

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT



Chairman,
Jamaica Social Investment Fund
Wesley Hughes, PhD

Established in 1996 as a key component in the Government of Jamaica's strategy for eradicating poverty, the Jamaica Social Investment Fund continues to carry out its mandate of providing vital services to the country's poorest citizens. The Fund's primary means of achieving its objectives is to make financing available for development projects in low-income communities. These projects are formulated in response to the needs identified by the communities themselves and are implemented with the full participation of the beneficiaries. Emphasis is placed on participation as a means of ensuring sustainability in that beneficiaries are called upon to invest along with the Fund. This investment fosters a sense of ownership which encourages the preservation of assets. As a result, JSIF interventions not only contribute to the development of social infrastructure but also to the empowerment of citizens in underserved communities.

The work of the Fund is part of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NPEP) which was initiated in 1995 to coordinate poverty related projects and programmes. Among the NPEP's objectives is the reduction of the number of persons below the poverty line and the eradication of absolute poverty.

This mandate remains a challenging one but there are indications that the work is bearing fruit. The 2001 Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions revealed that between 1992 and 2001, the poverty level declined from 33.9% to 16.9%. With more than 1.2 million Jamaicans benefiting from JSIF's projects, it is appropriate to say that the Fund has played a meaningful role in the wider Government effort to improve the living conditions of our country's citizens. In fact, a 2002 Impact Evaluation carried out by a UK based firm of independent consultants, ITAD, stated that the Fund, "continues to be a positive influence in alleviating poverty in

the niche areas where it is working". It goes on to say that JSIF's sub-projects have had a "social and economic impact on poverty" and brought about "improvements in the social capital" of the communities that have been supported. The Evaluation concludes that "the JSIF's overriding legacy is the way in which it has spread the use of participatory approaches in working with poor communities in Jamaica...We believe that this will have a continued and positive impact on the way poverty alleviation programmes are tackled with the poor themselves as the main driving force in finding solutions to overcoming poverty".

During its eighth year of operations the Fund marked several milestones which are worthy of mention. Among them were:

- The start of project implementation utilizing Community Driven Development (CDD) methodologies including Community Based Contracting (CBC).
- The launch of the US\$2.86 million Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF).
- The completion of the first project implemented with CBC and the first initiative funded under the European Union's Poverty Reduction Programme (PRP), the \$12 million Galilee Basic School Construction Project.
- The launch of the \$35 million Whitfield Town Sanitation Project, the largest initiative the Fund has undertaken to date.

The period under consideration also saw the Fund receiving commendations for various aspects of our operations from several sources including International Funding Agencies and Private Sector interests. As a public institution accountable to the Jamaican taxpayers, JSIF's operating procedures have always been governed by principles of transparency, efficiency and complete objectivity. These factors were instrumental in JSIF being chosen by the Incorporated Masterbuilders Association of Jamaica as the recipient of the prestigious Roy McGregor Award for 2003.

The Roy McGregor Award is given to a non-builder who has rendered outstanding and exemplary service to the construction industry. Past recipients include Caribbean Cement Company, Jamaica Public Service Company, the Governor General Sir Howard Cooke and the National Housing Trust. In addition, JSIF's Managing Director, Mrs. Scarlette Gillings was among 14 women who were honoured by the Association for making outstanding contributions to the building sector.

In April 2004, the European Union's Commissioner of Development and Humanitarian Aid, Mr. Poul Neilson toured the Whitfield Town Project during a three-day visit to Jamaica. The Commissioner had high commendation for the extensive level of beneficiary participation and said the project can serve as "a reference case" which can be duplicated in other developing countries. He requested - and received - detailed documentation on the project and indicated that he wished to share the knowledge garnered from this initiative in the international sphere. Although there are encouraging signs that JSIF's work is having an impact on the country's poorest citizens, the battle to eradicate poverty is far from won. It is therefore critical for the Fund to capitalise on its success and to utilise the knowledge garnered in the last eight years of operations to increase efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out its mandate.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I must congratulate the Management and Staff of JSIF for the work carried out and the goals achieved over the past year. I look forward to another year of hard work and dedication as we continue to serve Jamaica.



Wesley Hughes, PhD,
Chairman

Dated this 25th day of August, 2004



Managing Director Mrs. Scarlette Gillings at the Incorporated Masterbuilders Association of Jamaica's annual banquet in March 2004 where JSIF received the Roy McGregor Award and Mrs. Gillings was honoured for her contribution to the construction industry.



The European Union's Commissioner of Development and Humanitarian Aid, Mr. Poul Neilson (left) discussing aspects of the Whitfield Town Project with Mr. Herman Johnson, Supervisor of the Prefabrication Plant.