



Social and Economic Justice (SEJ) Project

Lessons Learned

Department: Social & Economic Justice

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Focus Area: Economic & Social Rights

Project Role: Education, assessment, and advocacy for Community Development

Product or Process: Empowerment of Jamaican citizens in leadership and advocacy to ensure greater participation and human rights in communities

Version	Date	Author	Change Description
1	June 1, 2008	St. Rachel Ustanny, M.Sc., B.Sc. (Hons.)	Original document outlining lessons learnt over year 1 of the exploratory research, April 1, 2007- March 31, 2008

Lessons learned purpose and objectives

Since implementing the pilot in 2006 and passing one of two years allocated for exploratory research into the impact of education, leadership, and advocacy on community development, I believe it imperative to document the critical lessons learnt, so that Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ) and other key stakeholders can commence discussions about suitable and realistic strategies for improving good governance and ensuring sustainable community development. Thus far, I have learnt lessons and discovered opportunities for improving the Project. This report was designed to contribute to the continuous improvement of the Project--documenting lessons learned helps with the discovery of the root causes of problems that occurred and enable us to avoid these problems later on or for future projects. The information in this report was gathered based on: the experience of the researcher, data shared by participants in the evaluation workshop, demonstrated interest and willingness of residents to participate in advocacy and leadership for community development, event and final reports, and project activities that are noticeably successful or a failure.

The general intent of this report is to gather all relevant information for better planning of later project stages and future projects, improving implementation of new projects, and preventing or minimizing risks for future projects.

Lessons learned questions

1.1 What worked well?

1. Providing meals and refreshments for participants at workshops
2. Providing participant stipends
3. Respectful and knowledgeable facilitator who can speak the people's language
4. On-going support to plan, give advice, and encourage community involvement in development activities
5. Agency involvement and visibility in the community for an extended period of at least two years
6. Responses from national/ government leaders to advocacy letters
7. Demonstrated interest of agency/national leaders to address community problems, engage community leaders in discussions about problems, and participate in community development activities

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8. Actual improvement in or attention to problems initiated through advocacy and networking
9. Monitoring community and agency leaders' commitment to and involvement in problem-solving
10. Community leadership involvement in planning, implementation, information dissemination, and mobilization
11. Availability of base infrastructure—proper roads, community venue, water, electrification, and toilet facilities—to enable access to the community and participation of residents in interventions
12. Providing learning materials to support presentations made and content covered in workshops and meetings involving residents
13. Utilizing the Social Development Commission (SDC) database as a resource for identifying geographical communities
14. Sensitizing residents about their human rights, responsibilities, and solution processes
15. Clarifying the overall intent of the intervention
16. Forging relations with individuals who are known by and seen & respected as leaders by residents of the community
17. Assistance with coordinating or responding to traumatizing or emergency situations such as burn-outs, flooding, and hurricanes
18. Participatory evaluation of the intervention at the end of each year
19. Training events that are highly informative, educational, skills-oriented, and participatory
20. Financial assistance for community leaders to represent constituents at meetings with national leaders
21. Accompaniment of community leaders by intervention leaders at meetings with national leaders
22. Facilitating a flexible schedule so as to allow room for community meetings on non-working days and during non-working hours
23. Facilitating deliberate training in leadership and advocacy for community development
24. Developing templates to assist community leaders with planning, communications, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities
25. Introducing the Community Development Officer (CDO) of the SDC to community leaders and articulating the nature of future relations, expectations of both leaders, and requirements for effective development
26. Providing participation certificates
27. Executing a pilot to assess the feasibility and suitability of a community development model for addressing specific types of problems
28. Introductory letters to potential participants and community leaders informing them of the intent to intervene and soliciting their involvement and support

1.2 What didn't work well?

1. Significant data gaps in the SDC database and inappropriate programme for maintaining community contact records
2. Poor or limited base infrastructure—roads, water, community venue, electrification—to support the possibility of interventions
3. Implementing interventions in inner-city communities affected by crime and violence via an independent agency/ NGO working in the community that does not deliberately target power holders and perpetrators of crime
4. Absence of a dedicated council of community leaders who will commit to spearheading community development activities
5. Poor visibility and mistrust of elected local government, agency, and national leaders—Member of Parliament, Parish Councilors, police, SDC—as practical and genuine source of solution to community problems
6. Dissatisfaction by residents of en-route communities with their own community and development rights
7. Limited or no attempt to reach out to nearby communities and request their involvement in the intervention
8. Upsurges in and the continuity of violence and crime in the implementing community

9. Lack of willingness of local institutional leaders to accommodate the use of community facilities for interventions
10. National leaders addressed with advocacy letters not responding or showing an interest to contribute to community development
11. Inaccessibility of some national leaders by telephone for follow-up on letters sent or for meetings scheduled
12. Implementing interventions in communities that are accustomed to them and feel empowered enough to solve their problems individually or as a community
13. Implementing interventions in a section of a community dismantled by crime and violence without involving residents of other sections, as well as their leaders and those perpetrating crime

1.3 What needs to be done over or differently?

1. Need to outline and pilot a specific process for targeting communities affected by crime and violence

1.4 What surprises had to be dealt with?

1. Extremely bad or non-existent roads en-route to deep rural and farming communities

1.5 What project circumstances were not anticipated?

1. Working during untraditional hours and on untraditional days to facilitate residents' schedules
2. High costs associated with maintenance of the steering and suspension system of the motor vehicle—where it sustained damage to the undercarriage resulting in the replacement of control arms and tie-rod ends
3. Overwhelmingly heavy work load, use of innovativeness, dedication, and playing a wide variation of roles in order to ensure success: events planning, facilitation, and reporting; conducting primary & secondary research and preparing evaluation reports; initiating communications with and following-up with local and national stakeholders via digital & snail mail, telephone, and facsimile; conducting Internet research for advocacy meetings, preparing participant materials, playing team lead at advocacy meetings with national leaders, reporting on meetings, and following-up on deliverables; designing planning, communications, and monitoring & reporting templates for CBOs; preparing annual project plans, and data gathering instruments; and liaising with communications and research consultants

1.6 Were the project goals attained? If not, what changes need to be made to meet goals in the future?

The overall goal of the SEJ Project is to contribute to the development of a more just and equitable society for the citizens of Jamaica by a process of research, community education, and advocacy around issues of social and economic justice and rights. Over the period, April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008 seventeen—one evaluation, five education, five assessment, and six leadership—workshops were convened with an estimated 140 residents and leaders of seven communities: blind, Fair Prospect, Albion, Albion Mountain, Springfield, Rockfort, and Morant Bay. Seven national leaders facilitated advocacy meetings: Dr. Leary Myers, NEPA, Min. Michael Henry, Ministry of Transport, ACP John McLean, JCF Community Policing, Edward Shakes, JFLL, Robert Brian, SDC, Robert McHargh, NWA, and M.P. Dr. Donald Rhodd. Advocacy letters have already led to the cleaning of the Brown's Gully in Morant Bay, the identification of four new communities for adult literacy programming (blind, Fair Prospect, Springfield, and Albion Mountain), and commitment to execute river training work along Johnson River in the vicinity of Springfield during June 2008. The Project has also produced three evaluation reports to-date on the situation community development and the realization of ESR.



Social and Economic Justice (SEJ) Project Highlights

Top 3 Significant Project Successes

Project Success	Factors That Supported Success
Lobbying using professional advocacy techniques as an effective strategy for addressing community problems—as seen in the cleaning of Brown’s Gully and other community development commitments by agencies like JFLL	Professional training in Advocacy Communications and experience lecturing in Networking & Advocacy
Community residents are anxious to learn about their human rights and responsibilities	Multimedia learning materials (PowerPoint presentations, coloured informational brochures, interesting content and supporting hand-outs), participatory learning style, and knowledgeable & respectful facilitator
Development of a model for community development based on the framework of empowering residents about their economic and social rights (ESR)	Receipt of funding to execute a pilot and exploratory research, and responsive & innovative researcher

Other Notable Project Successes

Project Success	Factors That Supported Success
Greater awareness about JFJ, reduction of negative perspectives and misconceptions about the organisation, and diversification of issues covered by JFJ	Workshops that transferred information about JFJ, ESR, leadership, and advocacy
Broader stakeholder base at the local and national levels of governance	Workshops, advocacy letters & meetings, and the creation of a stakeholder database
Assessment of community problems & experiences and the preparation of evaluation reports to advance work & solicit additional funding	Experienced social researcher

Project Shortcomings and Solutions

Project Shortcoming	Recommended Solutions
Inability to sustain community needs for on-going support beyond 1 year	Transition to SDC which has a mandate for advancing community development