



A COMPREHENSIVE REFORM OF THE JAMAICAN JUSTICE SYSTEM PROJECT DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

Jamaica's justice system has been challenged to keep up with the changing social and economic conditions in the country and to be responsive to the current needs of the public. There has been a tremendous increase in demand on our justice system as a result of population growth, as well as the emergence of diverse and unprecedented social problems that have led to greater use of the courts.

Various attempts have been made to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Jamaican justice system, some through local initiatives and others with international assistance. While some reform efforts have been implemented in specific areas in the justice system, the old structures and the traditional way of doing things remain basically in place. There is, however, a recognition by Jamaican officials that for reforms to be truly effective the entire system needs to be assessed and a cohesive, broad-based modernisation strategy needs to be developed and implemented.

Jamaica is not alone in facing challenges to its justice system. Most of the larger Commonwealth countries, including Britain, Canada, and Australia, have been compelled to conduct comprehensive reviews of their civil and criminal justice systems and to introduce major reforms.

Some of the recommended procedures and best practices that have resulted from these reviews have been incorporated in the Jamaican justice system. However, every country is unique and not all the solutions that are suited to one country are applicable to another. There is clearly a need for us to conduct our own comprehensive review of its justice system and to design a reform and modernisation programme tailored to the Jamaican context.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Project will inquire into the state of the justice system on a comprehensive basis and develop strategies and mechanisms to facilitate the modernisation programme that will enhance the administration and delivery of justice to meet the current and future needs of Jamaicans.

Towards this end, The Project will make practical recommendations for action, focusing on proposals that will be implementable within a reasonable amount of time, and are capable of providing meaningful results

It is the consensus among all stakeholders that a modern justice system will be more efficient, accessible, accountable, fair and able to deliver timely results in a cost-effective manner.



Jamaican Justice System Reform

Together for Justice with Civil Participation

The Project design is based on three pillars of systemic change processes: the sharing of expertise and experience, participatory processes, and capacity development.

METHODOLOGY

- The following steps will be taken in the conduct of this Project:
- The creation of a **review structure** that actively engages all key stakeholders and the public;
- The implementation design of a **research programme** that will include undertaking surveys and soliciting opinion papers from stakeholders;
- The implementation of a **consultation programme** to obtain input from all key stakeholders and the public to include stakeholder roundtables, regional justice summits and a national conference;
- The implementation of a **communications programme** to share the information obtained through the consultation and research programs with key stakeholders and to ensure country-wide engagement in the review process;
- The implementation of a **capacity development programme** to enhance the prospect for implementation and sustainability of any and all recommendations resulting from the review; and
- The development of a **final report with comprehensive recommendations and strategies** for the modernization of the administration, operation and structure of the justice system.

STRUCTURE

A Jamaican Justice Reform Task Force (JJRTF) has been established to provide overall guidance and direction for the design and implementation of the comprehensive justice review, as well as the preparation of the final report.

- The JJRTF will be responsible for ensuring the active engagement of all the justice sectors and the public in the review.
- The JJRTF will establish Regional Working Groups and Working Groups on specific issues to assist it in carrying out its mandate.
- A Canadian Advisory Committee of justice reform experts will provide support to the review.
- The review will be staffed by a five-person Management Group.
- The Jamaican Ministry of Justice and the Canadian Bar Association will also provide assistance.

TERMS AND REPORTING

The Project began in September 2006 and is expected to submit a final report by June 30, 2007.