



J-FLAG

THE ROAD TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**A NATIONAL FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS,
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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Equality, justice, and protection are essential to growth and development. Jamaica's National Development Plan (Vision 2030) was developed on this premise, which also recognised the importance of inclusion given our diversity as a people has been dubbed by the Plan as one of our national strengths. We live in a Jamaica that is affected by economic and social injustices, where there is inadequate protection for the rights of all people without prejudice and discrimination, regardless of economic status, religion, gender identity, place of origin, sex and sexual orientation, ability, age, health or any other status. We also live in a society where there is inadequate protection for the environment on which we depend for sustenance.

J-FLAG is therefore calling on the Government to consider the following human rights, economic and social justice issues as critical matters that must be addressed by the next government as part of efforts to achieve Vision 2030.

I. Empower People with Disability (PWD) to Achieve Their Fullest Potential and Fully Contribute to and Benefit from Jamaica's Development (Vision 2030 Goal 1, Outcome 2; SDGs 1, 3, 4, & 8)

- A. Improve access to education and training by installing the requisite physical, technological and other infrastructure including ramps and adaptive technologies such as Job Access with Speech software (JAWS) in at least three schools in every parish, and provide students with disabilities with reading and examination materials in accessible formats such as Braille.
- B. Reduce unemployment among people with disabilities by taking affirmative action to improve access to employment opportunities within the public sector and thereby increase the percentage of public sector workers with disabilities by 10% per year over the next five years.
- C. Improve access to justice, health and other essential services by training relevant persons around providing non-discriminatory services to people with disabilities that fully considers their realities, assigning interpreters to health facilities and courtrooms and installing ramps, among other things.
- D. Take immediate legislative and policy action to safeguard the rights of people with mental disabilities deemed "unfit to plea" who remain incarcerated for protracted periods without ever standing trial.

Recommended partners:

- Jamaica Council for Persons with Disability
- The Abilities Foundation of Jamaica
- Combined Disabilities Association
- Jamaica Association on Intellectual Disabilities
- Jamaica AIDS Support for Life
- Office of Special Student Services at The UWI, Mona
- Mico Care Centre

II. Enhance the Lives of Retired Persons, the Elderly and their Families (Vision 2030 Goal 1, Outcomes 1 & 3; SDG 1 & 3)

- A. Improve care and support for the elderly by ensuring equitable access to community support services such as transportation, home support, proper nutrition and diet, adult day programmes and assisted living.
- B. Improve access to health and other essential services by enhancing outreach services and prevention programmes, and expanding the National Health Fund.
- C. Improve access to social protection and social services available by increasing coverage of pension schemes, providing special housing solutions, and discounted home loans for holders of mortgage from the National Housing Trust (NHT) to ease repayment burden.

Recommended Partners:

- Help Age International, Jamaica
- National Council for Senior Citizens
- Caribbean Community of Retired Persons

III. Reduce Stigma and Discrimination and Protect and Promote the Rights of the Most Vulnerable and Marginalised within the Jamaican Society (Vision 2030 Goal 2, Outcomes 5 & 6; SDGs 5, 8, 10 & 11)

- A. Enact Anti-Discrimination legislation to protect and promote human rights and ensure equal treatment of all people, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups
- B. Improve Mechanisms to Protect Persons, including and especially vulnerable and marginalised persons such as women, children and the elderly from sexual harassment, abuse and violence by implementing the recommendations of the Voices for Equal Rights and Justice (VERJ) to the Joint Select Committee of Parliament for the Review the Sexual Offences Act 2009 and Related Acts.
- C. Protect the rights of the most vulnerable and marginalised by introducing a Model Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy which promotes equal access to employment, respect, tolerance and equality within the workforce.
- D. Encourage the participation of women in government and on boards by taking affirmative action to increase the number of women Councillors, Members of the House of Representatives and Senators, and improve women's access to leadership roles.

Recommended partners:

- Voices for Equal Rights and Justice (VERJ)
- 51% Coalition
- Partnership for Jamaica

- Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica
- National Human Rights Institute (following its establishment)
- The People's National Party
- The Jamaica Labour Party

IV. Reduce the Number of Children and Youth Living and Working on the Streets by Half (Vision 2030 Goal 1, Outcome 3 and Goal 2, Outcome 5; SDGs 1 & 3)

- A. Strengthen the capacity of state and non-state actors to work cooperatively to address the needs of children and youth who live and work on the street by ensuring a stable funding base through subvention and other technical assistance as required.
- B. Empower and build the capacity of children and youth and their families by undertaking community-based interventions and necessary assessments, including parenting and life skills training, provision of and access to social protection services, employment training, and family reintegration programme.
- C. Remove children from the streets by introducing a special programme to place all children who live and work on the street in state homes or with a foster parent(s) or reintegrating them with their parents, guardian or family where possible.

Recommended partners:

- National Parent Teachers' Association
- Jamaica Council of Churches
- Jamaica Association of Social Workers
- Possibilities Programme

V. Reduce Income Inequality and Secure Economic Justice for All Jamaicans (Vision 2030 Goal 1, Outcome 3; SDGs 1, 5, 8 & 10)

- A. Increase the Minimum Wage by at least 30% to ensure that it is above projected inflation to allow individuals and families to have more purchasing power.
- B. Promote gender equity and protect the livelihood of women by enforcing and amending, where necessary, the Employment (Equal Pay for Men and Women) Act 1975 to close the pay gap between men and women.
- C. Establish a framework for reducing child poverty by developing targets specific to children, and developing child poverty-related indicators and a comprehensive monitoring and reporting system to be led by the ministry with primary responsibility for youth and the Planning Institute of Jamaica.
- D. Eliminate the disparities in disbursement to boys and girls who are beneficiaries of the Programme for Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH).
- E. Equitably share the tax burden by increasing the income tax threshold, reducing income tax, and improving tax compliance through integrated

systems (such as the non-renewal of driver's' licence for persons who owe property tax).

- F. Promote the creative industry and other non-traditional careers as economically viable by incorporating into the secondary school curriculum and protecting creative markets with domestic and international legislation.

Recommended partners:

- Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica
- Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts
- Partnership for Jamaica
- Jamaica Manufacturers' Association
- 51% Coalition
- University of Technology
- University of the West Indies
- Young Entrepreneurs Association

VI. Protect the Rights of Children, Youth and Adults who Come in Conflict with the Law (Vision 2030 Goal 2, Outcome 5; SDG 16)

- A. Immediately implement all aspects of the recently promulgated 'Administration Policy for People Deprived of Liberty' which would provide more robust oversight for police lockups and prisons.
- B. Ensure that all detention facilities conform to international standards by, *inter alia*, addressing issues related to overcrowding, access to hygienic facilities, and access to adequate medical and psychological care.
- C. Regulate arrest and detention by police more effectively by passing legislation that explicitly and affirmatively expresses the rights of detainees, strengthens judicial oversight of arrest and detention, and provides specific remedies for breach of duty.
- D. Reduce the number of children who enter the formal justice system and juvenile detention centers which adversely affect their development by expeditiously implementing the Child Diversion Policy nationwide.
- E. Take meaningful action to Reduce the number of children before the justice system without legal representation by expanding the legal aid infrastructure and increasing resource allocation to the Office of the Children's Advocate.

Recommended partners:

- Jamaicans for Justice
- Legal Aid Council
- Future Services International Limited
- Jamaica Association of Social Workers
- Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition

VII. Address Homelessness and Protect the Rights and Well-Being of People who are Displaced and Homeless (Vision 2030 Goal 1, Outcome 3 and Goal 2, Outcome 5; SDGs 1 & 3)

- A. Reduce the number of people who are homeless by increasing the number of shelters and/or available spaces across the country.
- B. Prevent homelessness among children and youth by implementing interventions that target families and communities in an attempt to mitigate against the risks of them being kicked out of their home or needing to run away.
- C. Protect the well-being of the most vulnerable by making special provisions to facilitate and improve access to social protection and social services.
- D. Make shelters and drop in facilities sensitive to the needs and rights of persons by conducting sensitization training to enable staff and occupants to respect each other and foster a hospitable and respectful environment for all to reside.
- E. Hold caregivers accountable by more strictly enforcing the Child Care and Protection Act 2004

Recommended partners:

- Jamaicans for Justice
- J-FLAG
- Open Arms Drop-in Centre
- Jamaica Association of Social Workers

VIII. Protect the Human and Civil Rights of LGBT Jamaicans (Vision 2030 Goal 1, Outcome 2 and Goal 2, Outcome 5; SDGs 3, 4, 16)

- A. Create a more inclusive and safe school environment for LGBT youth by reducing homophobic and other forms of bullying, providing human rights sensitisation training for teachers, school administrators, Guidance Counsellors, and assigning social workers to schools.
- B. Reduce and eliminate institutionalized discrimination against LGBT persons by removing or amending laws that explicitly or implicitly excludes LGBT persons from protection and coverage under the law, and introducing hate crime legislation.
- C. Improve employability of young, poor LGBT persons by providing stigma and discrimination free subsidised training programmes particularly in rural and volatile communities.
- D. Formalise human rights training for all public sector workers by incorporating such trainings in tertiary training institutions, mandating trainings as part of career development and enhancement workshops for teachers, health workers, soldiers, police officers and other state actors.

- E. Launch a national human rights campaign to promote a culture of respect, and address and reduce all forms of violence (physical and nonphysical) against all persons.

Recommended partners:

- Respect Jamaica
- J-FLAG
- Independent Jamaica Council for Human Rights
- Quality of Citizenship Jamaica
- Women's Empowerment for Change (WE-Change)
- TransWave

IX. Create and Strengthen National Mechanisms to Facilitate the Enjoyment of Rights (Vision 2030 Goal 2, Outcomes 5 & 6; SDG 16)

- A. Strengthen the infrastructure for protecting rights to information and democratic participation by completing the review of the Access to Information Act.
- B. Strengthen and centralize national human rights protection and promotion strategies by following-through on commitments to establish a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI).
- C. Strengthen the Ministry of Justice by continuing to increase its annual budget to improve court management services, undertake human rights education programmes, and other critical interventions that are critical to secure justice for all persons and reducing crime and violence.

Recommended partners:

- Jamaicans for Justice
- J-FLAG
- Jamaica Civil Society Coalition
- Independent Jamaica Council for Human Rights

X. Promote Environmental Protection as a National Priority (Vision 2030 Goal 4, Outcomes 13, 14 & 15; SDGs 2, 11, 12, 13, 14 & 15)

- A. Encourage environmental friendly business development plans by offering tax relief and subsidized loans to young entrepreneurs and rural women who include safe environmental practices in their business plans.
- B. Mainstream sustainable development through a national educational campaign, ratifying and implementing the COP21 Agreement, and commencing a national youth environmental Warden programme.
- C. Conduct research into viable alternatives to plastic and styrofoam, and reduce the importation and manufacturing of plastic and styrofoam.
- D. Address environmental abuse by increasing fines for breaches to Jamaican environmental laws to ensure that it does not cost less to

break the law; provisions should be made to periodically update regulations to ensure fines are economically relevant.

- E. Improve enforcement of our environmental laws by increasing the number of environmental Wardens and Inspectors.
- F. Improve waste collection and disposal by increasing the allocation of resources for garbage collection and creating a landfill that will reduce negative health impacts on citizens.

Recommended partners:

- Jamaica Environment Trust
- Jamaica Civil Society Coalition
- Environmental Foundation of Jamaica
- Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica

J-FLAG is calling on the Government to commit to economic and social justice for all Jamaicans guided by a human rights framework toward achieving sustainable development. We cannot achieve Vision 2030 if the state, the Opposition, civil society, and our people do not work cooperatively and collectively to reduce and eliminate all forms of inequalities. Vision 2030 will only be achievable when there is adequate protection, consideration, coverage, access and empowerment for our people to achieve their full potential.

We cannot continue to marginalise parts of the society, and we cannot continue to engage in business and personal activities that contribute to the degradation of the natural environment. We are aware that this cannot only be the responsibility of the next administration, but will require partnerships. Accordingly, we call on the government to declare their unwavering and actionable commitment to equality for all and for environmental protection so we may improve lives, families and businesses, and preserve the environment for future generations.

The organisation is willing to work with the next administration and all stakeholders and partners to action these recommendations.