



**USAID** | **JAMAICA**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# INCREASED LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS OF TARGETED JAMAICAN YOUTH

Latin American and Caribbean Education Profiles 1999–2004



## PROFILES OF USAID EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS: INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

This publication is one in a series profiling the recent work of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the education sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It is intended for all who are interested in learning more about USAID, international development, and education activities in the LAC region. While USAID currently has offices or development activities in 17 countries throughout the region, its education development efforts are concentrated in eight: the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Peru.

The purpose of the series is to provide information on how the U.S. government is responding to diverse education needs in these countries through a variety of initiatives—ranging from innovative projects that increase educational access for underserved populations to efforts to foster policy dialogue and better decision-making in the sector. Bringing these initiatives to life typically requires coordination with and participation from a variety of international, national, and local partners.

The publications highlight USAID efforts in these countries during a five year period, 1999–2004. Each profile treats one country and includes a succinct analysis of key problems that limit access to quality education there, defining those challenges within historical, political, and social contexts. The publication outlines USAID's strategies for targeting its education investments, describes specific projects for addressing key issues, and shares lessons learned/best practices to improve future programming.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Latin American and Caribbean  
Education Profiles 1999–2004



Two first grade students  
from Drews Avenue  
Primary School.

**COVER:** Students in a cooperative learning group at Cavaliers All Age School.

All images courtesy of U.S. Agency for International Development.

# JAMAICA AT A GLANCE



## GEOGRAPHY

**Total Population:** 2.6 million (mid-2004 estimate)  
**Land Area:** 10,991 sq. km (slightly smaller than Connecticut)  
**Capital:** Kingston (628,000 in metropolitan area)

## GOVERNMENT

**Government Type:** Constitutional parliamentary democracy  
**Current Prime Minister:** Percival James (P.J.) Patterson, sworn in, March 1992

## ECONOMY

**Total Gross Domestic Product (at current prices):** US\$7.7 billion (2003 estimate)  
**Per Capita GDP:** US\$2,963 (2003 estimate)  
**Population Living on Less Than US\$2 a Day:** 19.7 percent (2002 estimate)  
**Human Development Index:** .764 (compared with .777 LAC regional average—2002)  
**Overall Donor Assistance:** US\$247.7 million in grants and loans (2002)

## HEALTH AND CULTURE

**Median Age:** 26.8 years  
**Life Expectancy at Birth:** 75 years  
**Annual Population Growth Rate:** 1.4 percent (2004 estimate)  
**Chronic Undernourishment:** 10 percent of children under 5  
**Languages:** English and Patois  
**Official Language:** English  
**Ethnic Groups:** African descent 90.9 percent, mixed 7.3 percent, East Indian 1.3 percent, other 0.5 percent

## EDUCATION

**Compulsory Education:** 6 years (grades 1–6)  
**Literacy Rate:** 79.9 percent (2004 estimate)  
**Primary Completion Rate:** 95.1 percent (2003 estimate)  
**Primary Net Enrollment:** 89.4 percent (2003 estimate)  
**Lower Secondary Net Enrollment:** 80.5 percent (2003 estimate)  
**Upper Secondary Net Enrollment:** 56.7 percent (2003 estimate)  
**Tertiary Net Enrollment:** 18.1 percent (2003 estimate)  
**Tertiary Gross Enrollment:** 6.6 percent of GDP (2004 estimate)  
**Public Expenditures on Education Sector:** 6.6 percent of GDP (2004 estimate)

## **JAMAICA AT A GLANCE**

**THE PRIME MINISTER'S "TASK FORCE ON EDUCATIONAL REFORM JAMAICA" IS WORKING WITH PARLIAMENT IN 2005 ON AN ACTION PLAN TO GENERATE THE HUMAN CAPITAL AND SKILLS NECESSARY FOR JAMAICAN CITIZENS TO COMPETE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY.**

The Jamaican educational system has made great strides in increasing access and enrollment in schools. Yet Jamaican education professionals still struggle to improve quality, equity, and efficiency in the classroom. The government of Jamaica has addressed these challenges by allocating 6.6 percent of its 2004 gross domestic product to education and applying it toward new policies for curriculum reform.

Building on USAID/Jamaica's experience under the previous strategy, new efforts will further parental, community, and private sector partnerships in support of education initiatives. Strengthened leadership and governance in the education system enforce a higher quality standard and foster sustainability. Viewing schools as units for change has resulted in a more inclusive process that reinforces ownership and improved management practices. Better basic education contributes to a more competitive workforce. USAID/Jamaica will work with private sector partners to create opportunities and resources for a better educated society.

**USAID/Jamaica's 2005–2009 Country Strategy targets:**

- 1) Improved literacy and numeracy in targeted schools.**
- 2) Improved quality of teaching for at-risk and out-of-school youth.**
- 3) Increased support by parents, communities, and the private sector for education to meet Jamaica's needs.**

**USAID/JAMAICA STRIVES TO IMPROVE EDUCATION SYSTEMICALLY BY FULFILLING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION NEEDS THROUGH TOTAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE REFORM PROCESS.**

**“The quality and relevance of primary and secondary schooling in LAC countries continue to cause concern, as the majority of students attend weak and underfunded schools and fail to acquire basic skills in mathematics, language, and science. Fewer than 30 percent of students in the region complete secondary school, and many of those who do finish lack the skills to compete in the workplace—let alone in an increasingly competitive global economy. USAID programs are improving educational systems by developing innovative pilots and more effective service delivery models, many of which are being expanded by host governments and multilateral development banks.”**

**—Senate Testimony of Adolfo Franco,  
USAID Assistant Administrator for  
the LAC Bureau, March 2004**

#### **MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF USAID/JAMAICA**

**“USAID/Jamaica is improving the education of Jamaicans to lay the foundation for a well-trained workforce that can rise to the challenge of global competition. To this end, USAID has been successful in improving literacy and numeracy of poorly performing children and youth. Each year, over the last six years, USAID has assisted 29,000 children and 6,000 youths from the poorest primary schools and nongovernmental organizations. Hundreds of these children advance to qualify for coveted spaces in Jamaica’s top-performing high schools. USAID will continue to contribute to an education system that will prepare well-rounded and skilled youngsters who are able to contribute to a prosperous country with a sustainable future. Jamaica has net enrollment rates of 96.4 percent at early childhood and 89.4 percent at primary. However, the primary school daily attendance rate is 80.0 percent and needs to be improved. USAID will collaborate with the government of Jamaica to address major issues of improving quality, maximizing the use of resources, and addressing gender differences. With boys’ underachievement one of the major concerns for local educators, the new strategy is designed to introduce activities aimed at correcting male underperformance. In addition, the education program will build on the successes of the previous programs while emphasizing community partnerships and linkages.”**

**—Karen Turner**

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# PART I

## BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

### EDUCATION CONDITIONS IN JAMAICA

Jamaica has achieved near-universal primary education coverage, with a gross enrollment rate of 94 percent and a net enrollment rate of 89.4 percent of children ages 6–12 enrolled in school. Gross enrollment in upper secondary school (ages 15–19, grades 10–13) is 79.8 percent.<sup>1</sup>

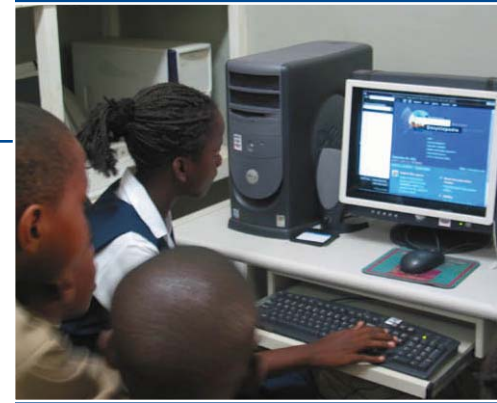
Despite these notable achievements in systemic coverage, the education sector faces considerable challenges in quality, equity, and efficiency. Gross enrollment is only 18.1 percent at the tertiary level, though this surpasses the 15 percent target established by the Caribbean Community.<sup>2</sup> The sharp decline in enrollment after age 15 is of particular concern given that youth

unemployment in Jamaica, at 34 percent, is the highest in the Americas. The situation is even more difficult for poor 17 to 19-year-olds, since fewer than one fifth attend school and unemployment is as high as 75 percent for inner city youth—further fueling the national problems of crime and violence.

Primary and lower secondary school attendance is poor, with only about three fourths of enrolled children attending classes regularly. As a result, more than half of sixth grade students fail to achieve “near mastery” on language and math tests, and about 30 percent of them remain functionally illiterate. Boys’ underachievement is evident, with one third of male sixth graders reading below grade level. Although female educational enrollment, attendance, and achievement are higher at all levels of the system,

<sup>1</sup> *Gross enrollment rate* is defined as all students enrolled at a level of the education system expressed as a percentage of the age cohort for that educational level; *net enrollment rate* is defined as all students of the required age cohort enrolled expressed as a percentage of the age cohort (*Social and Economic Survey of Jamaica 2003*).

<sup>2</sup> The Caribbean Community (often called CARICOM) serves to promote economic integration and development throughout the region, especially in its less-developed areas. Besides managing a common market, CARICOM formulates policies regarding health, education, labor, science and technology, tourism, foreign policy, and the environment.



Students using USAID-donated software and computer as part of a lesson at Anchovy Primary School.

women still face higher unemployment rates in the labor market.

The Government of Jamaica dedicates a substantial portion of its gross domestic product to education—6.6 percent in 2004, compared with the Latin America and Caribbean average of 4.0 percent. Nevertheless, funding for education at the primary and secondary levels remains a significant constraint, and existing funds could be better targeted with greater emphasis on quality and effectiveness.

The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture has introduced several education sector reforms over the past five years. These changes—embodied in the Ministry’s authorizing “white paper” of 2001—included a new national primary school curriculum and a national literacy improvement initiative. The white paper outlined new policies and procedures for achieving quality education in Jamaica, including the possibility of student retention based on fourth grade literacy test results and the requirement that each school prepare a school development plan. The new curriculum replaced one that had been in use in schools for more than 20 years. It requires changes in teaching methodologies and in the roles of teachers and learners, with a greater emphasis on integration across subject areas.

The white paper pointed out that greater access to quality education and training is imperative if Jamaica is to compete in a global marketplace. Economic development is unlikely to occur without significant improvements in the quality of schooling and the functional literacy of graduates.

<sup>3</sup> For background information on the Summit of the Americas, see [www.usaid.gov/regions/lac/summit.html](http://www.usaid.gov/regions/lac/summit.html), [usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/summit](http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/summit), and [www.americasnet.net](http://www.americasnet.net).

## USAID REGIONAL STRATEGY

In response to dramatically reduced region-wide funding levels—from \$190 million in 1990 to \$52.7 million in 2004—USAID education programming in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has shifted from large national programs to smaller, targeted geographic areas and an emphasis on policy dialogue. Bilateral mission education activities are based on four overarching regional objectives: improved *access*, *equity*, *efficiency*, and *quality*. The LAC Regional Education Program, based in USAID/Washington, supports initiatives under the Summit of the Americas,<sup>3</sup> the promotion of education reform in the region, and the Intermediate Results of 1) improved environment for education reform, 2) improved skills of teachers and administrators, and 3) improved relevance and skills of workforce.

USAID/Jamaica also serves as the headquarters for USAID’s Caribbean Regional Program. The \$54 million program is managed under an agreement with the Caribbean Community. Though regionwide in scope, the program has a special concentration on the Eastern Caribbean. USAID provides direct and indirect development support to 23 diverse nations across the region, with the active interest and participation of Caribbean governments.

During fiscal years 2000–2004, USAID/ Jamaica’s regional program has concentrated on four Strategic Objectives:

- Improved Business Environment to Meet International Standards.
- Improved Environmental Management by Public and Private Entities.
- Increased Efficiency and Fairness of Legal Systems in the Caribbean.
- Enhanced Caribbean Response to the HIV/AIDS Crisis in Target Countries.

## USAID/JAMAICA: HISTORY AND STRATEGIES IN EDUCATION

USAID/Jamaica has been active in the education sector since the U.S. Government established a presence in the country in 1962. It is currently the largest bilateral donor in Jamaica, as well as in the education sector.

Education activities over the past five years have largely been implemented under one USAID Bilateral Assistance Strategy from fiscal year 2000 to 2004. One of the critical development challenges addressed by the strategy is preparing Jamaica's youth for the future, since the education system—characterized by chronic poor attendance, underachievement, and low levels of literacy and numeracy at the end of primary schooling—is failing thousands of youth.

The overall purpose of the education Strategic Objective<sup>4</sup> is to improve the numeracy and literacy skills of targeted

youth (ages 6–14) through formal, public school-based interventions, as well as the skills of “at-risk” youth (ages 10–14) through non-formal, non-governmental organization (NGO)-based interventions. Activities emphasize achieving results in 1) improved quality of teaching, 2) increased school attendance, 3) improved management of schools, and 4) improved NGO delivery of literacy programs.

To improve student achievement, USAID provides teacher training, educational technology, health and nutrition programs, and governance and leadership training. Achievement of the Strategic Objective is gauged by improved sixth grade standardized test scores (in language arts and math) in 71 targeted schools. To improve the prospects of at-risk and out-of-school youth, NGOs use a remedial or curative approach to increase literacy, promote self-esteem, reintegrate dropouts, and reduce teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS.

The USAID/Jamaica resources available for education have grown substantially over time, with Development Assistance<sup>5</sup> (DA) funding increasing 75 percent from \$2.8 million in 1999 to \$5 million in 2005. 1999 was the second year of the New Horizons for Primary Schools project, thus the funding level was lower than in later years. Funding rose in later years to cover the infusion of technology in education and the installation of 20 Professional Development Centers. These centers are strategically placed to support



**Students at St. Peter Claver using technology to learn the alphabet.**

<sup>4</sup>The other Strategic Objectives of USAID's bilateral program are 1) improved business environment for developing the small, medium, and microenterprise sectors, 2) improved quality of natural resources, 3) improved reproductive health of youth, and 4) improved citizen security and participation in democratic processes.

<sup>5</sup> Under Chapters I and 10 of the Foreign Assistance Act, development assistance is designed primarily to promote economic growth and equitable distribution of its benefits.



USAID-funded Technology Center.

neighboring schools and are equipped with appropriate technology to support student learning, teacher learning, and teacher professional development. In the new strategy, USAID will provide funding to further integrate technology in education.

A new USAID/Jamaica Strategy has been approved for 2005–2009, and is discussed in greater detail in Part 3. Human resources capacity is both a concern and a cross-cutting theme of the new strategy. The proposed interventions will build human capacity at many levels, including in communities and the private sector. The strategy reflects particular attention on youth, continuing prior efforts to improve basic education and emphasizing other life skills as well. Young Jamaicans will be critical to the country's future economic competitiveness and the creation of a healthy, well-educated workforce.

## OVERVIEW

Part 2 of this report profiles five of USAID/Jamaica's education projects. A list of suggested reading about other USAID projects in Jamaica—as well as more about the five projects featured herein—appears at the end of this publication.

Model schools created through the *New Horizons for Primary Schools* project use a holistic approach to increase levels of literacy and numeracy among primary schools and raise student performance levels on national assessment tests. The *Uplifting Adolescents Project* provides at-risk youth with social and job skills to create more options for their future

socioeconomic advancement. Active learning and child-centered approaches are incorporated into the teacher training and curriculum of schools benefiting from the *Improving Educational Quality* project. The transition between pre-primary and primary, often symptomatic of dropout and inconsistent learning methodologies, is supported by parents and teachers in the *Pre-primary to Primary School Transitions Pilot* project. The *Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training* program—a regional initiative for the English-speaking Caribbean—enriches the quality of reading and writing instruction in the early grades.

Part 3 spells out the impact of USAID education activities in Jamaica over the past five years, such as improved quality in model schools and increased percentage of Jamaican students enrolled in formal and nonformal education alternatives as a result of USAID's basic education programs. It lists 13 lessons learned from the previous USAID/Jamaica projects, explaining the necessity for collaboration from all key actors to employ innovative teaching methodologies; that a wider variety of options given to teachers for instruction produces better achievement and quality in the classroom; and that addressing all levels of education yields a stronger and more equitable education system. The section concludes with an overview of what USAID plans to achieve in Jamaica through the strategy period by concentrating on improving achievement and increasing private sector cooperation through social sector investments and access to quality education services.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE USAID/JAMAICA EDUCATION OFFICER

“The quality of education in Jamaica continues to be one of the major concerns of the government. Through the **New Horizons for Primary Schools** project and the **Uplifting Adolescents Project**, USAID/Jamaica has improved the education of thousands of Jamaican children and youth. Under **New Horizons**, teachers were exposed to innovative learning strategies, cooperative learning solutions, and the infusion of education technology in classroom strategies. These techniques improved primary education of Jamaican children. Through **Uplifting Adolescents**, USAID/Jamaica has taken the lead role to change the lives of street children, working children, and children at risk of dropping out of school. These young people were taught skills that changed their lives. Other children succeeded in standardized tests and qualified to join their peers in the formal school system all over Jamaica. There are more than 11,000 12 to 16-year-olds not in school. Therefore, in the 2005–2009 strategy, USAID/Jamaica will support the government of Jamaica to improve the education of this critical group.”

—Claire Spence



# PART 2

## ACTIVITY PROFILES

**NEW HORIZONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**UPLIFTING ADOLESCENTS PROJECT**

**IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY**

**PRE-PRIMARY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL  
TRANSITIONS PILOT**

**REGIONAL PROJECTS**

**CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING**





Two students from Manchioneal All Age School.

# NEW HORIZONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Implemented by Juárez and Associates  
Dates: June 1998 to May 2005<sup>6</sup>  
Funding: \$10,200,000<sup>7</sup>

## WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Great inequities in the quality of primary education in Jamaica have resulted in low literacy and numeracy achievement among students. The school system operates on a foundation of school-based management and community participation, within the context of a centralized system of financing, where funding is sometimes delayed in reaching local schools. In these communities, low morale often translates into chronic poor attendance, perennial underachievement, and low levels of literacy and numeracy.

## WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

The New Horizons for Primary Schools project is a joint initiative of USAID and the Jamaican government that helps the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture (MOEYC) increase levels of literacy and numeracy among primary school students. Project officials have selected 71 schools in urban and rural areas that serve disadvantaged populations who performed in

the bottom quarter on national assessment tests. The expectation is that by raising the standards in these poorly performing schools to at least the national average, gaps and disparities in Jamaican primary education would be narrowed—thus fostering greater equity while contributing to the improvement of standards in the primary system more broadly.

## WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

New Horizons' general objective is to enhance the performance of Jamaican primary school students in numeracy and literacy through the development of model schools. The emphasis is on those children who—owing to poverty and other disabling conditions—had little academic success in the past. The project employs a holistic approach that provides for the empowerment of schools and communities through participation at the local level with the use of context-specific instructional approaches and materials.

<sup>6</sup>The original five-year New Horizons for Primary Schools project contract ended in June 2003. The second phase of New Horizons was recompiled and awarded to Juárez and Associates for two years.

<sup>7</sup>With additional funding from the MOEYC, total program funding is US\$15.2 million.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

New Horizons employs a series of interrelated interventions consolidated into four main areas that work in concert to change not only the learning experiences of children in the classroom but also the broader enabling environment of the school and community.

Health and nutrition activities are included in the program in recognition that poor health and nutritional status impair academic performance. New Horizons officials are particularly careful to develop activities that encourage the active participation of all stakeholders. Many of the activities concentrate on school improvement planning, cooperative learning for teachers, and governance and leadership training for school boards and teachers.

INTERVENTIONS	ACTIVITIES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing innovative mathematics and literacy programs</li> <li>2. Providing in-service teacher training in reading and mathematics</li> <li>3. Providing governance and leadership training for schools, communities, and parents</li> <li>4. Offering parent education and training</li> <li>5. Facilitating health and nutrition activities</li> <li>6. Providing supplementary reading and mathematics materials</li> <li>7. Establishing computer use in school and training teachers in educational technology</li> <li>8. Training resource teachers (who are equivalent to masters in their technical areas)</li> <li>9. Using management information systems (MIS) to integrate databases</li> <li>10. Improves school management and linkage among schools through education management information systems (EMIS)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher education and in-service training</li> <li>2. Educational technology</li> <li>3. Governance, leadership, and community/parental education</li> <li>4. Health and nutrition activities</li> </ol>

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

The quality of teaching has improved through training in the application of child-centered approaches, advanced cooperative learning methods, integration of technology into teaching, and techniques for effectively teaching math and language arts. USAID/Jamaica developed and introduced Professional Development Centers (PDCs) to promote partnerships and sustainability. The PDC concept fosters sharing of exemplary instructional practices among principals and resource teachers. Essential to the training in the PDCs is the integration of technology into pedagogical strategies for all teachers, which results in higher quality instruction.

All project schools have instituted School Development Teams (consisting of principals, teachers, parents, and school board members) who participate in drafting and implementing school development plans. Nearly 90 percent of project schools are implementing their plans, and targets are more consistently achieved.

One of the more innovative elements of the New Horizons for Primary Schools project has been development of the Jamaica School Administrative System (JSAS) software, an MIS/EMIS repository for school data. This software was designed for the use of principals and teachers (who were contacted to ensure that the fields were relevant for their use) to enable each school to better track and analyze student enrollment and performance. JSAS records grades, attendance, individual personal and historical data, standardized test scores, reenrollment and reregistration, and temporary withdrawals. The information entered can be used to generate grading curves, periodic report cards, monthly reports to the MOEYC, and analysis of data and trends disaggregated by individual, class, section, grade, and gender. JSAS is being used in 71 schools and will expand to include 200 non-New Horizons project schools.

More than 1,600 students have benefited from the New Horizons school breakfast program. Data indicate a reduction in the portion of underweight students from 7.3 percent to 2.7 percent and an increase in school attendance from 65 percent to 86 percent.



**UAP students and their teacher after a training workshop.**

# UPLIFTING ADOLESCENTS PROJECT (UAP)

**Implemented by Development Associates (phase 1); People's Action for Community Transformation (phase 2)**  
**Dates: June 1996 to April 2001; October 2000 to June 2005**  
**Funding: \$7.2 million (phase 1); \$4.5 million (phase 2)**

## **WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?**

A 1994 survey conducted by the Jamaica Movement for Adult Literacy (also known as JAMAL) revealed that 13 percent of adolescents ages 14–19 were functionally illiterate. A 1995 USAID study found that 45 percent of youths ages 10–18 fell into the “at-risk” category. Adolescents are considered at-risk if they 1) are not enrolled in schools, 2) have dropped out of school, or 3) do not attend school regularly. The expansion of the out-of-school population will impede economic growth and political stability unless the problems of these marginalized adolescents are addressed. There is an urgent need to provide at-risk youth with social and job skills so they may become more responsible citizens.

## **WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?**

The Uplifting Adolescents Project (UAP) was developed as a response to the critical problems facing out-of-school, at-risk youth who lack the educational and technical skills necessary to lead productive lives. The project is intended to strengthen local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver a multimodal package of services to improve adolescents' social skills,

as well as to support the Youth Unit of the MOEYC. The package of services—delivered by 15 NGOs island-wide—includes programs in remedial education (literacy and numeracy), reproductive health, personal and family development, and pre-vocational education. In addition, the Youth Unit is strengthened by data collection on the at-risk adolescent population and also by the operation of the National Youth Service, which recruits volunteer youth who contribute to personal, community, national, and international development.

## **WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?**

The goal of the UPA is to promote better educated youth and increase parental involvement. Many of the youth participating in the project come from the streets and had severed ties with their parents. The UAP has located some of the parents and worked to strengthen family ties. This assistance helps families provide better support to these at-risk adolescents. The purpose of the program is to improve the social, literacy, and pre-vocational skills of at-risk youth, offering them the opportunity to move toward becoming responsible and productive adults.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

UAP2 (as the second phase of the project is known) provides 10 to 18-year-old youth who are not enrolled in school (or did not attend regularly) with remedial education and basic skills to re-enter the formal school system or compete in the workforce. The major lines of action under the project are as follows:

- Providing technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs (15 under phase 1 and 12 under UAP2) to deliver a package of literacy and numeracy programs to at-risk youth. This includes improving NGOs' managerial and technical program capabilities.
- Delivering services to adolescents, especially in the areas of greatest need for at-risk youth: 1) literacy and remedial education to improve reading and math proficiency, 2) personal and family development, 3) reproductive health, and 4) technical and vocational training.
- Strengthening Uplifting Adolescents Project programs through HIV/AIDS awareness, peer leadership training, financial management training, parental workshops, and teachers' workshops that incorporate basic counseling techniques.

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

More than 18,000 adolescents registered in the first phase of the Uplifting Adolescents Project, well over the project target of 10,000. From late 2000 to midyear 2004, 23,682 adolescents registered under UAP2. Achievement data show that most program participants improved by at least one level in reading (63 percent of graduates and 53 percent of nongraduates) and one level in math (55 and 63 percent, respectively).

The project is most successful in improving the education of disadvantaged youths, including street children. It has succeeded in returning, introducing, and integrating them into the formal education. As of midyear 2004, of the 6,000 UAP2 students participating that year, 335 were either employed, in apprenticeship programs, or in tertiary technical institutions. For a population with a history of school failure, these findings suggest hope.

UAP2 graduates reported improvement in their math and literacy skills and found their newly acquired knowledge to be useful in their everyday lives. Those who were working at the time of the study said that the math, language arts, personal development, and job skills they learned through the Uplifting Adolescents Project were useful in their jobs.

Nearly 1,500 staff and volunteers from 52 NGOs, as well as parents and teachers, benefited from Uplifting Adolescents training programs in areas such as volunteerism, parenting, program planning, case management, fundraising, sustainability, and administrative and financial management.

Through coordination with the Jamaican Movement for Adult Literacy, NGO trainers were able to develop an Uplifting Adolescents Project Literacy Teaching Standard to assess NGO literacy teaching sites.

A camp for peer educators was conducted to help UAP2 participants take responsibility for their actions and train other adolescents in their communities. Training covered topics such as advocacy, leadership, children's rights, communication skills, and HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Support from parents and community members contributed to the students' success, as evidenced by changes in young people's attitudes and behaviors. Eighty-three percent of UAP2 graduates said that information they learned in the Uplifting Adolescents program positively changed their attitudes toward drugs and alcohol, and 100 percent reported that they are practicing safe sex.



Teachers strengthening their competencies through the use of computers.

# IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Implemented by the American Institutes for Research and the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE)

Dates: June 2000 to September 2002

Funding: \$500,000

## WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS WERE ADDRESSED?

A 1996 island-wide curriculum study commissioned by the Jamaican government found that significant improvements were needed in teacher assessment competencies, classroom interaction styles, and diagnoses of children's competencies. Recommendations included broad and detailed revisions to the existing primary curriculum, which dated from 1978, to accommodate differences in children's backgrounds and experiences. In response to the study, the MOEYC revised the national primary school curriculum in 1999 and reformed its assessment policies. However, clear gaps existed between the preparation teacher trainees were receiving in Jamaican teachers' colleges—based on traditional instructional approaches—and their ability to translate concepts into effective and modern classroom practice.

## WHAT DID USAID DO TO RESPOND?

These gaps between pre-service teacher training and the reality of the classroom informed a revision of the teachers' college curriculum in 2000–2002 with the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE). USAID partnered with JBTE to strengthen the instructional competencies of teacher educators in preparing new teachers, especially in science, mathematics, language arts, and social studies.

## WHAT WAS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The goal of the activity was to help six teacher training colleges bring their curricula and teaching methods in line with newer active learning and child-centered instructional approaches. The purpose was to create the tools for building skills and knowledge among teacher trainees to allow them to successfully deliver the revised Jamaican primary school curriculum and master the associated principles, content, and procedures in classroom situations.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE INVOLVED?

The project concentrated on:

- Developing a plan for integrated professional development pertaining to the new primary curriculum.
- Selecting and training a team of local specialists to review and enhance the existing pre-service training curricula.
- Building the capacity of pre-service instructors to use the new instructional activities and materials effectively.

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

USAID/Jamaica collaborated with the Joint Board of Teacher Education to execute the Improving Educational Quality project. The project successfully revised the curricula for social studies, language arts, science, and mathematics. The revision process served as a catalyst for changes in key areas of the teacher education program. This process is viewed as a model for effecting other changes in the JBTE program. USAID/Jamaica prepared the way for the Inter-American Development Bank to continue the revision of the remaining curricula of the primary courses for the six teacher training colleges. This means that college lecturers are better prepared to train teachers to employ the revised primary school curriculum.

During 2001–2002, a team of trainers visited the six colleges that were training primary school teachers. They observed classes in session and held discussions with teacher educators, student teachers, and principals. It was evident that teacher educators were using innovative and effective ways of exposing their students to additional information. They were engaging in research, encouraging their students to do research, and using a variety of relevant assessment strategies.

Student teacher questionnaires and focus group interviews revealed that:

- After one year, student teachers had a better knowledge of the revised primary curriculum.
- They were exposed to the assessment strategies that they would be expected to employ with students.
- They took more responsibility for their own learning by doing research, project work, and group work.
- They had more avenues to practice and be engaged in hands-on activities.

Reports from some colleges on the teaching practice performance of final year students suggested that students exposed to the revised grades 1–3 curriculum that is fully integrated using the overarching theme “All About Me and My Environment” were better able to master the skills and teach varying subject themes. This influenced the creation of an integration course to address the needs of college lecturers. The JBTE also responded to the emphasis on current trends in assessment and reformed the assessment policies.



Students benefiting from the Transitions Program.

# PRE-PRIMARY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL TRANSITIONS PILOT

Implemented by UNICEF  
Dates: September 2001 to August 2003 (phase 1)  
September 2004 to December 2005 (phase 2)  
Funding: \$100,000 (phase 1); \$230,000 (phase 2)

## WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

In 1997, UNICEF supported a study on early childhood transition—the period beginning in preschool and continuing into grades 1 and 2. The study corroborated international evidence that transitional problems present significant complexities for teachers and impediments to children's success in school. The weak links and abrupt transitions between pre-primary and primary schooling hinder efforts to improve educational quality and effectiveness. School challenges include poor readiness of first grade entrants, high first grade repetition, low enrollment of poor children, lack of individual student monitoring and detection of special learning needs, lack of supportive activities for language skills (such as letter recognition), and a wide age and ability differential within grades.

## WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

The Transitions project—jointly supported by UNICEF and USAID—is designed to mitigate the challenges presented by the pre-primary to primary school transition. The project works in 11 primary schools and concentrates on children up to age 8.

## WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The goal is to improve the school readiness and performance of children ages 4–8 in pre-primary and primary schools. The strategy is to engage parents and educators in supporting children's transitions into primary school and to give teachers new curricular tools to integrate into their programs and stimulate children's learning. The project seeks to 1) improve the quality of teaching, 2) increase parental support for child learning, 3) increase school attendance and enrollment, and 4) improve management and coordination of the transitional period. The project also ensures that teaching methodologies and learning environments are developmentally appropriate throughout the first two grades.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

Activities include parent education and orientation, pre-primary and primary teacher preparation and training, child-centered activities, and school curricula.

- Teacher training workshops integrate basic school (or pre-grade I) teachers with first and second grade teachers. This approach builds common expectations and greater cooperation among schools and places greater emphasis on lesson planning techniques to improve the role of teachers as facilitators.
- A “Big Brother” and “Big Sister” school management program—between pre-primary schools and primary schools—helps facilitate the transition of students.
- A learning environment is created to expand opportunities for hands-on learning and child-directed activities using literacy-based learning materials.
- Parent and community participation is fostered in the daily upkeep of the school (e.g., meal preparation, school repairs) and in the

practice of reading aloud to children at home.

- Monitoring and evaluation is done through research instruments developed for baseline data collection.

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

Project beneficiaries include 42 teachers trained in early literacy and early science instructional approaches and about 1,000 students who are better prepared to enter first grade. The project has succeeded in ensuring that children entering first grade have the appropriate skills. Teachers are provided with learning materials to improve their teaching skills.

Ten workshops concentrating on improving literacy through reading books and hands-on science activities have been held with teachers from project schools. Special emphasis has been placed on lesson planning techniques to improve the role of teachers as facilitators and to ensure the integration of various skill areas and subject matters. Individual student developmental portfolios monitor learning progress in classrooms.

Teachers have improved in their classroom practices. They work with individual students in improved classroom environments that have been reorganized for more effective teaching and learning. Children now have appropriate furniture instead of single desks shared by 3–4 children. Parents are active participants in their children’s education. These children are able to enter first grade better prepared to master the curriculum and with higher levels of performance on the Grade One Readiness Inventory (a diagnostic exercise to gauge number and letter knowledge, auditory perception, visual motor coordination, and visual perception).

Hands-on literacy-based materials have been provided, contributing to an enhanced learning environment to project schools. With support from USAID, a wide variety of literacy-based manipulative learning materials were ordered to expand opportunities for hands-on learning and child-directed activities. Thirty-six custom-designed folding wooden bookshelves on wheels are being constructed to secure these learning materials and establish learning corners in the classrooms. Each project school received appropriate storybooks, a portable stereo CD system, and materials with which to work.

Formal partnerships have been initiated with teachers’ colleges for both in-service and pre-service preparation of teachers. The project has fostered parent involvement in improving learning environments and increased awareness about their children’s literacy development.



**Pupils in a CETT classroom enjoy learning together.**

# REGIONAL PROJECTS

## **CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING (CETT)**

**Implemented in Jamaica by the Joint Board of Teacher Education of the University of the West Indies**  
**Dates: October 2002 to September 2008<sup>8</sup>**  
**Funding: \$5,500,000 (to date)**

### **WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS IN THE REGION MUST BE ADDRESSED?**

Educational achievement indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) compare poorly with much of the world's other regions. In some LAC countries, fewer than 60 percent of children who start school reach the fifth grade, and illiteracy rates remain high. These educational gaps limit the personal, civic, and economic potential of children and the communities in which they live. On a regional level, the economic competitiveness of Latin America and the Caribbean is severely constrained.

### **WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?**

In view of these regional challenges, President Bush announced a White House initiative at the Summit of the Americas in 2001 to establish three teacher training centers (in the Caribbean, Central America and the Dominican Republic, and the Andean region of South America) to improve reading instruction in the early primary grades.

The University of the West Indies' Joint Board of Teacher Education operates the Caribbean Center of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT). Established

in October 2002, CETT currently provides leadership and training in the teaching of reading to eight independent countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, including Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

### **WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?**

The goal of the initiative is to reduce the high rates of illiteracy and school underachievement in the region by improving reading instruction in grades 1–3. CETT activities are intended to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers and administrators in the region and to enrich the quality of early classroom instruction so that students gain competence in reading and writing. To address equity concerns, special emphasis is placed on disadvantaged communities and rural areas.

The principal strategy of the CETT is to create a network of professional development clusters involving dynamic local partnerships between selected primary schools, teacher training colleges, and the regional or district office of the MOEYC—all supported by specialists skilled in teaching reading.

<sup>8</sup> Anticipated completion date.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

There are five major CETT program components: 1) teacher training, 2) creation of teaching and learning materials, 3) production of assessment and diagnostic tools, 4) applied research, and 5) information and communication technology. The implementation strategy for the Caribbean CETT includes:

- Employing the best available knowledge from research studies on teaching reading and learning to read.
- Developing diagnostic tools to assist teachers in tailoring instruction to the needs of their students and performance instruments to assess reading achievement in the classroom.
- Training teachers in the latest and best evidence-based strategies of teaching reading and building on best practices with respect to promoting teachers' continuing professional development.
- Producing, purchasing, and providing appropriate and culturally sensitive, high-quality teaching and learning materials to project schools.
- Employing school-based design, development, implementation, and evaluation of creative interventions to improve reading in project schools and disseminating

successful strategies to the wider school system.

- Using information and communication technology to enhance and support all aspects of the operations of the CETT.

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN THE CARIBBEAN?

Currently, 147 schools participate in the Caribbean CETT program, reaching 17,928 children. CETT conducts training at several levels, including for college lecturers, Ministry of Education officials, school principals, and reading specialists. CETT reading specialists provide extensive in-service training to teachers through workshops. To date, these workshops have benefited 1,019 in-service teachers across the Caribbean. Some 55 college lecturers have also participated in CETT training and, in turn, trained 1,755 student teachers. CETT has developed materials to support teacher training and also distributes other helpful resources.

Scholastic Books, Inc. has partnered with CETT to provide more than 150,000 children's books (valued at \$750,000) to CETT schools over three years. As a result, hundred-book library sets have been established in each participating school and at the Teacher Training College Resource Centers. These libraries have raised both student interest in reading and the quality of teacher instruction.

An inventory—of existing diagnostic and performance instruments for assessing reading levels of primary school students—was subsequently used to develop a set of comprehensive diagnostic tests for reading and writing. Teachers used the results of the tests given to nearly 10,500 students to develop their classroom instructional strategy to improve reading competency in the classroom. The unprecedented development of a common set of Caribbean Standards for reading and writing is expected to be formally adopted soon by the Caribbean Community Ministers of Education.

Applied research has been integral to working with reading specialists in 365 classrooms. Each CETT teacher formulates a research question based on classroom needs and then designs an intervention to respond to the question. The reports will enhance the training component and be shared across the Caribbean. Using action research methodology, CETT teachers have developed classroom interventions to address the specific learning challenges students face.

The University of the West Indies has made information and communication technology a fundamental part of CETT by setting up a "virtual university" that provides an electronic platform to support project management and networking among consortium members. A Wireless Wide Area Network will also link cluster schools, the teachers colleges, the University of West Indies, the JBTE, and the MOEYC to facilitate training and information sharing across the institutions.

Private partnerships have supported the CETT. In addition to Scholastic Books, Inc. donations (almost half of which has already been distributed to CETT schools), Air Jamaica provided 10 airline tickets (valued at \$3,000) to facilitate travel across the region for project staff.



# PART 3

## IMPACTS, LESSONS, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

### IMPACT OF USAID EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

USAID has had significant impact on Jamaica's education sector over the past five years. An average of 28,000 school children—and 6,000 at-risk children—are served by USAID basic education programs in Jamaica each year. Major achievements and results are summarized below.

### IMPROVING PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' LITERACY AND NUMERACY LEVELS

- USAID has set up 20 Professional Development Centers (PDCs) as school-based locations for demonstrating and sharing exemplary instructional strategies. These centers are building sustainability in the New Horizons for Primary Schools in-service teacher education program in that the cadres of trained teachers at the PDCs then provide training for other

schools within close proximity of the PDCs. Also, teachers are engaged in observing and demonstrating effective practices, emphasizing child-centered learning experiences.

- The New Horizons for Primary (NHP) Schools project benefited 29,000 primary school students, 800 teachers, 142 principals and vice principals, 504 school board members, and 450 parents and community members during 2003 alone.
- New Horizons' student proficiency<sup>9</sup> has clearly improved since 1998. In mathematics, 41 percent of girls were proficient in 2004—nearly triple the baseline of 14 percent. Boys also improved dramatically, from 6 percent to 36 percent. In language arts, boys' proficiency increased from 17 percent to 38 percent, though gains for girls were more moderate (from 43 percent to 46 percent).

Pupils engage in a student-centered cooperative learning environment.



<sup>9</sup> Measured as "near mastery," or 50–75 percent correct, on the Grade Six Achievement Test.



Young students at NHP school.

- USAID successfully piloted a breakfast program in 18 project schools, serving 2,250 students. Attendance in these schools increased at least 23 percent in all schools served (and as high as 45 percent in one of them). Among a group of students selected for nourishment programs, the number of those underweight decreased by 4.6 percent. Participants in the breakfast program increased their performance in literacy and numeracy by more than 100 percent. Income-generating activities geared at sustaining the program have been instituted in four schools. And finally, 351 persons, including parents and teachers, were trained to run the breakfast program by developing menus, preparing meals, and planning and implementing fundraising functions to sustain the breakfast programs.
- The Jamaica Schools Administrative Software management information system is now being used in 200 primary schools—well beyond the universe of 71 New Horizons schools—as such expansion was demand driven. Teachers and principals use the software to efficiently track required Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture (MOEYC) data, as well as to perform quantitative and qualitative analyses on student achievement and attendance. This ability to examine individual and group data—both on annual and longitudinal bases—allows for better

tailoring of interventions (e.g., teacher training) that addresses school-level challenges and generates data to aid in national planning processes.

### **PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH TO ACQUIRE BASIC SKILLS**

- Uplifting Adolescents Project participants have improved their quality of life by passing the Grade Six and Grade Nine Achievement Tests, gaining entry to high schools and technical schools in the formal education system. As of June 2004, 392 students had passed the sixth grade entrance test and 306 students the ninth grade test. Since some of these students were nonreaders only a few years ago, these are noteworthy achievements.
- The percentage of NGO sites meeting Uplifting Adolescents Project literacy teaching standards was 94.0 percent in 2003, a dramatic increase from the baseline of 22.6 percent in 1999. In 2004, the target of 100 percent was reached, signifying that all NGO sites delivering Uplifting Adolescents programs have met the literacy teaching standard and are adhering to standards for class size, teacher preparation, and use of materials.
- Participation in the Uplifting Adolescents Project has contributed to adolescents' continuing formal education or entering the workforce. A 2003 impact study found that 85 percent of

graduates were back in school or working, and 62 percent of those who had dropped out of formal school programs prior to Uplifting Adolescents had re-enrolled in school (compared with 17 percent of nongraduates).

- USAID has trained the umbrella NGO Peoples' Action for Community Transformation and its subgrantees to successfully manage USAID funds. In addition, these groups received training in writing winning grant proposals.

### **PROVIDING COMMON STANDARDS AND ONGOING EDUCATION FOR ALL**

- The Caribbean Standards for reading and writing for grades 1–3, developed by the Caribbean Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training (C-CETT), are expected to be adopted formally by the Caribbean Community Ministries of Education (MOEs). The diagnostic tests assist teachers in identifying students' reading difficulties. The standards will make a clear impact by contributing to the development of specific learning objectives for reading. The Caribbean MOEs are so pleased with the common standards that they have asked the C-CETT to develop similar standards for grades 4–6.
- The Wireless Wide Area Network (W-WAN) has bridged a significant training gap in the Caribbean education sector. Teacher training colleges, now linked electronically, are exchanging ideas, sharing best

practices, and participating in cost-effective training courses offered through W-WAN. The network, developed by C-CETT, also broadens the communication channels between the University of the West Indies, MOEs, primary schools, high schools, and colleges throughout the Caribbean.

- A core group of C-CETT private sector partners has maintained an ongoing relationship with the C-CETT, and the number of partners continues to grow. This private-public partnership has underscored the notion that education is everyone's business—and that the private sector benefits from its support of educational initiatives. The partnership has helped MOEs take "ownership" of C-CETT rather than view this arrangement as a conventional donor-supported program with a beginning and an end.



Students engaged in lesson at a New Horizon's Technology Center.

## LESSONS LEARNED/ BEST PRACTICES

**1.** **Changing teacher behavior takes time.** The change sought in Jamaican schools is far more than a simple change in curriculum; rather, it is a change in a deep-rooted culture. Other countries' experiences suggest there is a continuum of change for teachers trying to move from traditional systems based on memorization to more active, participatory learning. Continued on-site support is required for this evolution to be sustainable.

**2.** **It is beneficial to foster peer learning and disseminate successful practices.** As teachers learn from their peers through individual and collaborative instruction, the methodologies can be evaluated and shared. The ideas generated during peer learning can serve as a sound foundation for improving and sustaining successful classroom practices. These "best practices" can be documented and shared in a host of ways, including in-school reporting, on bulletin boards, in staff meetings, through the local and national media, and in newsletters such as the New Horizons for Primary Schools project's *On the Horizons*.

**3.** **There is a need for earlier intervention. Systemwide, MOEYC policy emphasizes third and fourth grade testing to identify children who need extra assistance.** However, international research clearly indicates the importance of early experience in preparing children for

school success. Since interventions at the end of fourth grade come after children have experienced several years of failure, they are likely to be much less effective than earlier interventions. More attention should be paid to children in preschool and first grade who may need extra support and assistance. There is also a need for more attention to the linkage between pre-primary and first grade curricula and the transition between those levels.

**4.** **Ministry partnership is key to sustainability.** USAID's principal education partner is the MOEYC. In most cases, projects are jointly managed, with shared responsibilities and funding. The MOEYC is fully consulted on project plans and proposals, and participates in project design. Projects thus respond to Jamaican—as well as USAID—priorities and generally operate within Ministry policies and procedures. This mode of operation increases the likelihood that successful projects will be sustained and replicated.

**5.** **Evaluations can facilitate mid-course project adjustments.** The results of a 2002 external evaluation led USAID to adopt several recommendations that enhanced program effectiveness. Trained teachers regarded as associates to the project's literacy and numeracy specialists were used for more intensive in-class follow-up and teacher support. Increased opportunities were provided for teacher interaction within and between schools, and technical assis-

tance accelerated the use of technologies and other resources supporting the “bottom up,” child-centered approach.

**6.** As a school-based project concentrating on disadvantaged and low-performing children, the New Horizons for Primary Schools project is bringing its accumulated experience with Jamaican basic education to bear on problems in the real world. Though it was designed to develop, test, and evaluate innovative teaching, management, and community strategies at the local level, it is not just another pilot effort. The project is directly assisting a significant portion of poorly performing primary schools (a country-wide total of 9 percent) and at-risk students. If the effort is sustained, it has excellent potential for expansion and replication. It is the logical culmination of the mission’s basic education improvement strategy.

**7.** The first phase of the Uplifting Adolescents Project laid a strong foundation for subsequent program activities. Training in and application of parenting programs, mentorship, peer counseling, conflict resolution, and the use of performing arts as a means of reaching at-risk youth proved highly successful. NGOs demonstrated great strength in delivering services to troubled youth through grassroots structures in the most volatile inner city communities, with widespread participation by residents, the police, churches, civic organizations, gang leaders, and government agencies. These groups viewed literacy

and remedial education as dire needs to be addressed, and all were willing to assist the program. Networking and growing institutional relationships were unexpected benefits of the training program.

**8.** The initial Uplifting Adolescents Project experience revealed the need for certain project design adjustments. For example, one-year grant awards (as originally envisioned) created instability for NGO project staff and diminished program output. Annual grant renewals increased bureaucracy and paperwork. Multi-year agreements would have minimized the burden on the organizations involved.

**9.** Semi-annual financial reviews of NGOs have ensured transparency and accountability. These reviews strengthen the organizational capacity of all subgrantees, as they become aware of the benefits of adhering to strict accounting principles while completing contractual agreements. Such reviews are important to any institutional strengthening project.

**10.** Reading skills are central. The adolescents most at risk of dropping out of the Uplifting Adolescents Project are those who enter as nonreaders, while those with better reading skills are more likely to complete the program and move into school or work environments. Uplifting Adolescents teachers would thus benefit from support (training and resources) in teaching basic reading.

Students using technology to learn the alphabet.





**The second phase of the Uplifting Adolescents Project provided a haven**

**for many high-risk youths during a crucial period in their lives.** Adolescents who for various reasons have been excluded, estranged, or precluded from participating in the formal educational system find a nurturing environment where they can improve their skills and prepare for healthier, more productive lives. The program provided a close level of interaction with teachers and an almost parental engagement with at-risk students, significantly boosting their self-esteem.



**Achieving results requires considerable time and effort.**

Although the Uplifting Adolescents Project demonstrated that local NGOs can provide high-quality, effective services, it is also clear that doing so requires sufficient resources for associated training and technical assistance. Such support must be carefully planned and evaluated to ensure that it meets project needs, that necessary adjustments are made, and that grantees are not unduly burdened.



**Enhancing local NGOs' financial management skills builds their capacity**

**to manage other donor-funded projects.** The successful example of the umbrella NGO People's Action for Community Transformation, which successfully managed USAID funds following the end of a similar project managed by a US-based organization, is a case study from which the other local NGOs may learn.

## **EDUCATION SECTOR PROSPECTS IN JAMAICA**

The report of the Prime Minister's Task Force on Educational Reform Jamaica, *A Transformed Education System*, was tabled in Parliament on December 14, 2004. The task force was expected to prepare and present an action plan consistent with a vision for the creation of a world-class education system that will generate the human capital and produce the skills necessary for Jamaican citizens to compete in the global economy.

The report addresses:

- 2010 performance targets.
- The state of education in Jamaica.
- The contextual framework for transforming education.
- Key issues affecting the realization of the vision for education and recommendations to address these issues.
- Short, medium, and long-term action plans.
- The financial investment required to implement the recommendations and to achieve the vision.

The vision statement that emerged from subsequent roundtable discussions conveyed an education system in which:

Each learner will maximize his/her potential in an enriching learner-centered education environment with maximum use of learning technologies, supported

by committed, qualified, competent, effective, and professional educators and staff. The education system will be equitable and accessible with full attendance to grade 11.

Accountability, transparency, and performance are the hallmarks of a system that is excellent, self-sustaining, resourced, and welcoming of full stakeholder participation.

In June 2004, the Minister of Education, Youth, and Culture (MOEYC) presented the following broad themes encompassed in the education sectoral debate:

- **Roles of Education Officers and the MOEYC.** Administrators must successfully navigate changing environments to shape the future. Education Officers should have a high degree of accountability and demonstrate competencies in transformational leadership, change management, negotiations, and communication.
- **Early childhood development.** Maintaining consistent quality of services is essential for early education, as well as ensuring enrollment (98 percent). The Ministry strives to improve the quality of access and to emphasize the development of the whole child.
- **Primary education.** Literacy levels will be improved by strengthening primary education for seventh grade students. The

Ministry is piloting an activity to address underperformance in numeracy and literacy among students entering secondary schools, with full implementation planned for September 2004.

- **Secondary education.** Established standards and levels of attainment will promote a broad-based education. The first phase of the expanded secondary program for grades 10–11 will be implemented in September 2004, with systemwide implementation in 2006.
- **Empowerment of those outside the formal system.** Finding alternatives to improve education conditions and quality is a must for the Ministry. Its efforts are concentrated in four areas: 1) a High School Equivalency Program for earning a high school diploma outside the formal education system; 2) the Secondary Enhancement Program to undertake strategic, developmental actions detailed in the Ministry's school development plans; 3) a targeted program for inner city schools providing physical infrastructure, furniture and equipment, and teacher/principal training; and 4) a comprehensive information and communication technologies program for grades 9–11 that improves educational quality and equity.
- **Empowerment of teachers.** Three ways to address systemic

gaps in teacher performance are 1) in-service training, mentoring, and coaching, 2) improved pre-service training programs at teacher training colleges to make them more responsive to today's educational needs, and 3) a new teacher performance evaluation system to increase teacher efficiency and effectiveness.

- **Empowerment of principals.** A principal has the ability to make a great difference for a school. The Ministry will seek ways to reduce administrative time so principals may fully function as motivators and instructional leaders.
- **Empowerment of students.** The Ministry has increased its financial and institutional support to the National Secondary Students' Council and the Jamaica Union of Tertiary Students to promote student governance and responsible leadership.
- **Empowerment of school boards.** Strengthening the leadership capacity of school boards can be accomplished through school board initiatives. The Ministry supports training school boards through the National Council on Education in leadership, school management, and finances.
- **Collaboration with the private sector.** Partnerships with and participation by the private

sector is integral to improving the education system. In the future, the Ministry plans to work with partners to sponsor national capacity building in research and development.

- **National Training Agency.** The introduction of a new technical and business model for the training system—Unit Competency Standards—will enable more flexibility and portability of qualifications, while increasing opportunities for part-time study and certification of the existing workforce.
- **Tertiary sector.** Considerable capital and organizational investment in teacher training and community colleges is needed and is key to creating wider access and flexible lifelong learning opportunities in higher education.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR USAID/JAMAICA

USAID/Jamaica will begin executing its new five-year Country Strategy in fiscal year 2005. Education activities will support the Strategic Objective (SO) of “improved education of targeted Jamaican youth.” This SO directly supports the USAID–Department of State Joint Strategic Plan performance goal of “broader access to quality education with emphasis on primary school completion.”

Building on USAID/Jamaica's experience under the 2000–2004 strategy, the new SO will take a slightly broader approach and emphasize engaging parents, communities, and the private sector as partners in education. A multi-sector approach will be used to improve the quality of education for youth at risk of dropping out, as well as for those in poorly performing schools. Improving school management and governance will in turn improve the quality of education.

The education SO will build on past gains with special attention to fostering sustainability, scaling up best practices, and involving the private sector in school partnerships. Since education funding is limited, USAID will address resource constraints primarily through building community partnerships and obtaining greater school support from parents and families. Education will be improved by engaging private sector resources. Education will be improved by engaging private sector resources. This change can be achieved through corporate school sponsorship, education foundation funding, and national education system assistance at the local school level.

Improved basic education will contribute to a more competitive workforce. Private sector partnerships and linkages will provide opportunities to identify the educational needs of the economy and introduce entrepreneurial training into the education system. Programs for out-of-school youth will

seek to complement the HEART Trust/National Training Agency's skills training program and emphasize life-long learning.<sup>10</sup>

Future activities under the USAID/Jamaica 2005–2009 Strategy will concentrate on achieving results in three overarching areas:

- Improved literacy and numeracy in targeted schools.
- Improved quality of interventions for out-of-school youth.
- Increased stakeholder support for transformational education.

In respect to the third area, USAID will engage the support of the private sector through Global Development Alliances. Through such alliances, USAID aims to replicate the impact of its own efforts—and those of other agencies and governments involved in international development—by mobilizing the ideas, efforts, and resources of all these important groups.

<sup>10</sup> HEART TRUST/NTA is the government of Jamaica's National Training Agency providing policy analysis, planning, technical assistance, instructor training, accreditation, funding, vocational training, curriculum development of training facilities, standards, and the compilation of labor market information.



# SUGGESTED READING

For more on other projects in Jamaica, see the following Web sites:

- Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture ([www.moec.gov.jm](http://www.moec.gov.jm))
- USAID/Jamaica home page ([www.usaid.gov/jm/bilateral-program.htm](http://www.usaid.gov/jm/bilateral-program.htm)).
- USAID/Jamaica FY2005 Congressional Budget Justification ([www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2005/lac/jm.html](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2005/lac/jm.html)).

For more on New Horizons for Primary Schools, see the following reports and Web sites:

- Juárez and Associates page on New Horizons project ([www.juarezassociates.com/english/projects/proj011.htm](http://www.juarezassociates.com/english/projects/proj011.htm)).
- Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture page on New Horizons project ([www.moec.gov.jm/projects/newhorizons](http://www.moec.gov.jm/projects/newhorizons)).
- *New Horizons for Primary Schools Formative Evaluation* (Juárez and Associates, 2002. USAID Document No. PD-ABY-194. Available online at [www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PDABY194.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABY194.pdf)).
- *New Horizons for Primary Schools Contractor's Final Project Report* (Juárez and Associates, 2003. Available online at [www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PDABY676.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABY676.pdf)).

For more on the Uplifting Adolescents Project, see the following reports and Web sites:

- *Uplifting Adolescents Project Study* (American Institutes for Research, 2003. Available at [www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PNACU231.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACU231.pdf)).
- [www.jamaica-kidz.com](http://www.jamaica-kidz.com) (Uplifting Adolescents Project home page, including information on each NGO program).

For more on Improving Educational Quality, see the following reports and Web sites:

- *Pathways to Quality: The Improving Educational Quality Project* ("Chapter 5. Jamaica: Modernizing Teacher Education Through Curricular Change." American Institutes for Research, 2005. Available at [www.ieq.org/pdf/PathwaystoQuality.pdf](http://www.ieq.org/pdf/PathwaystoQuality.pdf)).
- Newsletter article about IEQ/Jamaica activity ([www.ieq.org/pdf/QLII-4\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ieq.org/pdf/QLII-4_eng.pdf)).

For more on the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training regional program in Jamaica, see the following reports and Web sites:

- CETT Newsletter I (I), 2003 ([www.readingforallchildren.org/pdfs/cett\\_newsletter\\_1.pdf](http://www.readingforallchildren.org/pdfs/cett_newsletter_1.pdf)).
- *Centers for Excellence for Teacher Training: A Summit of the Americas Initiative - Assessment of Teacher Training and Reading Instruction Needs and Capacities in the Caribbean*. (Available at [www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PNACX198.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACX198.pdf)).



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