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for every child



Situation Analysis of Jamaican Children - 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1991, Jamaica ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Convention articulates the basic human rights to be provided to children under 18 years old, which hinges on four key principles:

- i) non-discrimination; devotion to the best interest of the child;
- ii) the right to life;
- iii) survival and development; and
- iv) respect for the views of the child.

These basic human rights are operationalized in 54 articles of the CRC, which provide guidance to countries in the development of legislation, policies, programmes and plans of action to realize their commitments under the Convention, and by extension, to safeguard the inalienable rights of children.

As a signatory to the CRC, the Jamaican government has an obligation to report periodically on the country's progress in upholding the Convention. As part of its mandate, UNICEF Jamaica has an obligation to monitor this progress.

One of the ways UNICEF Jamaica achieves this is by conducting a comprehensive situation analysis to highlight major issues affecting children, assess actions being taken to address these challenges and make recommendations concerning the gaps identified. This is done every five years, as UNICEF embarks on a new country programme cycle, to inform the development

of UNICEF-supported programmes which are implemented by the government and other partners.

The situation analysis conducted for the current programme cycle for 2017-2021 is also designed to inform the United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (UNMSDF). The UNMSDF is an action plan for UNICEF and other UN agencies in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean that supports the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the CRC and other international human rights treaties.

The situation analysis, drawing on the Guidance on Conducting a Situational Analysis of Children and Women's Rights<sup>1</sup> seeks to:

- i) Raise stakeholders' awareness about key issues affecting children and adolescents;
- ii) Strengthen evidence-based planning and development processes at the national and local levels, to contribute towards an enabling environment for children that adheres to human rights principles;
- iii) Strengthen national and sub-national capacities to monitor the situation of children, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;
- iv) Contribute to national research on disadvantaged children and adolescents and leverage UNICEF's convening power to foster and support knowledge generation with development, civil society and private sector stakeholders;
- v) Strengthen the knowledge base to enable assessment of the contribution of development partners, including UNICEF and the UN, in support of national development goals.

The situation analysis utilized secondary sources drawn from international and national reports, sectoral and thematic reports, progress reports on international conventions and treaties, studies/

analytical works, surveys/censuses, programme reviews and evaluations, among other relevant sources.

The situation analysis focuses on highlighting successes and challenges in the following areas:

- Justice
- Violence and Safety
- Education
- Health
- Poverty and Social Protection
- Children and the Natural Environment

Drawing on the concluding observations of the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Jamaica – which outline national progress on fulfilment of the CRC – it also makes recommendations on accelerating Jamaica's efforts to fulfil its obligations under the CRC.

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## Summary of findings

Since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Jamaica has made notable progress in meeting its obligations under the CRC. However, there are significant shortfalls which point to the need for efforts to be doubled and driven by a greater sense of urgency to better protect and safeguard the future of Jamaica's children and their families.

## Justice

The Jamaican child justice system has been modernized and strengthened in important ways, including the creation of institutions and the passage of landmark legislation designed to safeguard the rights of children. The state has also made attempts to address resource gaps and deficiencies. However, there are still structural and systemic inadequacies, including a number of specific areas that the state can and should address.

Procedural requirements and provisions under the CRC and Jamaica's own Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) are being breached. The treatment of children in conflict with the law falls under the Department of Correctional Services, which has no clear institutional or legal linkages to children's agencies – a situation which needs to be addressed and modified. The care of children in state custody is far from ideal, including inadequate provisions for their educational needs and psychological care. Amendments to the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) and other legislation are needed to ensure greater oversight of the child justice system. A Joint Select Committee of Parliament is currently considering submissions from a wide cross-section of stakeholders which propose extensive amendments and strengthening of the CCPA.

Also, more effective enforcement mechanisms and better resourcing, whether through the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) or other bodies, are needed if the legislative framework is to truly serve the needs and protect the rights of Jamaican children in conflict with the law.

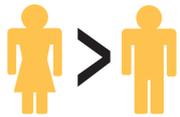


of the 194 children housed in correctional juvenile centres being charged with crimes serious enough to warrant incarceration under maximum security conditions. (2016)

Student attendance across the system now falls below the national benchmark of average daily attendance rate of

90%

Girls, on average, attend school more than boys.



Source: JSLC

Total National budget for education sector



\$3B Amount allocated to Early Childhood

Average per capita expenditure per student:

\$20,908

Early Childhood level

\$108,127

Primary level

\$138,444

Secondary level

Source: ESSJ

## Education

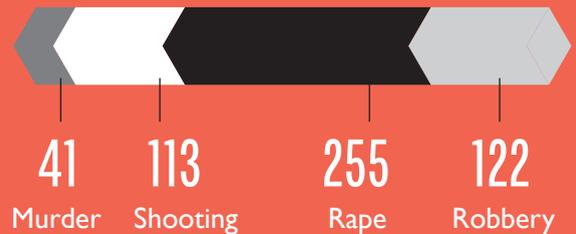
Jamaica has made gains with regard to its obligations under Article 28 (1) of the CRC to promote access, quality, relevance and equity in education, but gaps remain. Most of Jamaica's children have access to publicly funded education; however, many are affected by poverty and its attendant effects, resulting in less than desired participation, lack of progress, chronic under-performance and, in some cases, even the failure to complete their education. This is particularly evident at the upper secondary level among boys, and at schools located in lower socio-economic communities in rural and urban areas. Boys living in these communities have a higher propensity to drop out of school and become at-risk, unattached youth. In addition, the education sector continues to be challenged by the persistent issues of quality and its aim of making schools more student-centred, guided by its core vision that "every child can learn, every child must learn." Based on the evident vulnerabilities, there is a need to leverage and build on the gains made in the sector and explore innovative ways of looking at old problems, in order to best tackle the challenges and accelerate Jamaica's progress towards meeting its local and global commitments for sustainable human development.

68

of every 100,000 Jamaican children are victims of violent and physical crimes

643

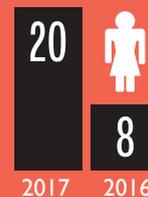
2016: 643 Jamaican children (68 per 100,000) were victims of violent, serious crimes



2017: 55 child murders

An increase of 34 per cent above 2016

Increase in the number of girls murdered:



Most child murders occurred in:



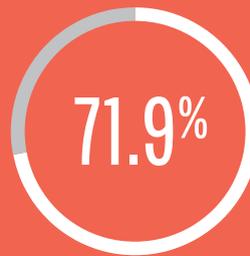
Source: Office of the Children's Registry and JCF

## Violence and Safety

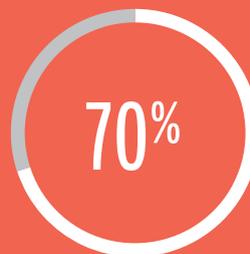
The welfare of Jamaica's children is undermined by the violence that they experience, especially in spaces where there is a reasonable expectation that they will be safe – at school, in their community and within the home, where corporal punishment is still legal. In a climate of high crime and violence, 68 of every 100,000 Jamaican children are victims of violent crimes. Approximately 80 per cent of Jamaican children experience some form of psychological or physical violence administered as discipline, about 65 per cent of students are bullied at school and 79 per cent of children witness violence in their community or at home.

Despite institutional strengthening, legislative reforms and favourable public pronouncements, there are still significant concerns about the protective environment that the Jamaican state has created to reduce children's vulnerability to violence. These include the state's inadequate efforts to address longstanding issues such as corporal punishment in homes and schools and the culture of sexual violence, as well as uncoordinated and fragmented responses across different Ministries and agencies.

Jamaica already has many of the variables—laws, policies, institutions—needed to reduce violence against children, but without the institutional capacity to coordinate and implement, and without increased resources towards improving this capacity, the government's commitment will be questioned, and there is little potential for improvement and change.



of all Jamaican children have suffered some kind of psychological punishment from a caregiver



of all Jamaican children experience physical punishment at home



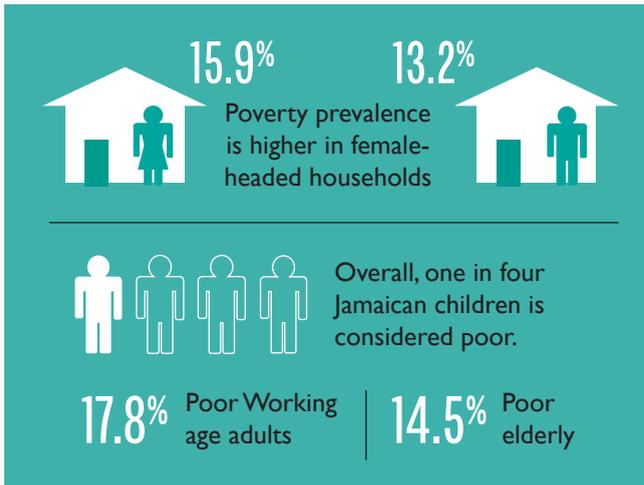
of all Jamaican children experience severe physical punishment



Males are more likely than females to experience violent discipline and the same is true for children from rural areas compared to those from urban areas.



Children in the poorest quintile were more likely to experience physical punishment and severe physical punishment when compared to their peers in the wealthiest quintile



## Poverty and Social Protection

A quarter of Jamaica's children live in poverty and, as a result, are more likely to be ill, engaged in child labour, have reduced access to adequate water and sanitation facilities and to be exposed to violent discipline. Girls in the poorest population quintile are also more likely to become teenage parents. Children enjoy some social protection from the state, though a large number of deserving children still fall outside of the targeting mechanism.

The Jamaican government has responded to the challenges posed by child poverty by overhauling its social security programmes, and replacing a number of disparate programmes with the Programme for Advancement of Health and Education (PATH). The programme is partly consistent with child-sensitive social protection tenets and enjoys the support of donor agencies and members of the international community.

Through the development of a social protection strategy, the government has committed to the use of a social protection floor to improve coverage and to synchronize the various social protection initiatives. Effective implementation of this strategy is therefore key to resolving the challenges of fragmentation at the policy level, lack of implementation fidelity and gaps in regulatory frameworks, which together work against the achievement of a number of CRC commitments.

## Health

Jamaica's performance on macro-economic measures of child health paints a picture of improved provisioning for children. Ninety-five per cent of Jamaican infants are fully immunized and skilled health personnel attend 99 per cent of births. Jamaican children are about 60 per cent more likely to live beyond five years old, and about 33 per cent more likely to live beyond one year old. While Jamaican children have universal access to health care, their welfare is compromised by deeply entrenched income inequities that create vulnerabilities for children, especially those living in rural areas and urban inner-city areas. Issues such as childhood obesity and persistently high teen pregnancy rates are challenges that are yet to be adequately addressed by the state. Health literacy to enable individuals to claim their right to health is severely lacking, and proactive, preventative measures to tackle other social disparities that affect children's health seem inadequate.



## Under-5 mortality rate improvement

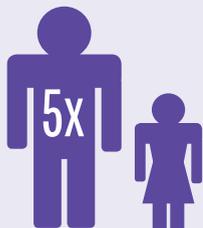
Between 1990 and 2015, Jamaica's U5MR improved by almost 60% – a reduction from 38 to 15.7 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Jamaica ranks 16th out of 33 countries in the LAC region; globally, 107 out of 194 countries.



Source: WHO data 2013-2016

## Jamaican adolescents ages 14-19 face significant risks and challenges



### HIV infection:

As adolescents age, their risk for HIV infection increases. Adolescents ages 15-19 are 5 times more likely to become infected with HIV than younger children.



**Transactional sex:** 24% of girls ages 15-19 and 54% of boys in the same age group are engaged in transactional sex.



### Teen pregnancy:

Jamaica's teen pregnancy rate is the third highest in the English-speaking Caribbean with a birth rate of 72 per 1,000 teen girls (ages 15-19).



72.5%

### Suicide:

14-19 year olds account for 72.5 per cent of students who are at risk of suicide

42%

### Mental health:

42% of all attempted suicides treated at public hospitals were children.

## Children and the Natural Environment

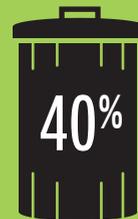
Jamaica has a mixed record on the extent to which it is securing a natural environment that facilitates the realization of optimal health for all children. Jamaican children now grow up in a natural environment where air pollutants are increasing, and where air quality falls below World Health Organization (WHO) minimum acceptable levels. The health of Jamaican children is compromised by a natural environment in which the management of solid waste creates a high risk of respiratory illnesses, resulting in air and water pollution, and potential diseases. On a positive note, most Jamaican children have access to clean drinking water and clean energy and live in a world where renewable energy increasingly accounts for a greater proportion of total energy produced.



Overall, 93% of Jamaicans have access to safe drinking water.

88% in **rural** areas have access to safe drinking water.

96% in **urban** areas have access to safe drinking water.



40% of household waste is not collected and disposed of, especially in rural areas.

This compromises the air quality that children have to breathe.

The situation with children is inarguably the greatest priority, because therein lie solutions and interventions that can break the inter-generational transmission of poverty, one of Jamaica's most pernicious developmental challenges.

