development and Investment Manual” was produced. This manual documented the processes and procedures applied by all government agencies and authorities, as well as private sector bodies, involved in the development approvals process.
- The next stage of the Project was the identification and amendment or elimination of key legislation, regulations, and processes, which constrain the development approval process, and hinder investment in Jamaica.

USAID/Jamaica’s economic growth program is continuing to support activities aimed at improving the private sector’s capacity to contribute to economic growth and job creation and to benefit from trade and investment opportunities. Although the overall program has been reduced in size and scope, it continues to focus on improving the business environment through the Development Approval Process Project.

USAID, through the Jamaica Farmers Access to Regional Markets Project, (JA FARMS) aimed to conserve Jamaica's unique biodiversity and improve GOJ capacity to support sustainable agriculture development programs. JA FARMS supported activities that developed sustainable agricultural economic alternatives, which reduced threats to Jamaica's unique biodiversity.

Through training and demonstration greenhouses, JA FARMS introduced best practices in protected agriculture to local farmers, while strengthening the capacity of the Rural Agriculture Development Authority (RADA) and other key stakeholders to expand and improve services. Other accomplishments include:

- Training of 807 farmers, RADA Extension Officers, Forestry Department Officials, Bauxite Companies' Agricultural Officers, GOJ Education Officers, and secondary- and tertiary-level students in protected agriculture practices and technologies, including 286 women
- Partnering with the GOJ to establish a Market Information System to collect price data on a weekly basis at farm-gate, retail outlets, and wholesale outlets. The system is expected to create transparency in the value chain and stabilize markets.
- Placing 2,530 hectares of land under improved management

Sustainable agricultural practices encourage thriving farming livelihoods among rural communities. Not only do they contribute to sustained income generation for families, these practices discourage harmful environmental practices, therefore preserving Jamaica's biodiversity.

The USAID Protected Areas and Rural Enterprise project supported the GOJ and community partners further to preserve biodiversity, protected-areas management, and natural-resource friendly agriculture and tourism enterprise development. Emphasis was placed on building micro-enterprises through training, product development, and business operation support. As a result:

- 361 persons, including 229 women, were trained and received increased economic benefits
- The Cockpit Country Local Forest Management Committee (LFMC)'s Flagstaff Heritage Tours and Trails project was launched as a demonstration of community-led tourism enterprise based on the sustainable use of natural resources
- Forest conservation and management was advanced through strategic planning, building public awareness, and targeted forest rehabilitation

Specific threats to biodiversity conservation included forest encroachment and over-harvesting of young saplings associated with yam cultivation. As a result:

- Training in improved natural resource management and biodiversity conservation was provided to 1,040 project partners, including farmers, artisans from Cockpit Country LFMC, beekeepers of the St. Thomas Bee Farming Association, and cocoa farmers.
- Over 24,000 native or endemic forest seedlings were planted in priority sites within the Cockpit Country, and the Blue and John Crow Mountains.