



September 2007

Jamaican Self-Help

A Country on Hold

The weekend of August 18-19, 2007 was a tense one as Jamaicans and friends of Jamaica waited for what was predicted to be a direct hit by Hurricane Dean, a category 4 storm. The government shut down the electrical grid across the country, and everyone tried to find a safe place to wait out the storm. Fortunately, Hurricane Dean veered south of the island as it moved towards Mexico and Central America. Still by early Monday morning, Jamaicans woke up to find the destruction left by the storm — trees and power lines down, roofs and windows blown away, flooding and water damage from the heavy rains, and crops completely destroyed. Particularly hard hit were areas in Clarendon, St. Catherine and Kingston & St. Andrew. Across the island, the poorest people living in makeshift houses were the most devastated. At least 107 schools were damaged and 4 deaths were confirmed as a result of the storm.

Jamaica's Prime Minister, Portia Simpson-Miller immediately called a State of Emergency which directed the military to patrol the areas of greatest destruction, assisting residents and ensuring that looting was kept to a minimum. The National Election, set for the following week on Monday August 27, was put on hold.

Beginning first thing Monday morning, Jamaican Self-Help (JSH) began to call all its contacts in Jamaica — office numbers, cell numbers, home numbers — but because of the storm it was impossible to get through until Monday afternoon. JSH reached Fr. Peter McIsaac first. He had stayed overnight at St. Anne's Church in Hannah Town, because he knew it would be impossible for him to travel into the community after the storm. "We sustained pretty heavy damage here," he said. "Many homes have lost roofs and a lot of people have lost their food and household belongings because of the rain." By Tuesday morning, the phone lines were more accessible and JSH heard from contacts in its other project communities. "All the teachers are fine (at St. Peter Claver School)." "Everyone is okay." "We're alright." The good news was that there were very few injuries caused by the storm — just loss of property, no electricity and no potable water. At S-Corner, water was the main concern — "Water, there is no water here, and we need to have trucks bring water to the whole community, probably for the next 5 to 7 days" said Director Angela Stultz.

Most of the communities assisted by Jamaican Self-Help sustained damage —

Photos by the Jamaica Gleaner



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some quite serious, while others were able to begin the clean-up right away. In the S-Corner community, the men's chicken project lost 150 chickens and all the feed for their birds; a number of local shopkeepers lost all their inventory due to water damage and looting; about 40% of the houses sustained damage. 40 people stayed overnight in the tiny clinic and grassroots college rooms to keep safe during the storm. St. Peter Claver Primary School located in the same community sustained damage to the canteen. St. Margaret's Human Resources Centre and St. Pius X Training Centre had less damage – St. Margaret's library was damaged by a fallen mango tree, and St. Pius had some flooding. Riverton City, a community of St. Patrick's Foundation, sustained a great deal of damage to housing. The roof of the school, which was acting as a temporary shelter, was blown away by the storm. Hannah Town, the community of St. Anne's Community of Concern, suffered extensive damage from wind and rain. 200 families needed food and 100 families needed assistance to repair their homes. On the north coast in St. Mary, the three schools supported by JSH were not damaged, but many farmers lost their crops. This loss will continue to be felt as farmers will not have food or produce for market in the coming months.

The Canadian government pledged up to \$2 million in immediate assistance for the countries of the Caribbean region that were affected by Hurricane Dean. Recently

appointed Minister of International Co-operation Bev Oda stated, "this support will help international aid agencies and non-governmental organizations meet the urgent needs of people severely affected. Canada also stands ready to provide additional help where needed to assist with relief and reconstruction." At the same time, the Jamaican High Commission in Ottawa and the Consulate General of Jamaica in Toronto joined forces to publicize ways that Canadians could assist – from financial contributions to donations of specific goods like tarpaulins and flashlights.

In the communities that JSH supports, many families were greatly affected. Jamaican Self-Help responded immediately asking each of its partners: "How can we help?" Based on their responses, the Board of Directors agreed to utilize the \$5,000 from the Jamaican Project Reserve fund to assist with emergency aid and reconstruction, including:

- transportation of potable water into the community;
- basic foodstuffs such as cornmeal, tinned meat and flour;
- zinc and building supplies for rebuilding houses;
- seeds, potting soil and fertilizer for farmers.

The Jamaican organizations allocated the funds based on the specific needs of each community.

Major Hurricanes ~ 50 years

YEAR	NAME	CATEGORY	# OF DEATHS
1951	Charlie	not available	154
1980	Allen	5	8
1988	Gilbert	3	45
2004	Ivan	5	17
2007	Dean	4	4

Once again JSH has seen the value of community-based organizations that are responsive to the situations of their communities – whether the needs are emergency relief supplies or longer-term development programmes. Because of the presence and support of these organizations, and the strength of the people in the community, JSH anticipates that the damage left by Hurricane Dean will be quickly repaired and that daily routines and activities will return to normal in the coming weeks. It is frustrating for Jamaicans and their supporters alike to see the same issues each year – the same needs for proper housing, adequate infrastructure, and sufficient family incomes to meet natural and human crises when they arise. This frustration points out the continued need for sustainable development that addresses the roots of the problems.

There is still a great deal of work to be done in Jamaica. While Jamaicans must determine the best route for their own development, JSH and its supporters will continue to contribute financial resources and solidarity to help Jamaicans realize their goals.



National Election in Jamaica

On September 3rd, 2007 Jamaicans cast their votes to a slim Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) victory of 31:29 over the People's National Party (PNP). This is the first victory of the JLP since 1980. Bruce Golding will replace Portia Simpson-Miller as Jamaica's next Prime Minister.

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

“More and Better Aid”

By Amy Bowen & Leta Montopoli, MPH Committee

- Over a billion people live in abject poverty.
- Poverty kills more than 50,000 people every day.
- Every 3 seconds a child dies as a result of extreme poverty.

In the year 2000, all members of the United Nations pledged to spend 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) by 2015 to address the dire situation of global poverty as part of the new Millennium Development Goals. This target was originally set by former Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson in 1970. Despite its relative wealth, Canada has not kept up to other countries. In 2005 the Canadian Government announced that it was going to set a new plan to meet the target of 0.7%. Current projections based on the government plan indicate that Canada will only reach 0.33% by 2010, and will fall far short of the 0.7% by 2015. The national Make Poverty History campaign persists in its call for Canada to fulfill its commitment to the international community for more and better aid.

In the meantime, NGOs in Canada and worldwide continue to work diligently to utilize the limited funds available for development assistance effectively. The support of JSH has made it possible for Jamaican community organizations to carry out programmes that make a difference to many Jamaican families in both urban and rural communities. Through JSH, Canadian donors and volunteers do their part to help “Make Poverty History.”

Jamaican Self-Help (JSH) works through the Make Poverty History Youth Action Committee in Peterborough to promote awareness about the need for both “more and better” aid.

It is a false assumption that better aid primarily means more money. While money is crucial to bring forth development, there are numerous other factors at the community level that are often overlooked. Strategies to establish community, cooperation, sustainability, education and self-confidence are required for better aid. This type of aid has proven to maintain long-term development. St. Anne’s Community Centre of Concern is one of the projects assisted by JSH, and is a good example of how a small amount of money can be used effectively at the community level.

St. Anne’s Community Centre of Concern in Kingston is a non-profit organization that promotes community development and social justice. Such development is accomplished through various programs and events for children, youth, women and others in need. To undertake these programs, St. Anne’s depends on “aid”, donations and funding from both local and foreign contributors, including JSH.

Located in a very poor and violent area with high levels of unemployment, the programs at St. Anne’s have become very important to the community. They offer opportunities for self-improvement, and create a safe place for growth and development.

The Women’s Domestic Production program is an example of how St. Anne’s is fostering development in Jamaica. This program has given women the opportunity to learn to sew and earn a small income from their work. In fact, local schools have begun to order uniforms to be made by the women in this program. This allows for a more stable cycle of development, where schools are closely tied to their surrounding community. In this way, the aid sent to Jamaica helps establish more sustainable development, rather than short term solutions.

A unique approach to building self-confidence and pride within



Photos by Shannon Moroney & St. Anne’s staff



the community is the Dance and Movement Program. Designed for approximately 20 primary school students each year, the program embraces dance in an attempt to promote both individual and community esteem. Participants practice and perform regularly for the community as well as for regional competitions. From the Dance and Movement program, students have gained both social and physical skills that increase their confidence while the community also has a sense of pride in what the students accomplish. This type of program provides community members with the realization that they are competent, and have the potential to improve their circumstances.

JSH and St. Anne's work together to explore what it means to give more and better aid. Programs like the ones described above, demonstrate that there are many ways to provide aid. Work at the community level sets the foundation for a country to prosper and establish a system of development suitable to the needs of the people. Encouraging community, cooperation, sustainability, education and self-confidence are important to consider when exploring the issue of more and better aid, as these elements provide for long term development and sustainability.

The international Make Poverty History campaign will continue to advocate for a just response to global poverty. At the same time, JSH will maintain its support of organizations like St. Anne's Community of Concern through the much-needed contributions of its donors and volunteers.

Make Poverty History Youth Action Committee

The Peterborough's Make Poverty History (MPH) Youth Action Committee is based on the National Make Poverty History Campaign. The campaign's platform calls for more and better aid, trade justice, cancelling the debt, and ending child poverty in Canada. The MPH Youth Action Committee consists of local high school students and focuses its activities around the national platform.

Recently, the committee worked with a local youth filmmaker to produce three public service announcements that will be aired on local television stations. The short films deal with giving better aid, trade justice, as well as women's rights. The members of the MPH Youth Action Committee also interviewed numerous residents from a broad range of backgrounds to gain an understanding of how the community feels about the issue of poverty, both locally and internationally. In addition, members from the committee have met with Peterborough's MP Dean Del Mastro to discuss such issues, and presented the first short film to the Canadian Council for International Cooperation in Ottawa.

Through its work, the MPH Youth Action Committee strives to engage, educate and raise awareness in the community that will lead to change in accordance with the campaign's platform.

For details of the national campaign: www.makepovertyhistory.ca

Jamaican Speaker Tour

Fabian Brown, St. Patrick's Foundation, Jamaica

Ganley Lecture

Tuesday October 16, 2007 at 7:00 pm
Location: George Street United Church
Peterborough
For more information: (705)743-1671

Ottawa Event

Thursday October 18, 2007 at 7:30 pm
Location: Ottawa Mennonite Church
1830 Kilborn Avenue
For more information: (613)843-1762

JSH Board Members

Tucker Barton

Chris Boriss

Nancy Chesher

Jessica Chin-You

Emily Downie

Rosemary Ganley

Kate Johnston

Tricia Johnston

Kim Kasperski

Joyce Mackenzie

Cailleigh McKnight

Peter Mullins

Gail Payne

Irvin Stewart

Dawn Straka

Philosophy & Mission Statement

Jamaican Self-Help is an organization of Canadians working in solidarity to foster the development of healthy Jamaican communities through partnership based on mutual respect, understanding and a shared vision of self-determination; and foster an understanding of global forces North and South and their inter-connectedness.