

REMARKS
BY
MR. OMAR SWEENEY
MANAGING DIRECTOR
OF
THE JAMAICA SOCIAL INVESTMENT FUND
FOR THE
REGENT STREET SDA EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
HANDING OVER CEREMONY
ON
FRIDAY APRIL 29, 2016
AT
10.00AM
AT
THE CENTRE
7-9 UPPER REGENT STREET
DENHAM TOWN

SALUTATIONS:

Chairman:

Chairman of the School Board: Mr. Michael Vernal

Pastor Everett Brown: President, Jamaica Union of Seventh Day Adventists

Pastor Kanhai Lumsden: Pastor, Regent Street SDA Church

Principal: Mrs. Hyacinth Scarlett

Mr. Jesus Orus Baguena- Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union

Dr. Eric Nathan: President, East Jamaica Conference of Seventh Day Adventists

Mrs. Nichole Blair-Thomas.

Representative of the Member of Parliament, Mr Jermaine Hyatt.

Representative of the Minister of Education, Youth and Information, Miss Brittany Singh

Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls. Good Morning.

Our commitment at JSIF to education in general, and early childhood education in particular is evidenced by the fact that since our inception in 1996, we have approved and completed education related projects valued at over JA\$ 5 Billion.

This particular project here Regent Street was designed to address the following challenges faced by the school:

- *Small and confined classroom spaces– 5 classrooms for 110 students; some classes had up to 30 students and utilized make-shift desks made of plywood.*
- *Inadequate furniture stock*
- *The kitchen did not adhere to Early Childhood Commission (ECC) standards – inadequate*

storage, countertops made of unsuitable material and insufficient sink capacity.

- *Bathrooms that did not adhere to the standards of the ECC – toilets and face basins were not age appropriate and in need of repairs.*
- *Lack of a suitable administrative area – inadequate furniture and small in size*
- *Absence of a sickbay.*
- *Play area in need of rehabilitation – suitable play surface was required.*

The rehabilitation works completed by the Poverty Reduction Programme (PRP) which we celebrate and officially hand over to the Regent Street SDA Early Childhood Development Centre include:

- ✓ The construction of a school building comprising two (2) floors
- ✓ Provision of seven (7) classrooms

- ✓ A kitchen with an expandable eating/meeting area.
- ✓ Male and female bathrooms with facilities for accessibility by persons with physical challenges.
- ✓ An office for the Principal
- ✓ A sick bay
- ✓ State of the art solar (photovoltaic) system which will allow the Centre to participate in “net billing”.
- ✓ All required infrastructure to ensure certification by the Early Childhood Commission (ECC).
- ✓ Paving of the school yard
- ✓ Installation of chain link fencing
- ✓ Provision of kitchen equipment and sick bay furniture.
- ✓ Adequate and critical pieces of furniture for both teachers and student as well as,
- ✓ 2 fire extinguishers, first aid kits and white boards.

Directly benefitting from this upgraded, and for all intents and purposes, new school, are the 110 students along with the 8 members of staff.

This project was delivered at a cost of JA\$ 36.5 Million, along with the JA\$7.3Million contributed by the community, and implemented over four (4) months.

The JSIF/PRP team is serious about erecting useful community infrastructure. We are also very aware of the critical importance of ensuring their maintenance. In this regard, we have coordinated with a number of external agencies like the Fire Department, the Parish Council and ODPEM and have expended resources in maintenance training for five (5) community members to ensure that there are resources in place to attend to the ongoing maintenance of this facility. The training included:

- ✓ Maintenance Planning
- ✓ Facilities Management

- ✓ Proper Environmental practices,
- ✓ Budgeting and Fund Raising
- ✓ Fire Prevention and techniques in combating Fires
- ✓ Disaster Preparedness and Risk Management

The participating community members left the training with a maintenance plan for the Centre, which they developed during the training, as well as a maintenance tool kit comprising such items as a wheelbarrow, a rake, a machete, and garbage bags, provided by the PRP. All is therefore now in place for the continued maintenance of this rehabilitated Early Childhood Development facility.

At this juncture let me publicly recognize and thank the European Union (EU), our financing partner on this important project, which was implemented under its EU Poverty Reduction Programme (PRP).

Let me also recognize the critical support of the community and the sponsors- the Regent Street

SDA Basic School Board and PTA , in ensuring the successful and efficient completion of the project.

Our children and staff can now feel proud and comfortable to be engaging daily in the important learning process, in an environment conducive to learning and play.

Let me remind everyone that it is through education that we will break the poverty cycle among so many in our Society. I am therefore appealing to all the parents and guardians present here today to support your children's educational journey. Make sure they never miss a day of school. Get involved in the life and work of the school. Never ever stand by and allow anyone to vandalize this school. It is the community's resource and must be maintained and secured. Work with the teachers. Keep track of your children's progress. The quality of their future depends on it.

On behalf of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) let me wish for you, all the good that is possible from this new learning facility.

Thank you very much.