



'Engaging Our Youth, Securing Our Future'

OCTOBER 13 & 14, 2016

SUMMARY REPORT



An Initiative of Operation Save Jamaica
In collaboration with churches in Jamaica and the Jamaican Diaspora

This inaugural Jamaica Christian Diaspora Conference, staged under the distinguished patronage of His Excellency the Governor General was a gathering of Churches, representatives of the Government, the business community, NGOs, multinational institutions, citizens and individuals, to consider and collaborate on a range of interventions to improve the engagement and inclusion of Jamaica's young people in the social and economic wellbeing of the nation

The main focus of the Conference was to:

- i.* mobilize the Church both locally and abroad into strategic action in order to be a catalyst in the transformation of Jamaica.
- ii.* facilitate meaningful engagement and dialogue among church, public and private based entities
- iii.* explore concrete and collaborative ways through which the church can contribute to the nation building process, particularly youth empowerment and advancement.

There were approximately 200 persons in attendance each day drawn from the main Diaspora countries of the USA, UK and Canada; as well as Jamaica. These included representatives from the church public, private, and civil sector, church based organisations and other NGOs. Operation Save Jamaica spearheaded the conference in partnership with Jamaica Umbrella Group of Churches, Street Pastors UK, RAFFA and Nehemiah UCHA and with churches in other territories. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Victoria Mutual Building Society, JLB Shipping and Strategic Communications, Media and International Affairs were the major sponsors.

Pastor Bruce Fletcher, Conference Chairman and Chairman of Operation Save Jamaica (OSJ) welcomed the participants. He acknowledged its importance likening same to a mustard seed, with the potential for global impact over time. Special recognition was given to the increased cross-denominational partnership of the church, citing as an example the birth and growth of the Jamaica Umbrella Group of Churches. This body represents approximately 95% of the churches, with all denominations represented including independent churches. Pastor Fletcher challenged the local churches to work and increase their engagement with the churches in the Diaspora, especially those in the UK, Canada and the USA. He called for greater ownership and

collaboration among government, private sector and NGOs to find solutions for Jamaica's Challenges.

NOTEWORTHY CONCEPTS AND IDEALS FOM THE CONFERENCE

- Ecumenical nature of the conference
- The Christian underpinning forms the core of the Jamaican value system
- Church as an agent of socialization shapes youth perspective
- The church is a critical element of community involvement in national development, including promoting strong families and socializing children, youth and adults in appropriate societal values and norms.
- Faith based calculated risk vital for sustainable development
- The church provides key social and economic development services, including: education and training.
- Schools from the early childhood to tertiary levels, providing lifelong learning opportunities through skills training programmes; community health clinics, and for the Diaspora, medical missions to underserved communities and groups; promoting and providing forums for cultural expression through song, dance and drama; feeding programmes for the homeless and other vulnerable groups; and providing housing and care for the indigent and elderly.
- The church has been a key voice in the national dialogue on crime, violence and justice. Within communities, the church is known to mediate domestic and gang related disputes, and in many instances command enough respect to dissuade residents from engaging in crime and violence related activities as well as encourage cooperation with the relevant authorities.

This Summary Report outlines the **Challenges and Recommendations** that the Jamaica Christian Diaspora Conference discussed as being relevant to the previously stated objectives and notes the areas for Engagement and Support proposed by speakers, panellists and participants in the various sessions of the conference. The full report of the conference offers the detailed discussions. This document however, serves as the basis for strategic planning for future engagement and support.

OPENING CEREMONY

Challenges

- i. Supporting the implementation of a values and positive attitudes programme to create a gentler and more compassionate society,
- ii. With a special emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable, including both the elderly and the youth;
- iii. Acknowledgment of youth involvement in crime as both perpetrators and victims.
- iv. Growing concern over the number of school dropouts.

Recommendations

1. Implement a values and positive attitudes programme to create a gentler and more compassionate society.
2. Place emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable, including both the elderly and the youth.
3. Focus on Education for Parents.
4. Create programmes for the training of church members in conflict management and dispute resolution.
5. Create programmes for the training and Strengthening of chaplains for interventions in prisons to effect meaningful rehabilitation and transformation.
6. Create more options for skilled training and jobs for youth.
7. Advocate for housing for less fortunate and homeless.

8. Creation of balanced strategies, programmes and activities, as a Church Community, to cater to both the spiritual and physical needs, for youth empowerment and advancement.
9. Effect the implementation of the Diaspora Multi-Disciplinary Centre for young offenders
10. Create a template or model for transforming under-performing schools into schools of choice.
11. Work towards committed participation from both private and public sectors, including NGOs and the general Church Community.
12. Support the delivery of quality education, including initiatives aimed at strengthening school/home/community relationships, as well as parental involvement in education.
13. Provide capacity building and other support to the soon to be established Vision 2030 Jamaica Youth Ambassador Programme.
14. Support the delivery of quality health care services, particularly primary health care at the community level and strengthening and improving health services and care provided to children and adolescents.
15. Support the protection and development of brand Jamaica, our cultural and creative industries, and our national sports programmes to provide our youth with world class training facilities and support services.
16. Support the delivery of social assistance to vulnerable groups.
17. Support programmes that target the underserved and Persons with Disabilities, particularly as it relates to access to social and economic goods and services.
18. Create a Jamaica Christian Network
19. Establish Gold Ribbon Projects
20. Establish the Jamaica Christian Diaspora Youth Movement
21. Advocate for housing for less fortunate and homeless

PLENARY PANEL 1:

A Conversation on the State of at Risk Youth in Jamaica. Challenges and Responses

Challenges

- i. Individual – Being male, having behavioural issues, substance misuse, and hormonal changes
- ii. Family – Poor parenting, inconsistent discipline structure, aggressive and abusive family environs
- iii. School – Truancy and dropping out of schools, lack of attachment to school and low academic performance.
- iv. Peer – delinquent peers and siblings, gang involvement, peer rejection and bullying
- v. Community – Anarchic structure, presence of crime, drugs, poor housing facilities and exposure to violence.
- vi. Lack of an evidence-based approach
- vii. Insufficient coordination and cooperation
- viii. General perception and stereotyping of youth as perennially negative further limiting options for growth
- ix. Historical injustices which exists
- x. Deep seated poverty which co-exists with ostentatious wealth.
- xi. The change in gender dynamics.
- xii. Youth involvement in the Occult.
- xiii. Issues of spiritual stagnation

Recommendations

1. Establish effective social intervention programmes that efficiently target at-risk youths and address the underlying risk factors.
2. Create a two-tier approach to tackle crime and violence: (i) ensure that youths are sufficiently supported so that they choose to refrain from criminal activity, and; (ii) prevent those in our care and custody from reoffending after they have served their sentence.
3. Five pillar response to crime: Social Development, Situation Prevention, Effective Policing, Swift and Sure Justice and Reduction of repeat offending.

4. Use technology as a pull factor to attract more youths into more appropriate and value based programmes.
5. Establish programmes for Mentorship and Volunteerism
6. Identify innovative systems/ programmes that could be introduced
7. Provide human and material resources that would support the implementation of social intervention that target at-risk youth.
8. Establish a Jamaica Combined Cadet Force (JCCF) International Database, which would allow persons to identify their contact and select an area of interest. The Minister requested that contact be made with Major Foster at JCCF for further details.
9. Create a Jamaica Diaspora Advisory Board – This would be a platform where the Diaspora can make their contributions towards making a Jamaica a safe and prosperous country.
10. Use Peace Management Initiative (PMI Kingston) methodology for community response and peace building
11. Strengthen Police initiatives guided by data for instance the location of additional security checkpoints
12. Use daily Hospital data for in-hospital interventions by agencies which target persons seen in hospital for VRI's in their communities and reduce retaliation killings
13. Support public education initiatives “Watch u Flex No Badda Vex” and “Tun up de Peace”, “Violence is Preventable, Stop Now” messages.
14. Establish school based therapeutic intervention aimed at increasing school attendance and decreasing expulsion and school dropouts.
15. Provide alternative livelihoods to “dry up the 600+ soljaz & top dawgz’, the unemployed idle youth.
16. Build resilience at the community level to allow communities to resist engagement in homicides and violence. Now, Social interventions to be used to build community cohesion.
17. Initiate operational research into Lotto scamming.

PLENARY PANEL 2

Diverting our Youth from Prison to Productivity: Strategies for Divergence, Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Recommendations

1. Utilize the three main techniques for restoring juvenile offenders: **monitor, mentor and minister.**
2. Support the establishment of Summer STAR camps in every parish of Jamaica to carry out the necessary Restorative work needed for the transformation of young lives.
3. Provide a caring and enabling environment for at-risk youth through offering support to diversion centres.
4. Invest in sports to attract more youths to more physically and morally correct lifestyles.
5. Support the use of the multi-layered response and gender balanced approach to addressing at risk youth issues, notwithstanding the special case for males.
6. Create value based programmes especially those focussed on promoting faithfulness.
7. Promote increased youth engagement in light of the expressed frustration at the relatively aloof nature of the church and government in addressing urgent and immediate social intervention needs within select communities.
8. Plan another Conference of this nature, but with more meaningful youth involvement.
9. Ensure sustainability of programmes recommended to effect lasting and genuine change.
10. Promote greater interaction and networking with project coordinators, international partners and the Diaspora at large.

CONCURRENT SESSION 1

Rethinking Education Interventions: Beyond the Walls of the Traditional Classroom

Challenges

- i. The lack of the presence of a male figure in the lives of many young males, some of whom are at risk.

Recommendations

1. Use modern techniques and tools to reach and inspire the contemporary youth.

2. Invest in resources that could bridge the gap between archaic methods and tools to those that could significantly transform the classroom and students at large. This means increased investments in technology in schools in Jamaica.
3. Identify, adopt, rescue and uplift targeted schools.
4. Establish a national parenting policy that will empower and equip parents with the requisite skills to guide youths in becoming productive and dignified members of the society.
5. Make available male role models and positive authority figures to reach out to at-risk youth, especially young males.
6. Use more creative and relevant approaches to reach the young males.
7. Use sports, dance, swimming, food, and cars, to attract young males to programmes geared towards transformation.
8. Contact the Early Childhood Commission for information on the status and capacity of those early childhood schools in need of greater assistance.

CONCURRENT SESSION 2

Securing the Wellness Of Our Youth: Toward A “Healthy And Stable Society”

Challenges

- i. Many persons have difficulty affording travel and subsistence to attend development programmes.
- ii. Existing mental health programs are largely either child guidance clinics which do not provide clinical treatment and do not accommodate adults

Recommendations

1. Establish Parenting skills training
2. Design Values and attitudes programs
3. Set up conflict resolution programmes in communities
4. Initiate Chaplaincy programs

CONCURRENT SESSION 3

Youth Engagement through Sports and the Performing Arts: Models that work.

Recommendations

1. Create partnership among Churches in Jamaica and the Diaspora to facilitate social transformation through Sports, Music and Performing Arts.
2. Encourage churches to support musicians through the hosting of shows and concerts.
3. Create a National Talent Competition where young people from different churches could participate and express their talents.
4. Encourage churches locally to partner with each other in hosting events.
5. Combine sports programme with life skills training and partner with the private sector

PLENARY PANEL 3

Building Sustainable Mechanisms for the Transfer of Diaspora Skills, Technology and Resources: Perspectives from Corporate Leaders in Jamaica and the Diaspora – by Mr. Courtney Campbell, President and CEO of the Victoria Mutual.

Recommendations

1. Sharing of information- The greater knowledge basis would facilitate better decision-making.
2. Collaboration- Efficacy and efficiency is enhanced through greater collaboration.
3. Accountability- Clear systems of governance, rules-based procedures with transparency contributed to the longevity of several institutions including. Clear tracking, timely reporting were listed as key in getting credible information to the Diaspora.
4. Youth engagement- Need for a strong communication plan and policy to reach the contemporary youth.

PLENARY PANEL 4

Building Financial and Governance Structures to Sustain Church-led Diaspora Initiatives: Considering the establishment of a Christian Diaspora Foundation and Investment Vehicles to Fund Social Initiatives:

Challenges

- i. Ease of access youths have to gangs

- ii. Lack of job opportunities
- iii. Social inequalities
- iv. Urbanisation of poor
- v. Lack of an inclusive framework for the youth
- vi. Over-reliance on donor support

Recommendations

1. Create a Development Fund
2. Establish an Operating Trust Company as necessary for managing funds and key operational programmes.
3. Consider investing in projects that form part of an integrated plan for sustainable development.
4. Enhance partnership between the church and the business community as a possible solution to adopting the tools and strategies necessary to secure financial and governance stability.

PLENARY PANEL 5

Engaging our Youth for Social Development and Employment

Challenges

- i. Absentee fathers,
- ii. broken families
- iii. poverty
- iv. Church being risk averse
- v. Conflicting priorities diverting the attention of the youth.
- vi. Government's rationalisation programme

Recommendations

1. Establish a vocational space to train the youth in technical skills
2. Follow through on the offer of land from the Government to carry out farming and vocational activities.
3. Be ready to confront the hard issues openly and frankly

4. Diaspora to be ready to invest in the people of Jamaica - This requires a *seed of hope*, and strong belief system to carry forward sustainable and sound investments

PLENARY PANEL 6

Youth Unplugged: Emerging Leaders in Jamaica and the Diaspora speak frankly and openly on a range of topics and issues relating to youth advancement and achievement.

Challenges

- i. Apathy of the youth to the political voting process
- ii. Lack of inclusion of the youth in the Conference, in a meaningful way.

Recommendations

1. Promote the discipleship and mentorship of at risk youth, especially males.
2. Policy on Security which requires increased operability and timely responses.
3. Take the profit out of crime. Need to follow the security policy in seizing the assets of convicted criminals.
4. Deploy the protective services for persons working in potentially volatile professions, but necessary for nation building. One such example was the protection of forensic accountants to carry out the work of finding the assets of convicted criminals to support the development aspirations of communities left behind.
5. Prioritise youth participation. This was said within the context of the theme of the Conference: engaging our youth, securing our future.
6. Make a greater effort to communicate the projects and programmes available for youth to youth, in more creative and sustainable ways. This was recommended against the backdrop of the lack of awareness among the youth about the resources and programmes established for their benefit.
7. Rethink and reframe how church is operated.
8. Improve relationships between youth and churches
9. Need for better mentoring. The adoption of a child/youth mentorship programme
10. Establish a database of projects that exists to identify areas for greater support
11. Establish a Secretariat committed to sharing the official report and record of the Conference.

