Annual Report

Building an inclusive Jamaica that treats LGBT Jamaicans with respect and dignity.
2019

Annual Report

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J-FLAG is a human rights and social justice organisation which advocates for the rights, livelihood and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Jamaica.

Our work seeks to build a Jamaican society that respects and protects the rights of everyone. Our board and staff are committed to promoting social change, empowering the LGBT community, and building tolerance for and acceptance of LGBT people.

Mission

To promote social change by empowering the Jamaican LGBT community and build tolerance for and acceptance of the LGBT community by the wider Jamaican society.

Vision

The creation of a Jamaican society that respects and protects the human rights and inherent dignity of all individuals irrespective of their sexual orientation and gender identity: a Jamaica where there is the freedom to be, for all people.

Values

J-FLAG promotes the values of all-inclusivity, diversity, equality, fairness, and love. These values are at the heart of all we do, as we seek to become effective agents of social change.

J-FLAG envisions a Jamaica where LGBT citizens feel safe, secure, included and inclined to settle. To this end, our work is guided by the pursuit of five main outcomes:

1. Improved enabling environment for the livelihood, health and well-being of LGBT Jamaicans.
2. Inclusion of the voices of the Jamaican LGBT community in policy and decision-making.
3. The provision and delivery of services that meet the needs of the community.
4. Increased opportunities for LGBT citizens to be empowered to access services.
In an effort to achieve these outcomes, J-FLAG will:

1. Support the expansion of existing services to support the health and wellbeing of LGBT Jamaicans.
2. Provide opportunities for enhancing the participation of the community in policy development and review processes.
3. Create service packages that meet the needs of the community.
4. Develop an approach to Human Rights Advocacy for LGBT persons that legitimizes the needs of the community.
5. Develop networking opportunities that empower and increase opportunities for LGBT persons to create demand for accessible services.
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Executive Summary

This Annual Report highlights the progress and achievements of J-FLAG during 2019. It provides an overview of the implemented programmes and activities which underlie our mission to improve the livelihood, health and wellness of LGBT Jamaicans, ensure their voices are included in policy and decision-making, and increase their opportunities to access health and social services. Much of our progress in 2019 was a result of notable strides in the areas of rural engagement, visibility, community engagement, training of service providers and work with LGBT youth.

This report also outlines the various activities we completed in 2019 which align with our strategic plan, along with ad hoc activities which together, allowed us to engage over 6000 people in physical spaces, and well over 5 million people in virtual spaces. This included strategic management of stakeholder relations, the implementation of programmes geared at building the capacity, and improving the livelihood, health and well-being of LGBT people in Jamaica, the provision of much needed support to members of the local community and various outreach and community engagement activities including another successful staging of #PRiDEJA, our annual pride celebrations.

The report concludes with a summary of human rights violations received by the organisation in 2019, and information on J-FLAG’s financial health.
The start of the year was plagued with the loss of Rainbow House, our office space which also acted as a safe space for the community, and a base for a number of our activities. As many documents were destroyed in the fire which damaged our base, much of 2019 was invested in finding alternative spaces for our activities, recovering documents and maintaining our operations.

Despite these challenges, we were able to plan and successfully execute a range of programmes and interventions for and with LGBT people in Jamaica, while also pursuing organizational development, local and international visibility for the local LGBT movement and capacity building of staff.

In 2019, we were able to extend many of our programmes, activities and services to parishes in rural Jamaica. This allowed for us to better understand and respond to the needs of LGBT people outside of Kingston and St. Andrew. We engaged youth and community workers and young people in Manchester at the Mandeville Youth Information Centre to increase their understanding of and improve their ability to work with the community. We also conducted informal and formal community sensitization and legal literacy sessions with LGBT people in St James and St. Ann, and hosted Health & Wellness days in Manchester and St James. Our Youth Project also engaged individuals enrolled in the Housing, Opportunity, Production and Employment (HOPE) Programme in Manchester to increase their knowledge of gender and sexuality diversity. These initiatives allowed us to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders in other parishes which improves our ability to refer members of the community to services outside of Kingston.
Top Achievements of 2019

2. Pride & Visibility

We were able to engage between 2500 - 3500 people during our annual Pride festivities providing a space for celebration of LGBT people in Jamaica. Pride also provided much visibility of our work in local and international print and digital media. We were featured in UK Gal-dem Magazine and coverage of Pride 2019 in local newspaper, STAR sparked discussion on Pride being situated in the Emancipation/Independence period. We took this opportunity to educate the public on the symbolism of Pride as freedom and the need for LGBT Jamaicans to partake in the national festivities in a safe environment.

3. #RespectDue Billboard in Halfway Tree

With the support of a grant from the Dutch Embassy, we produced a 10-second video which encouraged respect for diversity within Jamaican society. The video which was broadcasted in some of Jamaica’s most trafficked areas including Halfway Tree, Crossroads, parade in downtown Kingston and Old Hope Road was viewed over 16,000,000 times over a four-month period. It sought to foster respect and tolerance toward LGBT people, the elderly, Rastafarians and people with disabilities.
4. Launch of Mystery Shopping Report

We spearheaded a Mystery Shopping report which assessed the services provided to persons living with HIV and other key populations in healthcare spaces. Ten trained participants conducted 23 visits to various service providers to determine the extent to which services are non-discriminatory and responsive. Overall, the majority of participants had positive experiences and reported that healthcare workers they engaged were largely respectful, helpful and did their best to provide professional and courteous services. Doctors and nurses were consistently viewed more favourably for their level of service and professionalism than security guards and some reception personnel. This suggests that targeted interventions/trainings for frontline staff such as security guards may be critical moving forward as they can serve as a deterrent in LGBTQ people accessing critical health services. Find the report here.

5. We are Jamaicans Mural installation

We partnered with Kingston Creative to install a mural in Downtown Kingston. The mural provides significant visibility for and promotes respect and understanding of the LGBT community in Jamaica. It is a public reminder of the importance of inclusivity of LGBT Jamaicans.
Top Achievements of 2019

6. Work with LGBT Youth

We successfully completed a number of initiatives including training in media engagement, public speaking and debating for advocacy, with and for LGBT youth through Equality Youth Jamaica (EYJ). The programs and activities have given over 100 LGBT youth and allies various opportunities for learning and skills building which have better positioned them as advocates. When reflecting on their involvement with EYJ in 2019, participants spoke extensively about newfound confidence in themselves on personal and professional levels, how the programmes encouraged them to explore ways they could use their talents to make a difference in the LGBT community, and the ways EYJ has inspired them to continue advocacy in the future. Our commitment to work with LGBT youth strengthens and provides sustainability to the movement in Jamaica.

7. Sensitisation training of health workers in Jamaica

This year we continued our partnership with the Ministry of Health & Wellness to work toward the creation of health care environment where non-discriminatory rights-based services are delivered to LGBT clients. We used behaviour change communication to sensitize 18 healthcare workers, expose them to the lives and experiences of LGBT people in Jamaica, and create a space within which they could change their values and attitudes. This was the final training session in a project which successfully increased the knowledge of a critical mass of healthcare workers, altering the health landscape for LGBT service users in a relatively short space of time and has undeniably contributed to the objectives of the National Strategic Plan on HIV and Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014-2019.
Overall completion rate - 60% of 102 planned activities were completed in 2019.

We also completed a total of 29 ad hoc activities in 2019 which included media engagement on relevant issues, building organizational and staff capacity through attending meetings and conferences with stakeholders and policy and advocacy activities such as the development of policy briefs and meetings with the private and public sector.
5,660,696 people reached through our social media channels

6,269 people reached through in-person programmes and activities

Q1 – 783 | Q2 – 786 | Q3 – 3767 | Q4 – 933

Types of Activities we completed in 2019

Health & Wellbeing: 23%
Youth Development: 18%
Policy: 18%
Support service provision: 25%
Community engagement: 16%
Promoting Livelihood, Health and wellbeing of LGBT Citizens

In our commitment to the holistic development of the LGBT community here in Jamaica, much of our advocacy in 2019 focused on creating spaces in the public health sector that are safe, non-discriminatory and accessible, while raising awareness among LGBT Jamaicans about critical health and wellness issues. We have made significant strides toward this through our partnership with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and other relevant stakeholders in government and civil society.

Our work with various healthcare workers over the past six years has allowed us to build a network which enables us to conduct training at various facilities to improve their ability to serve the LGBT community. This year, we conducted a sensitization presentation to twenty-three healthcare workers in Kingston which improved their understanding of gender and sexual diversity and spread awareness of unique healthcare challenges LGBT people face and provisions which may be made for treatment and care for the LGBT community.

Our partnerships have allowed us to understand the deficit within government health service centers regarding the treatment of LGBT people and conceptualise methods to address the concerns raised by the community. This has led to the establishment of evidence-informed guidelines which healthcare practitioners can use to better serve the LGBT community and their specific needs. This year, we completed the final training session with eighteen healthcare workers at CHARES in Kingston. We were also able to conduct a thorough evaluation of the program which has been running since 2013 and produce a report which details best practices and provides guidance for future training opportunities.

The main health-related social media intervention this year was our weekly “Wellness Wednesdays” which engaged LGBT people in Jamaica in online discussions of issues relevant to their mental and physical health. This included intimate partner violence, depression and suicide, healthy eating and safer sex and self-care practices. This was complemented by quarterly health and wellness days which saw the provision of
general health services and information on wellness to LGBT people in rural and urban Jamaica.

In an effort to promote community wellness, this year our team conducted five self-stigma sessions with eighty-two members of the community which discussed a range of issues from family to seropositivity. We also completed one conflict resolution session with twenty-eight people to aid in interpersonal relationship development among members of the community.

We ended the year with a particularly impactful programme aimed at spreading awareness of the utility of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) among the LGBT community in Jamaica. We partnered with affiliate TransWave to host two community sensitization sessions and a peer educator training session to equip thirty-three individuals with relevant information to make informed decisions about the use of PrEP. We also executed a social media campaign dubbed #PrEPResponsibly aimed at sharing information about PrEP which generated much engagement among the community on our three main social media platforms. A total of twelve information, education and communication materials (IEC) were produced and reached over 480,000 people online. The campaign was very instrumental in educating members of the community about PrEP. Community members expressed that the images were fresh and useful to their understanding of PrEP, including its side effects and how it works.
In an effort to amplify the voices of LGBT people in Jamaica and bolster their ability to participate confidently in policy reform and sharpen their activism, in 2019 we engaged 176 youth and youth development practitioners in various capacity building opportunities.

Executed predominantly by Equality Youth Jamaica, these initiatives included thorough training on the use of media engagement, public speaking, writing and debating for advocacy. Youth were also equipped with skills to design advocacy projects and become effectively involved in national policymaking and decision-making processes. Youth were central to our legal literacy training series which gave us an opportunity to hear their voices and equip them with knowledge on legal issues.
We were also able to successfully graduate the fourth cohort of our youth project, enabling sustainability for activism with thirty-five new youth equipped to effectively advocate for themselves and other members of the LGBT community.

In 2019, we also trained thirty youth leaders and development practitioners from government and community-based organisations in an effort to increase awareness of the issues that LGBT youth face and suggest mechanisms that can be used to mainstream these concerns in national youth programs. Participants were trained to consider gender and sexual diversity and expand their programs to be more inclusive of LGBT youth. Further, as we seek to document, standardize and utilize best practices, we developed a curriculum for inclusive youth leadership to be used as a point of reference in future training opportunities.

Equality Youth Jamaica helped to me to appreciate my place in the world and to do meaningful work that can change lives., I learned how to advocate for myself and uphold human rights for all - regardless of real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. I have travelled to various parts of the island to build bridges with youth who face similar issues from different backgrounds, volunteered to make spaces more pristine and presented my first academic paper. EYJ supported my skills in digital media and content creation and I am currently serving a community near and dear to my heart that I am a part of, creating stories and giving voice to queer and trans folk” – MX, EYJ Project participant

In an effort to further build capacity of LGBT people, our team also executed four legal literacy sessions which built awareness among 104 LGBT people of the ways current legal frameworks may negatively impact their wellbeing and equipped them with knowledge of ways to seek help despite these realities.

In 2019, we were also able to engage specific organizations, collaborating with the National Family Planning Board (NFPB) to increase their ability to respond to LGBT youth. In an effort to continue creating LGBT-friendly spaces for youth, we also hosted Building Bridges in collaboration with the Mandeville Youth Information Centre to create mutual understanding between workers and LGBT youth in their care. Our investment in youth ensures sustainability of efforts, mutually beneficial partnerships and allows us to better serve the needs of this population.
In 2019, our human rights advocacy and activism efforts flourished and boasts some noteworthy progress. We made significant use of new and traditional media, lobbying and liaising with government officials and engaging people through public forums to concretize human rights and social justice as imperative to the development of Jamaica.

We advocated for the institutionalizing of frameworks within the government system to facilitate greater reporting of, and redress for, human rights violations. Understanding the influence of key decision makers outside of the government, we also strategically engaged individuals within the private and non-governmental sectors to increase their awareness of issues facing LGBT people in Jamaica. To this end, we convened nine advocacy meetings with government officials, parliamentarians and diplomatic partners, along with a round table discussion with civil society organisations, the diplomatic corps and academics as a part of our International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia activities. The discussions were fruitful and allowed us to engage twenty-eight persons on the results of the new attitudes and perceptions survey which we commissioned.

In 2019, we also implemented a number of interventions to educate Jamaicans on the importance of respect and tolerance towards the LGBT community. This included our UNDP sponsored, biennial Beyond Homophobia Conference which was hosted in partnership with the Institute of Caribbean Studies and Department of Sociology, Psychology & Social Work at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition and Jamaicans for Justice. The conference created a space for 144 people to engage with expositions and scholarly and activist work on how LGBT people disrupt and insert themselves in public systems.
This year, we also embarked on work with community members who are key service providers namely teachers, police officers and social workers. Through three roundtable discussions, we were able to engage forty-nine participants in conversations on issues they face when serving the LGBT community and work toward recommendations to improve service provision.

Our work in the area of policy entailed strategically engaging stakeholders to allow for the holistic well-being of LGBT people in Jamaica. This included conversations with private sector companies on anti-discriminatory policy for staff in an effort to create inclusive spaces for LGBT employees, exploring new areas of advocacy such as drug policy, and working toward the development of policy briefs on contemporary legal issues that affect LGBT people in Jamaica.

In 2019, there was significant visibility for the LGBT community in traditional media through an Editor’s Forum which resulted in a front-page story and four stories in The Jamaica Gleaner. This was particularly notable as participants of trans experience were able to share their experiences and challenge commonly held negative narratives about the community. We also made remarkable strides with the use of new media for LGBT advocacy, using our social media pages as spaces to foster dialogue on the necessity of LGBT Jamaicans occupying space in Jamaica’s public domain, as well as affirming their dual identities of being both Jamaican and a part of the community.
While negative feedback was noted, the nature of discussions and sentiment which arose from the campaigns are indicative of the strides we have made. We were able to reach over 500,000 people through numerous campaigns including:

- **#RespectDue** which reached over 38,000 people online with messages aimed at respect and tolerance toward LGBT people. The campaign was also broadcasted in one of Jamaica’s most trafficked areas, Half Way Tree, as well as other areas across the capital.

- **The #OutLoudJA video campaign** which reached almost 90,000 people online and explored the lived experiences LGBT Jamaicans through 11 videos which promoted tolerance. The campaign allowed for discussion on issues ranging from intimate partner violence and school bullying, to the importance of allies and navigating spaces in Jamaica.

- **The #Reimagine campaign** reached over 40,000 people online and sparked discussion by calling for people to reimagine Jamaica as a non-discriminatory society where all Jamaicans have equal access to resources, and the ability to exercise their fundamental human rights.

- **A relaunch of our 2015 “We are Jamaicans” campaign** saw 28 new videos aimed at sparking discussion about what it is like to forge a life, community and have meaningful experiences as LGBT Jamaicans. The videos reached over 344,000 people, promoting key conversations around stigma, discrimination and tolerance.

In an effort to engage LGBT Jamaicans on issues pertaining to community development and their overall wellbeing, we effectively engaged over 200 members of the community in a number of outreach and community building events. This included the annual Sagicor Sigma Run, two stagings of our annual event Prism, which this year, celebrated LGBT heroes, a games night which engaged over fifty people, and our annual Labour Day activities which reached over sixty people at two schools where we planted fruit and shade trees, and donated recycling bins. Our Labour Day outreach also allowed for visibility as our logo was included among those of other contributors at the Seaward Infant and Primary school. We also hosted fourteen community sensitization sessions throughout the year which allowed us to engage over 200 LGBT people on topics related to mental, sexual and physical health, as well as navigating public spaces and fora in Jamaica.
Our fifth annual PRiDEJA week of activities created space for approximately 3,000 LGBT people and allies from the diaspora and home to celebrate pride, LGBT life, business and culture from August 1-6, 2019. Celebrating under the theme Reintegrate. Reimagine. Rebuild. #PRiDEJA2019 sought to strategically foster spaces that centred the interests of the Jamaican LGBT community.

The week of events included our annual sports day, concert and open mic night, cooler fete and day of service activities which included the painting of a pedestrian crossing in Kingston, beach clean-up and an engagement at a children’s home in Kingston. These events were complemented by newer events including GALore, a women’s only party executed by affiliate, WE-Change, a Tradeshow & Forum and Out for Jesus which created space for LGBT people of faith to celebrate.

The events brought significant international, regional and local visibility to our work, with a historic line up of four prominent dancehall artists (Ishawna, Yanique Curvy Diva, Tifa and Marcy Chin) performing at the breakfast party, and the Out for Jesus event capturing the attention of the media leading up to the week of activities. Discussions within the media cemented the need for the creation of safe spaces of faith for LGBT people to express their religious beliefs and examined the reconciliation process which continues to happen between the Jamaican LGBT community and dancehall music.

Through #PRiDEJA2019, we were able to engage new attendees and establish new partnerships with local entities such as the Jamaica Association of Diverse Businesses with whom we partnered for the stellar planning and execution of the Tradeshow and Forum, as well as the silent headphone party, which was a favourite from the 2019 week of events.
In 2019, we recorded a total number of 21 cases of violations toward members of the LGBTQ community in Jamaica. All 21 reports were made by gay men and more than 95% detailed experiences of physical and verbal assault. More than 50% of the reports made included home expulsion, and almost 20% referred to experiences of cyberbullying. The majority of reported instances occurred in Kingston and St Andrew, and less than 30% were reported to the police.

As we operated without an office space for much of 2019, this significantly impacted our ability to receive reports. All reports submitted in 2019 were from people seeking asylum. The loss of Rainbow House, our office space, also impacted our ability to collect supporting documents such as police reports from clients.
Equality for All Foundation\(^1\) continues to rely heavily on grants in order to execute its mandate. At December 31, 2019, 87% of the organization’s revenues were derived from grants received in the amount of $96.7M. Other sources of revenue include program revenues, direct public support and special events.

Our operating income as at December 2019, amounted to $110.7M which, when set off against operating expenses which include program, administrative, human resources and other costs resulted in net income of $12.5M. This is an increase of 23% when compared with the same period last year.

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\(^1\) J-FLAG operates legally as Equality for All Foundation Jamaica Ltd, a charitable organization under the Charities Act 2013.
Financial Report

Administrative Costs

- Contract Services
- Facilities & Equipment
- General Expense Overheads
- Other Types of Expenses

Program Cost 2019

- Support Services
- Salaries & benefits
- Program Staff Emp'ler Contributions
- Meeting, Training, Workshops
- Project Staff Travel Allowances
- Program Services
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