

1 NO POVERTY



GOAL 1

End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere

Context

Reducing the prevalence of poverty and eradicating extreme poverty is a policy priority of the Government of Jamaica (GOJ). The National Policy on Poverty and National Poverty Reduction Programme (NPP/NPRP) 2017 is a responsive instrument to implement and evaluate measures to address poverty and vulnerability. The NPP/NPRP has two goals:

Goal 1: Eradicate¹⁵ extreme (food) poverty by 2022;

Goal 2: Reduce the prevalence of poverty significantly below 10.0 per cent by 2030.

The NPP/NPRP is a mechanism to identify, streamline and coordinate programmes for the poor and vulnerable in keeping with nationally agreed strategies, targets, and goals. The coordinated approach is essential for improving targeting, reach, access to services and service delivery, while building and expanding partnerships, and strengthening collaboration and communication.

The NPP/NPRP is aligned with the Vision 2030 Jamaica— National Development Plan and the Jamaica Social Protection Strategy (SPS) 2014. The SPS uses the rights-based and life-cycle approaches to achieving income security for all. As noted in the SPS, the interconnectivity between the Social Protection, which helps to safeguard the living standards of individuals, and other variables (e.g., economic, psychological, cultural and political) is significant. This integration is also taken into consideration in the development of the National Poverty Reduction Programme, which seeks to address poverty through five distinct programme areas: Addressing Extreme Poverty and Basic Needs; Economic Empowerment and Human Capital Development; Psychosocial, Cultural and Normative Advancement; Basic Community Infrastructure; and Institutional Strengthening. As of 2021, approximately 80 programmes — delivered primarily by GOJ ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), and partnering non-government entities — continued implementation under the NPRP.

Jamaica is currently exploring the development of a multidimensional poverty index (MPI), which is a measure that considers several deprivations and is designed to address the heterogeneous nature of poverty. The index would be a useful and necessary complement to the monetary poverty measurement, by including deprivations related to health, education, sanitation and others. Currently, Jamaica uses a consumption-based monetary measure to estimate an absolute poverty rate. Consistent with global trends, a non-income measure of poverty will be established to further aid in the assessment of multiple deprivations, facilitating human development through improved programme targeting. The

¹⁵ Eradication of poverty as defined by the World Bank – absolute poverty levels below 3.0 per cent. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview#1>

MPI will adopt a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods as it will seek to identify specific deprivations that are relevant to Jamaicans living in poverty. The methodology to develop the MPI will incorporate focus group sessions to allow for community-level inputs in identifying the relevant deprivations faced by the citizens of the country. This will be complemented by, technical computations, and broad-based technical consultation to arrive at the best MPI outcome. The government is being supported by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative in collaboration with the Caribbean Development Bank and other partnerships.

The review for the period 2018-2022 summarizes key achievements, issues and challenges concerning poverty.

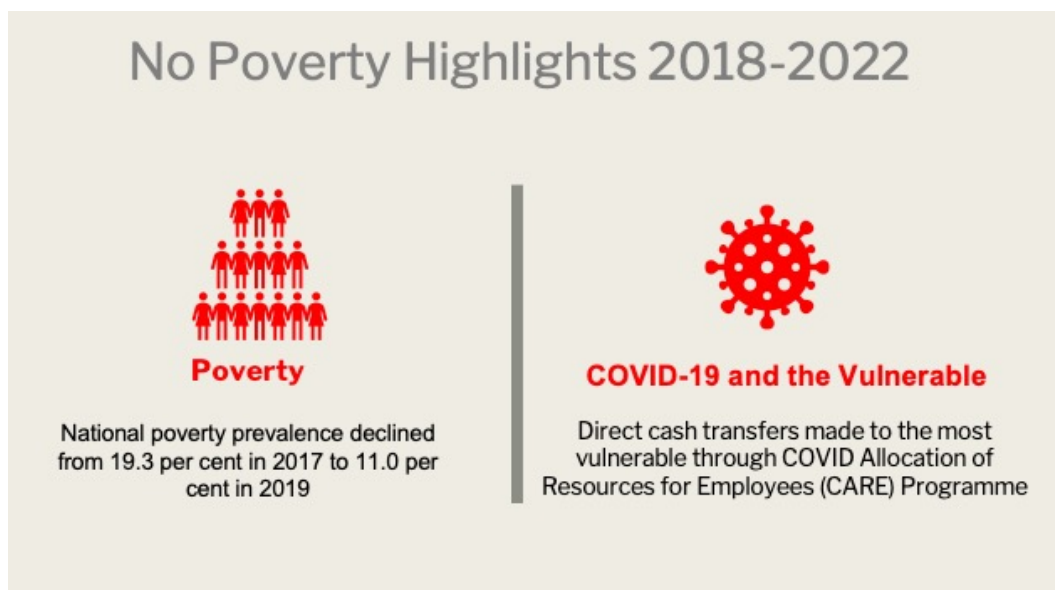


FIGURE 6: HIGHLIGHTS, NO POVERTY 2018-2022

Discussion

Target 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.90 a day

There is coherence between the national priorities for poverty reduction and achieving the SDGs given that the goals of Jamaica's National Policy on Poverty and National Poverty Reduction programme are aligned with SDGs Goals 1 and 2.

TABLE 3: POVERTY PREVALENCE BY REGION, 2017 – 2019 (PER CENT)

Region	Poverty			Food Poverty		
	2017r	2018	2019	2017r	2018	2019
Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area (GKMA)	17.7	9.2	4.7	5.5	2.9	0.4
Other Urban Centres (OUC)	19.8	12.0	13.4	4.8	3.9	3.5
Rural Areas	20.2	15.0	14.2	5.6	3.7	6.7
Jamaica	19.3	12.6	11.0	5.4	3.5	4.0
r – Revised Per cent estimates are weighted Discrepancies may be due to rounding. Source: Compiled by PIOJ with data supplied by STATIN						

Since 2017 (the baseline year of the NPRP), poverty prevalence indicators have trended in a positive direction towards the achievements of the NPP/NPRP Goals, with a general decline in poverty while the comparative regional data show the highest poverty prevalence rates in rural areas. The latest available data on poverty (2019) revealed that 11.0 per cent of the Jamaican population was living in poverty—a 1.6 percentage point decline from 2018, and an 8.3 percentage point decline from 2017. Rural Areas (RA) recorded the highest poverty prevalence figures in 2019— at 14.2 per cent; followed by Other Urban Centres (OUC) at 13.4 per cent and the Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area (GKMA) at 4.7 per cent (Table 3).

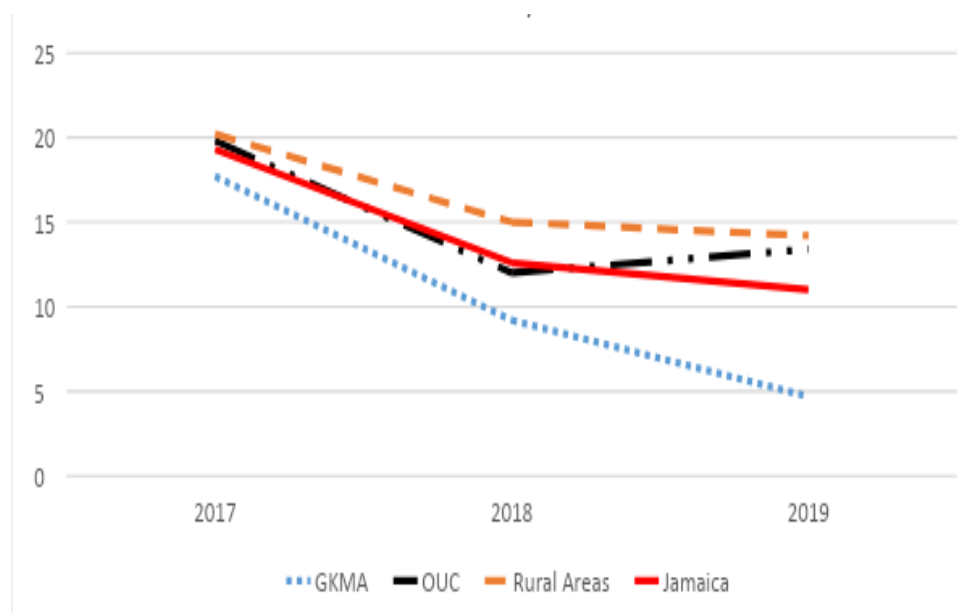


FIGURE 7: POVERTY PREVALENCE BY REGION, 2017-2019 (PER CENT)
 Source: Jamaica Survey Living Conditions

The decline in poverty can be attributed to the improvement in the Jamaican economy. In 2019, there was a 0.9 per cent¹⁶ growth in the country's real gross domestic product (GDP)—representing the 7th consecutive year of growth. This performance was supported by continued stability in the macroeconomic environment.¹⁷ There was also growth in key industries such as Agriculture, Hotel & Restaurants and the Wholesale & Retail Trade. Agriculture, which accounted for 7.1 per cent of real GDP in 2019 and is one of the most significant industries in Rural Areas, expanded by 0.4 per cent.¹⁸ The Hotels & Restaurants industry recorded growth in output of 4.9 per cent, the highest recorded for 2019, and accounted for 6.2 per cent of real GDP.¹⁹ This out-turn largely reflected an increase in the number of tourists from Jamaica's main source markets.²⁰ The largest industry group, Wholesale & Retail Trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles & Equipment, accounted for 17.2 per cent of overall real GDP and recorded growth of 1.1 per cent.²¹ Other improvements included an increase in remittance flows to US\$ 2 405.6 million compared with US\$ 2 345.8 million in 2018—an increase of US\$ 59.8 million.²² Remittance inflows are a possible social safety net for the poor, hence an increase in remittance inflows may increase household consumption, leading to a reduction in poverty. Jamaica's unemployment rate for 2019 declined compared with 2018; 7.2 per cent relative to 8.7 per cent.²³

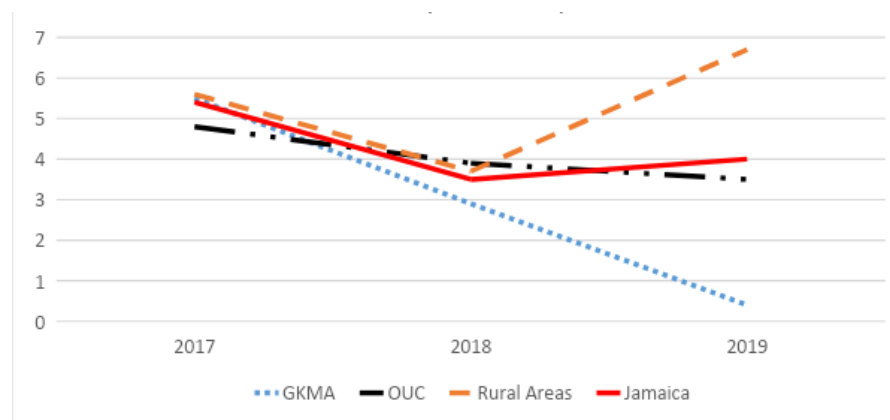


FIGURE 8: FOOD POVERTY PREVALENCE BY REGION, 2017-2019 (PER CENT)
Source: Jamaica Survey Living Conditions

In 2017, the food poverty rate (Figure 7) stood at 5.4 per cent when compared with 3.5 per cent in 2018 and 4.0 per cent in 2019. Rural Areas recorded the highest food poverty rates in 2017 (5.6 per cent) and similarly in 2019 at 6.7 per cent. In 2018 the food poverty prevalence in GKMA declined below 3.0 percent and continued to decline in 2019.²⁴

¹⁶ Statistical Institute of Jamaica. 2019. National Income and Product Accounts. Kingston: STATIN

¹⁷ Planning Institute of Jamaica. 2019. Economic & Social Survey Jamaica 2019. Kingston: PIOJ

¹⁸ Statistical Institute of Jamaica. 2019. National Income and Product Accounts. Kingston: STATIN

¹⁹ Statistical Institute of Jamaica. 2019. National Income and Product Accounts. Kingston: STATIN

²⁰ Planning Institute of Jamaica. 2020. Economic & Social Survey Jamaica 2019. Kingston: PIOJ

²¹ Statistical Institute of Jamaica. 2019. National Income and Product Accounts. Kingston: STATIN

²² http://www.boj.org.jm/uploads/pdf/rem_updates/rem_updates_jan2021.pdf

²³ Statistical Institute of Jamaica. 2020. The Jamaica Labour Force Survey Annual Review 2019. Kingston: STATIN.

²⁴ Based on changes to sampling and weighting methodologies the current poverty series is available from 2017; future revision of prior year estimates by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica are anticipated for a full trend series.

Target 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

Table 4 shows a decline in the prevalence of poverty among female-headed households to 10.9 per cent in 2019, reducing by half when compared with the estimate of 22.8 per cent in 2017. For male-headed households, a similar analysis shows a marked decline from 15.7 per cent in 2017 to 11.1 per cent in 2019.

TABLE 4. PREVALENCE OF POOR INDIVIDUALS BY SEX OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD AND AGE GROUP, 2017 – 2019 (PER CENT)

	2017	2018	2019
Sex of Household Head			
Male	15.7	11.0	11.1
Female	22.8	14.4	10.9
Age Group			
Early Childhood (0-8 Yrs.)	23.4	15.2	13.9
Children (0-17 Yrs.)	24.4	15.7	13.3
Adolescents (10-19 Yrs.)	25.9	16.4	13.9
Youth (15-24 Yrs.)	23.7	14.6	13.7
Young Adult (25-34 Yrs.)	18.0	11.4	8.9
Prime Working Age (35-39 Yrs.)	15.7	10.4	9.3
Elderly (60+ Yrs.)	14.2	11.2	9.4
Jamaica	19.3	12.6	11.0
Source: Jamaica Survey Living Conditions			

The poverty prevalence in all age groups has also been declining. As of 2019, the poverty prevalence for children (0-17 years old) was 13.3 per cent, a reduction from 15.7 per cent in 2018, and 24.4 per cent in 2017. Reduction in poverty prevalence was also observed for persons aged 60 years and older, moving to 9.4 per cent in the latest estimate, from 14.2 per cent in 2017.

TABLE 5: PREVALENCE OF POVERTY BY SEX AND AGE GROUP, 2017 – 2019 (PER CENT)

	2017		2018		2019	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age Group						
Early Childhood (0-8 Yrs.)	24.3	22.4	16.0	14.4	13.8	13.9
Children (0-17 Yrs.)	25.2	23.6	17.3	14.1	14.7	11.8
Adolescents (10-19 Yrs.)	27.0	24.7	18.8	14.0	16.9	10.9
Youth (15-24 Yrs.)	25.0	22.4	16.4	12.6	16.5	10.8
Young Adult (25-34 Yrs.)	15.7	20.3	11.2	11.5	9.6	8.2
Prime Working Age (35-39 Yrs.)	15.5	15.9	10.0	10.8	9.5	9.1
Elderly (60+ Yrs.)	13.4	14.8	11.7	10.8	11.0	8.0
Average Poverty Prevalence	20.9	20.6	14.5	12.6	13.1	10.4
Note: Per Cent estimates are weighted Source: Compiled by the PIOJ from data supplied by STATIN						

Table 5 shows that, on average, poverty prevalence is higher among males than females. For every year, the highest poverty prevalence rates were recorded among males, more specifically among children and adolescents. For 2017, the highest recorded rate was 25.2 per cent among male children 0-17 years and 18.8 per cent and 16.9 per cent among male adolescents for 2018 and 2019 respectively. Among females, poverty prevalence rates were highest among children 0-8 years and adolescents 10-19 years. Prime working age adults recorded similar rates of poverty prevalence among both sexes for the review period.

Reduction in poverty prevalence was significant for persons aged 60 years and older for both sexes. In the last estimate, poverty prevalence for Elderly males was 11.0 per cent, moving from 13.4 per cent in 2017. For females, similar analysis shows a marked decline from 14.8 per cent in 2017 to 8.0 per cent in 2019. Overall, there was a decline in poverty prevalence rates across all age groups from 2017 to 2019.

Target 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

The provisions of Jamaica's social protection floor are aligned to the ILO Recommendation 202 (2012); it includes support for Basic Income Security and Basic Social Services for the population in general, but more specifically for vulnerable families, workers, persons with disabilities and the elderly. The country acknowledges that all vulnerable groups should have access to safety nets and that other members of the population should be able to tap into contributory and other forms of social security. In 2014, the floor, included cash and in-kind transfers, economic assistance, residential care, basic health and education services, water and amenities, shelter and public transportation, inter alia. Most provisions and programmes were already in existence at that time, and a costing exercise was done on the public expenditure on

the social protection floor in 2017 estimated that 6.0 per cent of nominal GDP was being spent on basic social services and 0.1 per cent on basic income security as defined in the floor.

The National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) are two key provisions within the social protection floor. The NIS provides pensions in the case of retirement, disability on the job, invalidity, and other forms of support the proportion of the adult population (18 years and older) registered to scheme, which is typically more likely in formal employment.

The Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH), is a major cash transfer social assistance programme, the proportion of registered beneficiaries of PATH, as a fraction of the total population, reflects the single largest target group that is simultaneously eligible for income transfers, support in shocks, education benefits, free health services, and school feeding programmes, inter alia. While continuing to extend the programme to eligible applicant households, the policy thrust of the government remains the reduction of poverty, and the provision of strategic case management support for welfare exit outcomes.

More recently, the GOJ embarked on two initiatives to further strengthen the Social Protection floor: the Social Pensions Programme and a feasibility study on unemployment insurance, following up on work previously recommended by the Labour Market Reform Commission 2017. The Social Pensions Programme targets persons 75 years and older who are without income support; it began providing transfers in July 2021. By November the programme provided pensions to 6 232 older persons, including those transitioning from other cash transfer programmes at the eligible age. The feasibility study for unemployment insurance is being conducted in collaboration with the ILO; it will determine options including institutional assessments, cost and actuarial analysis, demographic and legislative assessments, and provide the Cabinet with recommended options for consideration. The Social Pensions Programme and unemployment insurance will expand the SP floor. Thousands of older persons and their families, as well as workers across various industries, are likely to benefit from these additional social protection provisions.

Over the review period 2018-2022, the GOJ and its partners continued to address vulnerability needs among groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, migrants and other vulnerable persons in their homes or communities. The municipal Social Assistance Programme implemented by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development continued to provide financial resources to communities through the local governance frameworks, targeting education, funeral assistance, housing support, youth summer employment programmes, inter alia. The programmes to address homelessness were also advanced with efforts to create a sound policy framework and accelerate shelter solutions in the wake of the 2020 pandemic. The support included night shelters, drop-in centres, transitional facilities, increased frequency of meal provision, sleeping areas health care and care packages—all examples of extending social benefits to population groups most in need.

The pandemic affected implementation of the migrant work programmes overseas. However, social security continued to be encouraged through contribution measures and facilitated for improved income security. Migrant workers on programmes managed by the MLSS continued to receive appropriate orientation and guidance. Continuing prohibition by the US against mandatory social security deductions from migrant workers' earnings since 2010 places sole responsibility on the individual workers. However, available modalities for effecting the contributions have created barriers to these workers. Efforts have also been made to improve the welfare and livelihood support for workers previously involved in overseas employment, through retooling, re-skilling and other aspects of empowerment, supported by the International Organization for Migration. Considerations for the greater formalization of the domestic worker and fisher-folk sectors are anticipated to expand the social security coverage of those involved. Collaboration with private sector entities and

non-government organizations at community levels served to support continuing interventions for vulnerable persons and families.

Persons with disabilities (PWD) continued to be served through the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities, and several NGO and private sector organizations. The GOJ budgets continued to be provided in support of Economic Empowerment Grants and Assistive Aids grants, as well as academic scholarships. These forms of support continued through the pandemic and benefited over 100 persons. Rehabilitation grants to support medical needs, income-generating projects and other avenues of assistance also continued to be disbursed to hundreds of applicants. Under the stimulus package created to mitigate the employment risks within the pandemic, the government also provided a \$40 million allocation for PWD. By November 2021, approximately half of the budget amount had been disbursed to nearly 2 000 applicants. Social security coverage for PWD is not easily measurable at the national level by the use of routine household surveys. However, qualitative information signals low levels of income security and inconsistency in employment, which bear directly on contributory social security provisions. Many PWD are involved in low-wage occupations, mainly stemming from levels of educational attainment and/or mobility restrictions. While there may be tax relief for informal employment, this impacts relatively few persons, while medical and other costs are likely to be burdensome. Apart from the employment deficits, persons with disabilities are also impacted by lags in retirement pension payments and administrative issues with staff appointments that allow them to join pension plans. There was very little attachment to social security for those employed within the informal sector.

Other crucial indicators for examining coverage include the proportion of the Prime Working Age (25-34 years) with Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) general examination certification, which moved from 20.7 per cent in 2017 to 24.6 per cent in the 2019 survey. At the level of the lowest quintile (consumption group), corresponding data was 4.8 per cent, from 6.5 per cent in 2017; while for Quintile 2 the estimate was 11.5 per cent in 2019, similar to 11.9 per cent in 2017. This age group is significant to watch as it is the youngest tier of the Prime Working Age and should reflect educational outcomes as well as the labour market potential. The level of outcomes for the lowest consumption groups remains weak and does not augur well for sustained poverty reduction.

Coverage by health insurance is also a useful indicator within the population. There are provisions in the safety net to support drug-related subsidies (e.g. National Health Fund and Jamaica Drugs for the Elderly Programme). Health insurance is still mainly offered through contributory schemes with private insurance companies, while the government continues to pursue the development of a national health insurance programme. In 2019, the survey showed that 18.2 per cent of individuals were covered by health insurance, relatively unchanged from the 18.9 per cent in 2017. The socioeconomic comparison shows that while 43.8 per cent of Quintile 5 respondents had health insurance in 2019 the similar data for Quintile 1 was 2.5 per cent. Health insurance of this type however still largely obtains in formal employment settings, and this may explain the findings. The government continued to provide free healthcare in the public health system for persons on welfare, including free access to requisite drugs.

The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic further reinforced the role of the social protection system for social stability, social inclusion and social justice. Significant labour market impacts ensued, affecting thousands of families; additionally, many in the informal and services sectors lost income opportunities based on the mobility and other restrictions created by the pandemic. In April 2020, the GOJ moved quickly to institute a \$10 billion programme of economic stimulus and social welfare, the CARE Programme. This was intended to provide cash transfers to alleviate immediate needs, but it also targeted employers and small business entrepreneurs to protect against job losses. Also, the government provided \$40 million specifically targeted to supporting persons with disabilities who had suffered income losses. Overall social protection responses country-wide included welfare and social support, expansion of access to social services, social

security accommodations, and labour market support. The government leveraged support from non-government organizations, the private sector and international development partners.

The level of reach and access to the various benefits was however challenged by lack of formality, which expressed itself in weak attachment to the financial system, low levels of registration, affiliation and documentation, inter alia. Actions on both the demand and supply side will need to address these limitations in moving forward and advancing the extension of coverage. Steps are already being made to maintain direct bank deposits as a viable cash transfer modality and to advocate for the accommodation of low-risk bank accounts for certain clientele. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS), which executes several large income transfer programmes, has been actively involved in dialogue with the banking sector. There is currently increased sensitivity to the advantages of formalization and registration, which will facilitate the delivery of state benefits.

The networking and National Social Protection Committee (NSPC) partnerships have also supported the creation of new insurance products within the local insurance market in 2021, focused on contributory health and life insurance packages for small farmers and fisher folk. This is another important step in extending avenues of social security to marginalized workers. Over 200 000 registered farmers and fishers are anticipated to participate in the system, which promotes affordable premiums and provides for previously unmet health protection needs. These programmes have the potential to improve formalization through registration and expand workers' access to social insurance coverage.

The MLSS continued to make efforts at implementing parametric reforms to the National Insurance Scheme, arising from actuarial monitoring. In 2020 the insurable wage ceiling for contributors to the NIS was increased from \$1.5 million to \$3.0 million; this will be further increased to \$5.0 million in 2022. This will impact not only returns on investments to the National Insurance Fund but will also facilitate more meaningful contribution rates and benefits. Other reforms include routine actuarial reviews, enhanced back-office technologies, and human resource development, which have continued to be undertaken by the ministry.

The NSPC and its sub-committees focused on defining gaps and challenges to the extension of social protection coverage and access to social protection floors. Some of the major challenges in extending the coverage of social protection floor provisions are weak institutional capacities in service delivery entities, including limited human resources for case management and other client services; structural barriers to inclusion for persons with disabilities; limits to financial inclusion of vulnerable families and individuals; inequality in access to education; limited unemployment provisions, and limited livelihood protection.

The GOJ and its partners addressed several of these issues (as noted throughout the report), many having been exacerbated during the pandemic. The MLSS moved towards direct deposits and other electronic transfers for cash payments of social assistance and pension benefits. Negotiations have been pursued with the banking sector resulting in offerings of low-risk bank accounts for receipt of transfers and the cadre of caseworkers in the MLSS increased by some 300 persons, with pending reforms within the Public Assistance Division. Institutional assessments have been conducted on the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities to strengthen administrative and technical capacities. A feasibility study was undertaken regarding the establishment of unemployment insurance schemes. The GOJ through the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) also initiated a review of the targeting/screening mechanism used to identify poor and vulnerable families, and this is expected to be completed in 2022. This will further fine-tune the targeting mechanism and incorporate where necessary any emerging variables that are critical for identifying chronic poverty.

Target 1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance

The Government of Jamaica (GOJ) continues to guarantee the rights of all citizens, including the poor and vulnerable, to economic resources, basic services, and property through the Constitution, various laws, policies, and programmes. The following are among the pertinent rights-guaranteeing instruments in place:

- National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (2013)
- National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2019)
- National Land Policy (1997)
- Agricultural Land Utilization Policy (ALUP) (2011)
- National Education Strategic Plan (2012)
- Land Administration Management Programme (LAMP)
- National Housing Policy (2019)
- National Transport Policy (2007)
- National Minimum-Wage (Amendment) Order (2022)
- National Financial Inclusion Strategy (2017)

These national policy-level instruments outline Jamaica's thrust towards improved access to quality goods and services for citizens, including the poor; reduced unemployment; improved productivity and incomes; and improved access to credit and micro-finance. Relevant achievements include the following:

- Increase in the number of homeless shelters to meet the needs of vulnerable groups including the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- Provision of grant funding for entrepreneurship ventures to members of poor households and at the community level.
- Business markets, community fairs and farmers' markets conducted island-wide to stimulate commerce among farmers and small producers.
- The provision of access to civil registration documents to farmers to expand access to services.
- Implementation of an electronic land titling system to improve the titling process.
- Support to community enterprises linked to the Agriculture and Tourism Sectors, including the commencement of the development of a formal COVID-19 response for the agricultural sector.

Data from the JSLC indicate that just above three-quarters of households in the country had access to improved/safe drinking water sources. The disparity between regions continued with households in the GKMA, OUC and Rural Areas reporting 98.6 per cent, 87.2 per cent and 56.0 per cent respectively in 2019. By consumption quintile, data showed that

over 60.0 per cent of households in each category had access to improved water sources. In the poorest quintile, 31.0 per cent had indoor taps, compared with 53.3 per cent in the wealthiest quintile. The difference between indoor and outdoor water sources indicates quality of life disparities.

Security of tenure by possession of land titles also indicates that households in Rural Areas and lower quintiles were less likely to have registered or common law titles; however, the data revealed some important improvements in these categories over the series (Table 6). In 2019, some 61.7 per cent of rural households reportedly had registered land titles, in comparison to 58.8 per cent in 2018. In Quintile 1, there was also a notable improvement in tenure status for number of households possessing registered land titles, increasing to 51.5 per cent from 43.3 per cent the previous year. The second quintile also showed improvement to 60.8 per cent from 56.5 per cent, while other quintiles remained largely the same, in respect of registered titles.

TABLE 6: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF POSSESSION OF LAND TITLE BY THE HOUSEHOLD HEAD, 2018-2019

	2018				2019			
	Yes Registered	Yes, Common Law	None	Total	Yes Registered	Yes, Common Law	None	Total
Region								
GKMA	82.8	4.6	12.6	100.0	89.2	1.1	9.7	100.0
Other Towns	63.8	12.5	23.7	100.0	66.1	12.2	21.7	100.0
Rural Areas	58.8	14.2	27.1	100.0	61.7	15.4	22.9	100.0
Quintile								
Poorest	43.3	17.7	39.0	100.0	51.5	15.5	33.0	100.0
2	56.5	13.1	30.4	100.0	60.8	12.6	26.6	100.0
3	63.4	16.2	20.4	100.0	63.5	14.5	22.0	100.0
4	69.4	6.2	24.4	100.0	69.3	10.7	20.0	100.0
5	78.8	8.4	12.7	100.0	78.2	9.7	12.1	100.0
Total	66.9	11.0	22.1	100.0	68.1	11.8	20.1	100.0
SOURCE: JAMAICA SURVEY OF LIVING CONDITIONS								

While progress has been made to improve access to goods and services for the most vulnerable individuals and households, there is room to build the public's awareness of the existence of government programmes, services and benefits that they can access; this is especially so for new and emerging vulnerable groups. Greater efforts at linking the poor to formal groups and institutions that can act as a buffer in times of crisis are also needed.

Target 1.5 Build resilience of the poor and vulnerable and reduce exposure to climate-related and other shocks

Figure 8 depicts a historical view of the conceptual underpinnings for social protection in Jamaica. The period under review with its added complexities caused by the pandemic has reinforced empowerment and resilience as the next frontier. Each period is characterized by prevailing concepts and ideologies, which fuelled policy and programme directions. Notwithstanding shifts in focus across time, influences by global thinking, political history, national discourse and research, the current direction benefits from continuing relevance of past experiences that serve to strengthen how policies and programmes are positioned.

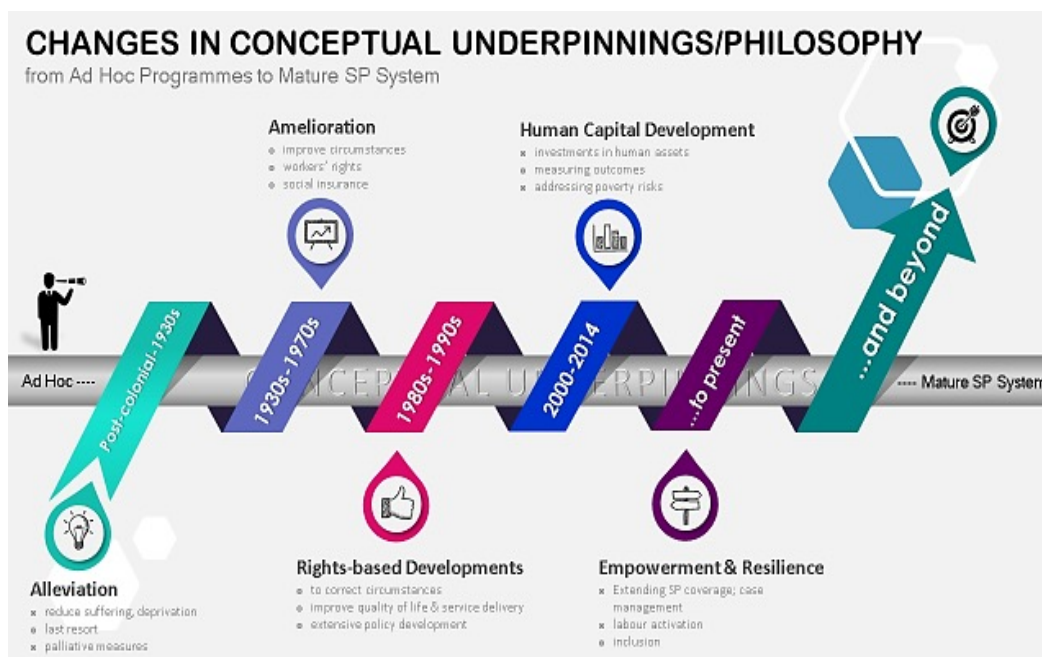


FIGURE 9: CONTINUUM OF THE CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION IN JAMAICA
Source: Social Protection and Gender Unit, PIOJ 2021.

While there is an emphasis on efficient delivery of welfare provisions, the current environment underscores the need for flexibility and options for adjustments. At the household level, these require improved educational attainment levels, increased labour market participation and sustainable attachment, greater levels of certification and registration of livelihoods, availability of crop insurance, access to business capital, and greater worker protection. On the supply side, there is a need for digital delivery systems, case management, accessible financial and insurance services, and registration systems. Business development mentoring systems and labour activation services are also needed. Much work has already been done by the GOJ in collaboration with the private sector to address these areas.

Climate-related and other shocks are likely to hit the weakest the hardest; hence, resilience building is central to pandemic recovery efforts, as well as longer-term efforts ongoing in various sectors. This approach is reflected in the second Medium Term Programme for the National Policy on Poverty 2021-2024. Advocacy will be a critical strategy; without significant changes many will remain vulnerable in the face of shocks, unable to redeploy their energies or skills, and without risk-mitigating provisions such as insurance. At the nexus of social protection and climate change, advances will need to be made not only in social insurance coverage but also in the protection of physical environments from destruction by livelihood activities, which impact responsible production and consumption (Goal 12), life on land (Goal 14) and life below water (Goal 15).

Target 1A Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions.

The GOJ continues to build partnerships to mobilize financial and technical resources at the bilateral, regional and international levels. Several partnerships for the economic and social development of the poor exist including with major international funding agencies such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union, and UN agencies. These partnerships are geared toward the human capital development of the poor and vulnerable including poor households, children, and persons with disabilities. The Sendai Framework, Paris Agreement and the SAMOA Pathway continue to guide Jamaica's thrust to build resilience from natural hazards and climate change impact. Jamaica acknowledges the need for continued focus on the prevention and mitigation of climate change impact on the society and those most vulnerable and continues to establish regional and international partnerships to demonstrate, strengthen and implement its commitment.

Partnerships at the local level continue to be highlighted, especially in the face of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The collaboration between the public and private sectors in the provision of goods and services to support those affected by various fallouts was evident. Academia also played a major role in identifying and interrogating pertinent areas for policy decisions. Notwithstanding, the collaboration between academia and the government can be further strengthened not only at the policy and programme development levels but also the implementation and product development levels. At the community level, the strengthening of community mechanisms to better respond to risks including disaster mitigation and expansion of livelihoods remain critical. There is a need however for innovative financing strategies that can raise capital from private and commercial sources.

Target 1B Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions

The government's approval of the Jamaica Social Protection Strategy (SPS) in 2014 paved the way for greater efforts at integration and investment in holistic social protection (SP) system for the country. The National Social Protection Committee (NSPC), the supporting institutional framework for the SPS, is important multi-sectoral coordination and knowledge sharing and platform. Through effective collaboration across government and non-government entities, it has led to greater opportunities for extending the reach of programmes and provisions.

The SPS, which supports the Vision 2030 Jamaica—National Development Plan identified priorities for the development of a strong SP system. These priorities included improved benefits and delivery systems for social assistance, improved targeting and case management, greater opportunities for vertical SP, strengthening of the reach of basic social services, and moving beyond the alleviation of circumstances to empowerment and resilience for families. These priorities are closely aligned with the strategic emphasis of the SDGs, and therefore the sector required little or no reinforcing of priorities. Advancements were made in case management cadres and procedures within the main ministries; actuarial reviews of the social insurance fund were undertaken and recommendations were carried through for improvement of its viability; revised policies were instituted for poverty reduction, international migration, human services, and senior citizens and new targeted social assistance programmes were developed.

The establishment of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks for poverty reduction and social protection, with the relevant indicators to track results and outcomes, strengthened the SP system. The M&E frameworks form part of new institutional arrangements for multi-sectoral involvement by stakeholder entities.

Sanctioned by the government, the National Social Protection Committee was convened in 2014, and sub-committees

were commissioned in 2015. The National Poverty Reduction Programme Committee (NPRPC) was commissioned in 2018; it uses an ad hoc working group structure to facilitate dialogue and technical input. The committee is chaired at the sector level by the PIOJ, which brings to bear a plethora of social, economic and environmental dynamics to the issues; through dialogue and deliberation, it has created opportunities for knowledge transfer and collaboration, enriching the stakeholder base and national consensus. Its members have also been sensitized about the importance of considering factors such as age, gender, disability, and other nuances not previously foremost in their implementation efforts.

Through their participation in the National Social Protection Committee NSPC, stakeholder entities (government and non-government) increase their awareness of and lend efforts to advancing the strategic imperatives of Vision 2030 Jamaica—National Development Plan. The avenues for creating, monitoring and evaluating priorities include the tri-annual Medium Term Socioeconomic Policy Framework as well as discrete Cabinet Submissions and Policy Briefs. Also, the NSPC, through ongoing discourse and cross-sectoral mainstreaming, networks and linkages at institutional levels, is an important mechanism for integrating social protection in other areas such as health, population, education and training, economy, sustainable development, migration, poverty and climate change. Further to this, the opportunity to influence government budgets at sectoral and institutional levels is important in achieving nationally established goals and targets, which these policy frameworks seek to advance.

The National Poverty Reduction Programme (NPRP) has a strong and functioning institutional arrangement in place to guide its implementation, monitoring, evaluation and coordination; it includes the Poverty Reduction Coordinating Unit and the inter-sectoral National Poverty Reduction Programme Committee (NPRPC). The institutional framework in place under the local governance system provides a mechanism for coordination and local participation in decision-making. In this regard, the Local Economic Development Programme is a step taken in addressing poverty within this framework.

Other supporting social policy frameworks over the period have included the National Policy for Gender Equality and the work on advancing a revised Population and Sustainable Development Policy. With a strong strategic focus on mainstreaming gender analysis and accommodating gender-sensitive development, these policy frameworks further advance the commitment to equal rights for males and females. In October 2021, the revised National Policy for Senior Citizens was tabled in both Houses of Parliament as a White Paper²⁵. The policy takes a holistic approach to active and productive ageing, with a recognition of the role of older persons in development, and their broad social protection needs. Three of the six Codes of Practice, as well as the Regulations for the Disabilities Act 2014, have been significantly advanced and will strengthen the protection of the rights of citizens with disabilities. Another important advancement in the social policy framework was the tabling of a new Human Services legislation before the Parliament, which will modernize the framework and institutions for serving persons in need, and initiate a repeal of the Poor Relief Act. Provisions to accommodate approximately 20 000 clients of residential care and other supportive services will continue under the new law. More home and community-based types of interventions and care programmes are envisaged with continued modernization initiatives.

25 The official Policy document.

The COVID-19 Pandemic Perspective

The pandemic hampered global efforts to reduce poverty, worsened pre-existing inequalities and uncovered vulnerabilities among the world's poor. The World Bank estimates that the effects of the pandemic could further push 100 million persons into poverty by 2020 causing global poverty rates to increase from 8.23 per cent in 2019 to 8.82 per cent in 2020.²⁶ Measures to contain the local spread of the virus—closing borders and curfews limiting public gatherings—negatively impacted the local economy particularly the most vulnerable, and highlighted the need for strengthened social protection measures.

Before the pandemic, poverty and food poverty levels were trending in a positive direction. Poverty prevalence rates were trending towards the goal of below 10.0 per cent while food poverty levels were close to global eradication levels of less than 3.0 per cent. Acceleration strategies outlined as priorities in the 2018-2021 Medium Term Programme prioritized greater access to safety nets, improved wage levels, skills certification, job matching and app apprenticeships, improved public amenities and infrastructure, inter alia. These were anticipated to keep the poverty rates on a downward trajectory. At the core of the priority poverty reduction strategies was the creation of jobs and livelihoods to impact the consumption status of individuals and households. These strategies, together with the strengthening of productive sectors and strengthening the capacity of the poor to take advantage of the employment opportunities that would result were imperatives in the pre-pandemic period and continue to remain priorities of the government of Jamaica.

Locally, the fallout from the pandemic affected MDAs' ability to administer the NPRP. An in-depth report on the effect of the pandemic on service delivery of NPRP partnering organizations highlighted the disruption of service delivery in areas such as education, health, and assistance to the poor and vulnerable as well as youth and persons living with disabilities. Challenges ranged from the closure of schools and other physical spaces selected for training purposes; reduced operating hours and decreased human resource capacity to a lack of funding and budgetary constraints to effectively reach target groups and by extension meet programme objectives and established timelines.

Additional gaps identified highlighted the need for investment in technology, primarily around beneficiary access to internet services, information communication technology (ICT) platforms and supporting devices. It also revealed the need for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in strategies and actions implemented across sectors, accompanied by legislation and relevant policy instruments. The insufficient accommodation for persons with disabilities in the health and education sector reiterated the need to expedite Jamaica's digital transformation to strengthen efforts to adequately serve this vulnerable population.

Despite the challenges, achievements of the National Poverty Reduction Programme continued in line with its main objectives: improving cost-effectiveness in programme delivery; reducing duplication while addressing gaps in coverage; improving monitoring and evaluation and accountability; building partnerships; and strengthening the systematic response to addressing poverty and vulnerability. Some of the key actions included:

- Provision of cash transfer, school feeding, post-secondary grants, tertiary bursaries, entrepreneurial grants, training, case management, and labour market interventions.
- Agricultural and entrepreneurship support and skills training for persons with disabilities, youth, and residents of poor and vulnerable communities.

26 The World Bank. 2020. Projected poverty impacts of COVID-19 (coronavirus). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/projected-poverty-impacts-of-covid-19>

- Provision of psychosocial support to youth and families through mentorship, mental health, and sexual and reproductive health services.
- Community-level interventions such as road-improvement, rehabilitation of school infrastructure, access to improved water sources, drip irrigation equipment, provision of low-income housing support and solutions, and sanitation equipment.
- Strengthening of existing and creation of new public-private sector partnerships. New partnerships have been forged primarily in areas of telecommunications, provision and distribution of food and other consumer items, ICT support and capacity building.

In response to the crisis, the government implemented mitigation measures to allow for ease of access to benefits and distribution of resources through local entities and funding from international development partners. These measures aimed to reduce regression into poverty by the vulnerable population and support the recovery of jobs and economic output. Among the government's responses were:

- The allocation of approximately \$8.5 billion in the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 to its main cash transfer programme, Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH), to aid registered elderly, persons with disabilities, and children living in poor households, adult poor and pregnant and lactating women. An extraordinary payment of benefits was also provided in May 2020 to alleviate the immediate effects of the pandemic on beneficiary families. PATH contributes to both the food security needs of the poor as well as building human capital for sustainable outcomes.
- The GOJ strengthened its disaster response mechanism to the COVID-19 pandemic by instituting the COVID Allocation of Resources for Employees (CARE) programme. This cash transfer programme targeted individuals and businesses that were impacted by the effects of the pandemic. Beneficiaries included the unemployed, students, small business operators and the tourism sector.
- The reduction in General Consumption Tax from 16.5 per cent to 15.0 per cent and a \$1 billion Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) tax credit to provide critical cash-flow support to MSMEs and a reduction in regulatory fees for certain crops.
- The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) provided grant financing of US\$ 231 170 for the development of the MPI for Jamaica. The index will provide a non-income measure to complement the current consumption-based measurement of poverty and will incorporate other contributing factors to poverty in the Jamaican context.

The recovery strategies implemented by the Government, together with the collaborative efforts of funding from International Development Partners and public-private partnerships are expected to contribute to achieving targets under the pertinent SDGs. The approach being pursued by the Government to achieve stronger economic growth is through greater alignment between policy and practice. Although full recovery to pre-crisis levels cannot be immediately expected, 2021 macroeconomic and employment data is indicating a rebounding of economic growth, employment and other indicators which are trending in the right direction, post-2020. The Government's continued investment in social safety nets, food and nutrition security, human capital development and livelihood creation alongside robust and supportive policy and regulatory frameworks will accelerate the efforts towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Lessons Learnt

From years of implementing policies and programmes, Jamaica has adapted its approaches from lessons learnt; these include:

- To reduce poverty, the strategic framework must consist of two central reinforcing elements: **economic growth and investment in human capital**. The availability of good quality education, health and nutrition as well as sustained economic growth is required to improve human welfare. Policy measures that are both pro-growth and pro-poor will foster an environment that promotes economic stability and improve human welfare. Sustained reduction in poverty levels will require:
 - "Sustained improvement in household's capacity to consume, that is, through employment or other income. This is strategic as the measurement of poverty is currently based on household consumption (food and non-food)
 - A coordinated, adequately targeted and supported National Poverty Reduction Programme that empowers the most vulnerable to successfully connect to employment and other opportunities
 - Addressing systemic, cultural, and psychosocial barriers that perpetuate poverty, and limit meaningful participation in education, training, and the labour market."²⁷
- **Environmental sustainability:** For poverty reduction to be viable, it must be environmentally sustainable. Climate-related and other shocks are likely to hit the weakest the hardest as they tend not to possess the means to invest in resources that promote resilience. Policies must aim to reduce their exposure to environmental shocks, ease economic risks and improve access to education and health services. Improved access to services and infrastructure will help to reduce environmental threats to the poor.
- Strengthening **partnerships and coordination** among the government, private sector and non-governmental organizations are critical for effective poverty reduction. Greater efforts must be made to ensure an effective division of labour amongst the organizations engaged in poverty reduction efforts. This will increase efficiency, reduce duplication and lead to a more effective poverty reduction outcome.

Way Forward

Overall, the investments provide sufficient evidence of the commitment of the GOJ to achieving balanced, inclusive, and sustainable social, economic, and environmental development. However, there is a need for capacity-building in the following areas if sustainable and inclusive social, economic, and environmental development is to be achieved:

27 Source: National Policy on Poverty and National Poverty Reduction Programme, 207, pg. XVI

- Improvement in internet accessibility, reliability, and availability across the island, especially targeting rural areas. Bolstering the information technology infrastructure and network will ensure sustained access to the internet, which provides the foundation upon which partnerships can be pursued with telecommunication entities for investments in underserved communities.
- Strengthening of policies and strategic alignment of national frameworks and the SDGs to address climate change, environmental sustainability issues and agriculture risk management.
- Improvement in national data capacity, storage, and registries to identify vulnerable populations. This will advance efforts to achieve inclusiveness, especially for vulnerable populations such as persons with disabilities, the homeless and the indigent.
- Strengthening the capacity of local-level stakeholders to deliver services to more beneficiaries. This involves training and prioritization and mobilization of funding through partnerships with International Development Partners (IDPs).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted several areas that will have an implication for the pace at which NPRP goals and by extension the SDG Goal of Eradicating Extreme Poverty can be reached. These factors include the economic and social context to support employment, livelihood, and human capital development. Consideration will therefore be given to the following:

- Strengthening and promoting an inclusive approach, which seeks to address existing and emerging vulnerabilities in efforts to resuscitate and restore the economy. As indicated in the Jamaica Social Protection Strategy, income security remains a critical factor for the achievement and sustainability of economic growth. This includes opportunities for all segments of the population to gain and regain access to livelihood, employment, and human capital development. Innovative strategies to resuscitate livelihoods will also be identified and pursued, including identifying avenues to build the resilience of the informal sector, while creating greater access to opportunities for formalization. Advocating for the acceleration of labour-market buffers in the event of shocks, including Unemployment Insurance, will also be pursued.
- Strengthening systems to accurately identify those who were not previously considered vulnerable but may fall into emerging groups in need of social protection. This includes continuous public education and information sharing (using accessible formats and media) to alert potential beneficiaries of support that they may be able to tap into. This includes information on how individuals and families may apply to or register with formal institutions and associations.
- Greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in strategies and actions implemented across sectors.

Due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Jamaican economy and society, there is a need for a redoubling of efforts and resources towards securing the rights to basic services and resources, particularly for the most vulnerable. Barriers exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic on employment, livelihood and other areas remain in sharp focus, as the country rebounds. The need for greater focus on building new and existing partnerships at all levels to plug gaps and prevent a reversal in progress, including in the area of poverty reduction and equitable access, is underscored.

Resource Requirements

Advancing the poverty reduction priorities for Jamaica requires financing and technical support in key areas of the National Poverty Reduction Programme and the social protection systems. These increased resources through public-private partnerships for social services, as well as funding for further social research into key issues of social protection and poverty reduction. There is a need to build capacities within the public sector to bolster service delivery (e.g., increasing the cadre of social workers and hiring of case management staff for major programmes, strengthening institutional, community and home-based care solutions for social care and strengthening human resources and technological capacity for the digital transformation of service delivery as well as project management and programme management expertise in government entities). There is also a need for adequate programme budgets to achieve desired targets and outcomes at the organizational level.