

Report of the working group with representatives of JFLL, JFJ, Springfield, Albion Mountain, Fair Prospect, & Rockfort

Overview

On closing the initial meeting with representatives of JFLL, JFJ, and residents of the specific communities on Friday, January 4, 2008, a second meeting was planned, which would represent the future partnership amongst national and local stakeholders around issues of adult literacy. From the first meeting emerged the expression of a need for a working group, which is aimed at furthering the dialogue and practically responding challenges and changing situations of inadequate access to adult literacy programming in the island. A core set of deliverables were outlined from that meeting towards the convening of the first working group meeting on February 5, 2008 at 11 a.m. In seeking to complete deliverables and prepare for this meeting, alternative representatives were identified in the case of one community, Albion Mountain, and a new stakeholder, Programme Officer of the Jamaica Society for the Blind (JSB), Mr. Conrad Harris was invited to articulate the needs of and support to be expected from his organization in advancing adult literacy amongst the blind and visually impaired across Jamaica. The meeting was postponed, due to a need by the executive director to attend to governmental responsibilities, and was rescheduled for Tuesday, February 12, 2008 at 10 a.m.—this new date and time clashed with another appointment on Mr. Harris's schedule, so he was unable to represent.

Attendance

The meeting commenced at approximately 10:15 a.m. and ended at 11:20 a.m. It was convened in the JFLL Board room, and in attendance were JFLL, JFJ, and community representatives. The representatives of JFLL were: Mr. Edward Shakes, Executive Director, Mrs. Annette Prince-Carey, Programme Manager for the High School Equivalency Programme, Ms. Sandra Prince, Director of Field Operations, Ms. Lisa Thompson, Mrs. Barbara Harry, Portland Parish Manager (993-3867, 799-1543), Mrs. Joy Wilson, St. Thomas Parish Manager (734-7220, wjoy29@yahoo.com), and Ms. Kisha Noble Ministry of National Security Citizens' Security & Justice Programme (878-0638, csjp9@yahoo.com). The represented communities were: Springfield, Albion Mountain, Rockfort, and the disabled. The representatives from Fair Prospect & Freeman's Hall were unable to attend because of work commitments.

Springfield Report

Marvalyn Eunick, is the representative of Springfield on the working group. After the initial advocacy meeting with JFLL, she was responsible for advancing dialogue with residents and leaders of her community regarding the implementation of adult literacy

programming within the community. From her leadership and research, she contacted the JFLL parish manager for St. Thomas, Mrs. Joy Wilson, initiated one executive meeting of her youth club in order to discuss the issues, conversed with members of the youth club and residents of the community in order to identify interested trainees and trainers, and initiated conversation with the local SDC office regarding the use of the premises as a possible venue. From this work, Ms. Eunick reported that 20 to 28 persons were interested in being trained in the adult literacy programme and one resident was willing to be trained as a trainer. She noted that the SDC office and community centre, the sole economic and social rights facility located in the community was in need of repair, as it was damaged by the passing of the hurricane in August 2007.

Albion Mountain Report

Trevor Bailey is the representative of Albion Mountain on the working group. After the initial advocacy meeting with JFLL, Dion Muir handed over responsibility for community leadership in the working group to him. With the assistance of other community leaders, Mr. Bailey, prepared a list of 18 members of his community who expressed an interest in being trained in the adult literacy programme. One resident showed interest in being trained as a trainer. He also informed the members of the working group that the local church, the lone economic and social rights institution in the community, would be willing to facilitate the training sessions in their building.

Fair Prospect Report

Mrs. Barbara Harry, JFLL Parish Manager for Portland presented the report on the community. Xavier Morgan, the community representative made contact with her, and invited her input on the tasks that he was assigned. In her report to the working group Mrs. Harry informed us that the Fair Prospect Methodist Church hall was available to conduct training of trainers, as well as classes for residents. She noted that there were a number of trained and retired teachers in the community and its environs who would be willing to be trained as trainers. In reporting on residents who have expressed an interest in participating in adult literacy training, Mrs. Harry indicated that over 30 learners could be identified from the area. In addition to Fair Prospect Mrs. Harry noted that there is also an available venue, interested learners and teachers in the nearby district of Manchioneal. In reporting on the general challenges of the communities of the Fair Prospect area, the working group was informed that, "there are a lot of drop-outs, therefore there is a real challenge of illiteracy, drug abuse, teen pregnancies, break down in family life, forced child labour where males are particularly visible on construction sites and children are stopped from school to help with farming."

Blind Community Report

Maxine McIntosh represents Jamaicans who are blind and visually impaired, living in the Kingston Metropolitan Region. Ms. McIntosh reported that from her ground work she was able to identify more than 30 persons who were interested in being trained in adult literacy and 1 member of her community expressed willingness in being trained as a

trainer. From my conversations with Mr. Conrad Harris, Programme Manager at the Jamaica Society for the Blind, I informed the members of the working group that the JSB was willing to facilitate the programme from their head office located at Old Hope Road, would be willing to prepare training materials in Braille, and willing to train trainers and JFLL staff, but would be unable to provide trainers for the programme and locations to facilitate the implementation of the programme in other parishes, which is also needed. Mr. Harris was expected to attend the meeting in order to articulate the JSB's support and to advance collaboration on a strategy for moving forward, but due to another meeting commitment he was unable to attend.

Rockfort Report

Geron Francis, the representative of Rockfort reported that he was unable to get any ground work done on account of the high level of tension in his community, and work & personal commitments. In response to this, Ms. Sandra Prince informed the members of the working group that the Ministry of National Security through its Citizens' Security and Justice Programme (CSJP) was an economic and social rights initiative that was designed to interface with residents of communities like Rockfort. She noted that they had been very successful in identifying residents for training programmes that are available as well as gather information about residents using research. In advancing stakeholder relations to advance the activities and commitment of the working group, Ms. Prince invited Ms. Kisha Noble of the CSJP programme to the meeting. Mr. Francis initiated dialogue with Ms. Noble with an intention to collaborate to address needs of the community.

General Observations

JFLL parish managers noted that the members of the working group needed to be cognizant of the fact that there might be challenges in the implementation stage—as residents may not want to accept where they are placed after JFLL assessments are completed. Mrs. Ustanny noted that workshops aimed at sensitizing residents about the programme, participants, expectations, and assessments should be a core event in the implementing the programme in each community. This would be aimed at reducing dissatisfaction with and misconceptions about the programme.

Mr. Shakes articulated that there was need to ensure that programming in Fair Prospect and Rockfort includes training in life skills—in so doing he noted that other agencies should be encouraged to undertake training and sensitization, in their focus areas, to participants in JFLL adult literacy programmes. In closing the meeting Mr. Shakes informed the members of the working group that work towards the establishment of adult literacy training sites would commence in three of the communities: Springfield, Albion Mountain, and Fair Prospect.

The next working group meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 8, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.

Deliverables

Specific activities were outlined for delivery at the next meeting of the working group. These were:

1. St. Rachel Ustanny to facilitate a meeting with Mr. Edward Shakes of JFLL and Mr. Conrad Harris of JSB in order to advance stakeholder relations to implement adult literacy programming for members of the blind community,
2. St. Rachel Ustanny and Geron Francis to liaise and meet with Ms. Kisha Noble of CSJP to discuss the work of that programme in Rockfort, and support needed to recruit residents for adult literacy training,
3. Mrs. Harry to assess Fair Prospect Methodist Church hall and prepare a budget to implement the adult literacy programme in Fair Prospect
4. Mrs. Wilson to assess the church in Albion Mountain and the St. Thomas SDC office, and prepare budgets to implement adult literacy programming in Albion Mountain and Springfield respectively,
5. St. Rachel Ustanny and Mr. Edward Shakes to raise the issue of the repair of the St. Thomas SDC office with Mr. Robert Brian and appropriate SDC officers, and
6. St. Rachel Ustanny to liaise with the Rockfort Development Committee regarding the SEJ project, and the work being done with JFLL to advance adult literacy, and request their support in advancing economic and social rights programming within Rockfort.