

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Although classified as a lower middle income country and having made strides in several key social and economic indicators, Jamaica suffers from a highly skewed income distribution and deep pockets of poverty still remain.

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HIV/AIDS especially among young females, gender-based violence and high levels of adolescent fertility remain critical challenges. Contributing to the Government of Jamaica's strategic RH framework and integrated with UNFPA's Country Programme, the project focused on adolescents and youth, SRH, STIs/HIV/AIDS, and maternal mortality and improving access to reproductive health services. It built on the foundation earlier work sponsored by UNFPA, by expanding the range of beneficiaries to include persons with disabilities (PWD) and men who have traditionally been under-served by SRH programmes.

The project has been characterized by a broad-base coalition of government and civil society partners forged to pioneer the country's first initiative on the sexual and reproductive rights of people with disabilities with a special focus on adolescents and youth. Other key areas of project work have included the introduction of the partograph, boosting commodities security, social marketing and undertaking operational research into the sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents.

### Working with people with disabilities

The stand-out achievement of the programme was undoubtedly its groundbreaking and comprehensive work on the sexual and reproductive health and rights among

adolescents with disabilities (AWD) and their parents. The project is the only one of its kind being implemented by UNFPA worldwide and targets a segment of the population that has been historically neglected from SRH interventions.

According to recent UN estimates, people with disabilities account for no less than 10% of the global population and disability leads to higher vulnerability to poverty. In fact, in Jamaica, close to 50% of those living in poverty are likely to be persons with disabilities. Therefore, interventions targeting the community of persons with disabilities have a significant potential to improve the quality of life of those living in poverty.

The programme carried out a comprehensive and inclusive approach to tackling this much neglected issue including basic research, needs assessments, informed advocacy on multiple levels, awareness raising among AWD themselves, their parents, service providers and the general public, targeted service delivery and input into the government's legal and policy framework. Advocacy activities carried out by the programme helped heighten public awareness and government level involvement and led to significant achievements at the policy level.

## The programme carried out a comprehensive and inclusive approach to tackling this much neglected issue.

RH was integrated into national policy on disability and included in the Draft International Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. To expand access to over-the-counter contraceptives, and information, a 'window' was established at the Jamaican Council for People with Disabilities which also provided counselling and referral services. This facility was expanded to 17 locations through partnerships with other agencies each with multiple outreach centres nationwide.

## FACTFILE

**Title** Sexual and Reproductive Health ACP Joint Programme

**Aim** To contribute to the Government of Jamaica's efforts to provide universal access to integrated gender-sensitive rights-based SRH services.

**Duration** 66 months: 2003–2008

**Budget** US\$2.130 million

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- ▶ Working with people with disabilities, in particular adolescents and young people.
- ▶ Operational research into sexual and reproductive health needs.
- ▶ Introduction of the partograph – a tool which allows verification of the progress of labour in pregnant women.



## SUSTAINABILITY

The project has broken new ground in promoting the sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities. This component of the project has now been recognized within Jamaica, UNFPA and beyond, as a model for future work with people with disabilities throughout the world and a basis for the Government of Jamaica and NGOs to move forward with additional work.

A network of practitioners made up of coalition members involved in the project has been consolidated and a website established to facilitate discussions, and, most importantly, the availability of practitioners to provide assistance to other countries on request.

## Working with young people and adolescents

A policy document on access to contraceptives for minors was developed to respond to increased demand for services generated among adolescents and youth through increased access to information. Jamaica has had a comparatively good record for including gender equity in SRH projects and programmes, demonstrated in the focus given to young girls identified as the most at risk group for HIV infection. Under the project, teenage girls who were vulnerable to risky pregnancies were counselled and procedures carried out to reduce risks of maternal mortality. The project also focused on raising awareness among health care workers, guidance counsellors and young girls on the risks of unplanned pregnancies, and by promoting a balanced gender element including interventions related to men and especially unattached male youth.

## Operational research into adolescent RH needs

Research carried out under the project in 2005 was critical in providing an invaluable understanding of the needs and barriers faced by AWD and their parents. This strategic study laid the foundation for programme activities in this key area, but also provided understanding of what had been a neglected and largely unknown subject.

Baseline research was also carried out into demand among adolescents for emergency contraceptive pills to determine whether a change in status from a prescribed drug to availability over the counter would increase demand for this contraceptive. The results supported the development of public education for emergency contraceptive pills (ECP), policy on the provision of contraceptives to minors and the provision of ECP in the public sector.

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A study on patterns of adolescent delivery was carried out through the project to facilitate targeting and design of the government

programme on post-partum IUD insertion. Stemming from this, a policy document on access to contraceptives for minors was developed, a protocol was drafted, brochures printed, nurses trained and services including counselling provided.

## Introduction of the partograph

Among key programme highlights was the introduction of the use of the WHO partograph at the hospital level as part of a cornerstone government strategy to reduce maternal and perinatal mortality. Monitoring of labour with the partograph – a tool used to visually chart the progress of labour and help identify any potential problems at an early stage – has assisted with the early recognition of obstructed labour and appropriate timing for interventions. Health staff (including doctors, nurses and midwives) were trained at the Hospital of the West Indies – the largest teaching hospital in the Caribbean – and the partograph was introduced into the core curriculum.

## LESSONS LEARNED

**UNFPA's long and successful partnership with civil society groups in Jamaica and the Caribbean, in alliance with other partners such as IPPF and the National Family Planning Board, was instrumental in making breakthroughs in ARH issues and rights, despite restricted budgets, and with persons with disabilities, previously a virtually 'forgotten sub-culture'.**

**UNFPA is a lead agency in adolescent reproductive health and now in PWD issues and rights, and has an opportunity to present this project as a case study to the rest of the region. UNFPA and the Jamaican government have consistently addressed plans to overcome staff reluctance to give services to youth. This is also integrated into the National AIDS Programme which has extensive resources to address future solutions.**

**The outstanding success of this project, with capacity building especially with NGOs and also with the health ministry, should be sustained, but in the context of a more strategic approach to building on innovative and effective practices.**



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UNFPA 220 East 42nd Street, New York, New York 10017, USA  
Tel: +1 212 297 5000 • Fax: +1 212 370 0201 • Email: [hq@unfpa.org](mailto:hq@unfpa.org) • [www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org)  
UNFPA EUROPE 14 Rue Montoyer, 3rd Floor, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 550 1830 • Fax: +32 2 550 1833 • Email: [unfpa-brussels@unfpa.org](mailto:unfpa-brussels@unfpa.org) • [europe.unfpa.org](http://europe.unfpa.org)

