

Proposal for piloting Adult Literacy Programming amongst the visually impaired in Jamaica

Issue

Fundamental education for adults who are visually impaired

Problem Statement

Absence of adult literacy programming for sight impaired Jamaicans resulting unequal development between sighted and sight impaired persons. There is a tendency for learning and other training to be visual, in fact there are absolutely no public facilities to provide literacy training to adults who have sight impairments, trainers are not prepared to empower persons with sight impairments, and training materials and equipment generally favour the sighted community.

Problem Pre-assessment

The benefits of implementing an adult literacy programme, as well as this pilot, amongst visually impaired Jamaicans are:

1. The fulfillment of the right to access adult education for persons who did not access or complete fundamental education
2. Increased literacy rates
3. Increased employment and marketability
4. Increased independence and autonomy
5. Improvement in individual's ability to communicate with others
6. The opportunity to encourage reading as a form of recreation and comfort
7. Existence of a trained cadre of literacy specialists who have the capacity to accept visually impaired persons in their classrooms, regardless of which parish they are from
8. Increased levels of confidence and self-esteem

There is room to involve persons who are sight impaired in planning and implementing a pilot adult literacy programme and sustaining it in the following way:

1. 12-24 visually impaired persons, living in the KMR, and in need of adult literacy training will be invited to submit their names and contact information to participate in the pilot programme—which will enable preliminary assessment of the possibility of nationalizing the programme and integrating it in existing/ routine adult literacy training programmes
2. The Programme Director of Jamaica Society for the Blind, Mr. Conrad Harris, committed to make himself and other trainers available to provide skills training and relevant materials to adult literacy trainers
3. One member of the sight impaired community committed to mobilize individuals who fit the pilot programme's target and recruit them to participate

4. Participants of the pilot programme will work towards preparing an advocacy letter seeking a meeting with corporate boards to discuss the need for their support in a fund for off-setting costs associated with training sight impaired Jamaicans

The absence of adult literacy programming for persons who are visually impaired is a breach of their fundamental human rights. In the case of Jamaica, adult learning centres are present in every parish, but none was designed to accommodate persons with disabilities, especially those who are visually impaired. This situation has its root cause in a number of factors:

1. Lack of mainstreaming of disability rights into national planning and programming
2. Lack of integration of visually impaired persons in the general society. People do not see the issue of blindness as a national issue, but a Jamaica Society for the Blind or Salvation Army problem—they see these organizations as the solution to all visually impaired persons problems including solving illiteracy
3. Absence of a culture that regards and respects persons with disabilities. People do not know enough about visually impaired persons' capabilities and capacities therefore they feel that it is a waste of time to invest in them
4. Market-driven economy which prioritizes investment in programmes that are financially (rather than socially) rewarding and viable
5. Absence of social responsibility by citizens and corporate agents to persons with disabilities
6. A culture of exclusion and denial of the basic human rights of persons who are vulnerable
7. Lack of understanding of the needs of the visually impaired, unavailability of specialized resources, and fear in attending to special needs by agencies with a human rights mandate

The absence of adult literacy programming for persons who are blind has the following effects on members of that community:

1. Low self-esteem and self-confidence
2. Poor marketability and low employment rates compared to sighted Jamaicans
3. Inability to meet basic prerequisites for employment, loan access, daily communication, and further education and training
4. Inability of heads of households to transfer literacy and other skills to dependents

General Aim

To ensure that all persons who are visually impaired can access adult literacy training services regardless of where they are in residing in Jamaica

Specific Objectives

1. To design a pilot literacy class for persons who are visually impaired by lobbying the Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL) to consider implementing the proposed pilot programme in October 2008
2. To identify resources from the JSB in order to provide technical support and expertise in implementing the proposed pilot programme, April-September 2008
3. To obtain information about the situation of literacy amongst Jamaicans who are visually impaired by conducting secondary or primary research, April-September 2008
4. To identify a group of 12-24 persons to assess for participation in the proposed pilot programme, April 2008-September 2008

5. To conduct a training of trainers sessions for JFLL staff who will implement the proposed pilot programme, September 1-30, 2008

Target

Target	Indirect Target	How to contact target	Target's feelings about the issue	How to influence target	Target's way of decision-making
Mr. Edward Shakes, Executive Director, JFLL	Lisa Thompson (assistant)	Email, telephone, facsimile, letter	Respectful of human rights; heads the agency responsible for adult education nationally	Presentation of evidence of the existence of the problem; list of interested trainees; outline of the scope of the problem nationally and in the KMR	Using research to inform decisions about programme implementation
Mr. Damion McLean of Ministry of Labour and Social Security Disability Unit	None	Email, telephone	Is a member of the visually impaired community who works in the disability unit and is in touch with Mr. Shakes of JFLL	Completed proposal and brief for next steps	Awareness of and sensitivity to the problem
Executive Directors of NGOs serving the visually impaired in the KMR	Executive Directors' support staff	Telephone call to head offices	Responds to needs of members of the blind community	Advocacy letter, telephone communication, and advocacy meeting	Fits within the framework of the NGO's mandate

Stakeholders Grid

Objective	Target	Allies	Beneficiaries
To design a pilot adult literacy class for persons who are visually impaired, by engaging in working group meetings to plan for its implementation in October 2008	Adults who are visually impaired, living in the KMR and in need of the literacy training	JFLL, JSB, Disability Unit of MLSS, and Jamaicans for Justice	Adults who are visually impaired, living in KMR, and have poor literacy skills and competencies
To collaborate with key stakeholders of the SEJ Project in order to examine the potential for implementing adult literacy programming for the visually impaired, April 2008- October 2008	JSB	JFJ, JFLL, and JSB	Adults who are blind or visually impaired, living across Jamaica, and are unable to read
To identify resources from the JSB to provide technical support and expertise in implementing the proposed pilot programme in April-October 2008	JSB	JSB and JFJ	Adults who are visually impaired, living in KMR, and are unable to read
To obtain information about the situation of literacy amongst Jamaicans who are blind and visually impaired by conducting secondary or primary research, April- September 2008	PIOJ, STATIN, MLSS, and NGOs across KMR serving the blind community	JSB and JFJ	JFLL
To identify a group of 12-24 persons to assess for participation in the proposed pilot programme in Sept 2008	Adults who are blind or visually impaired and living in the KMR	JSB and other NGOs serving members of the blind and visually impaired community	12-24 members of the visually impaired community, who reside in the KMR
To conduct a training of trainers session amongst JFLL literacy trainers who will implement the proposed pilot programme in October 2008	JFLL and JSB	JFLL, JSB, and JFJ	JFLL

Available Resources

Money is available through JFLL to implement programmes wherever there is a demand. Our working group with the visually impaired community was an out-growth of the JFLL literacy working group—created in response to our advocacy to increase local access to adult literacy services in Jamaica. The working group for the proposed pilot programme therefore has access and directly reports to executive staff of JFLL. In addition, the working group is comprised of me, the Advocacy Specialist of the SEJ Project, the Programme Director of the JSB, and a member of the blind community who participated in the SEJ project. Through our network with JFLL we have access to their facilities for working group meetings involving JFLL representatives and access to their facility for hosting the proposed pilot programme with visually impaired Jamaicans. Working group meetings for implementing the proposed pilot programme are facilitated at JSB head office. Administrative needs and support are provided by JFJ, JFLL, and JSB.

Action Plan

Objective	Target	Resources Needed	Responsible Party	Time Frame
To design a pilot adult literacy class for persons who are visually impaired, by engaging in working group meetings to plan for its implementation	Adults who are visually impaired, living in the KMR and in need of the literacy training	Executive officers of JFLL , researcher, project manager, computer, Internet, MS Office, stationery, and meeting space	JFLL & JSB literacy working groups	April-Sept 2008
To collaborate with key stakeholders of the SEJ Project in order to examine the potential for implementing adult literacy programming for the visually impaired	JSB	Internet, MS Office, stationery, meeting space, and stipend for participants	St. Rachel Ustanny	April 2008-October 2008
To identify resources from the JSB to provide technical support and expertise in implementing the proposed pilot programme	JSB	Telephone, list of JSB trainers and their contact information	Conrad Harris	April-October 2008
To obtain information about the situation of literacy amongst Jamaicans who are blind and visually impaired by conducting secondary or primary research	PIOJ, STATIN, MLSS, and NGOs across KMR serving the blind community	Telephone, contact information for agencies, list of persons/ agencies to be surveyed	Conrad Harris	April-Sept2008
To identify a group of 12-24 persons to assess for participation in the proposed pilot programme	Adults who are visually impaired and living in the KMR	List of interest persons and their contact information	Conrad Harris and Maxine McIntosh	April-Sept 2008
To conduct a training of trainers session amongst JFLL literacy trainers who will implement the proposed pilot programme	JFLL and JSB	One to three trainers from JSB, outline of key issues & skills to be covered by JSB trainers in the session	Conrad Harris	Sept 2008

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Objective	Target	Time Frame	Expected Outcome	Indicators
To design a pilot adult literacy class for persons who are visually impaired, by engaging in working group meetings to plan for its implementation	Adults who are visually impaired, living in the KMR and in need of the literacy training	April- Sept 2008	Information to guide the design of a basic literacy curriculum for persons who are visually impaired in Jamaica	Proposal for pilot programme designed based on working group discussions
To collaborate with key stakeholders of the SEJ Project in order to examine the potential for implementing adult literacy programming for the visually impaired	JSB	April 2008- October 2008	One pilot adult literacy class for visually impaired Jamaicans scheduled for implementation in October 2008	Authorization of training of JFLL trainers by JSB staff; implementation plan and budget authorized for preparation; and assessment of trainees authorized
To identify resources from the JSB to provide technical support and expertise in implementing the proposed pilot programme	JSB	April- October 2008	One to three JSB trainers to train JFLL literacy trainers in skills for training and supporting persons who are visually impaired	Meeting with JSB trainers to design the training of trainers workshops; presentation designed for delivery at the training of trainers workshop; one to three trainers identified and committed to facilitating the presentation and participating in the workshops
To obtain information about the situation of literacy amongst Jamaicans who are blind and visually impaired by conducting secondary or primary research	PIOJ, STATIN, MLSS, and NGOs across KMR serving the blind community	April- Sept2008	Statistics that disaggregate literacy data according to disability, primarily visual impairment; challenges of literacy articulated and solutions identified	Secondary data sources cited; primary research (working group meetings) conducted
To identify a group of 12-24 persons to assess for participation in the proposed pilot programme	Adults who are visually impaired and living in the KMR	April-Sept 2008	A cohort of 12-24 visually impaired adults trained in basic literacy and are able to read and use the computer	12-24 visually impaired adults who could not read are able to read at the end of the pilot; advocacy letters prepared by participants in the proposed pilot programme seeking financial support for nationalizing the programme
To conduct a training of trainers session amongst JFLL literacy trainers who will implement the proposed pilot programme	JFLL and JSB	Sept 2008	Skills about how to empower visually impaired Jamaicans transferred from JSB to JFLL	JFLL trainers demonstrate awareness and competence in skills needed for working with and supporting visually impaired Jamaicans in literacy