

## **ARTICLE FORHOUNSLOW (BIGWOODS) BASIC SCHOOL GROUND -BREAKING CEREMONY**

The Jamaica Social Investment Fund continues to invest a great deal in the country's education sector, especially at the early childhood level. To date, the organization's Board has approved 387 school projects to the tune of approximately \$2billion.

The southwest St.Elizabeth community of Bigwoods will be among the most recent recipients to benefit from a \$27 million basic school that will be constructed and equipped by JSIF.The financing agreement was signed and ground broken on October 8, 2009.This new project is scheduled to be completed in (4) months and will consist of (3) classrooms, bathroom facilities for teachers and students, kitchen, canteen, administrative area, a sick bay, play area, a water storage tank and perimeter fencing. The students will also benefit from the additional amenities of a drinking fountain, see-saw, sand pit and a slide. Additionally, the school will be fully equipped with a stove, fridge, chairs and desks for students and teachers.

Heartfelt gratitude was expressed by the principal of the school, Mrs. Graham, for what is said to be the biggest investment in the community since 1955.The existing structure is over 100 years old and lacks inadequate seating, ventilation, lighting, kitchen and play facilities. The 44 students enrolled also encounter major challenges, as the only available sanitary facilities are pit latrines.

The Hounslow Basic School is located in a poor farming community surrounded by the Santa Cruz Mountains. Its estimated population is eight-hundred (800) persons. Unemployment is extremely high, as 85% of the working age population is without jobs. Educational levels are also very low with the majority of residents in the community having no more than a primary school education. This project is therefore in line with JSIF's commitment to poverty reduction through education.