



Government of Jamaica

Transforming Education Summit: Commitment Statement

We are Championing the Transformation of Education to Advance our Country's Sustainable Development Prospects

Jamaica's Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (Constitutional Amendment) Act of 2011 states that Jamaican citizens have the right to “publicly funded tuition in a public educational institution at the pre-primary and primary levels” and in 2016, the Government implemented a non-mandatory fee policy to reduce the cost of education across all pre-university levels. Education expenditure is above 5 per cent of GDP and close to 20 per cent of government expenditure. Jamaicans on average complete 11.7 years of schooling, which are equivalent to only 7.2 years of learning when benchmarked against top-performing systems. This reveals a learning gap of 4.3 years, felt largely by students from poorer households. Despite the strong budgetary allocations and capital investments, the education system is not optimally delivering improved outcomes in student performance. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the inequities in the education system. Jamaica must invest now to reverse the learning losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The investment required is more than US\$16.5 million annually for about two years. The Government recognizes that the cost of inaction will be far greater and will have a disproportionate impact on the poor and risk leaving many behind.

Coming into the TES, Jamaica is in a unique position having undertaken several assessments on its education system in the last two years producing several reports, including the Reform of Education in Jamaica 2021 report, to strategically guide its transformation, all of which were underpinned by extensive island wide stakeholder engagement including with youth. The TES national consultations engaged over 900 teachers in six online sessions that, when reviewed against the recommendations of the previous consultations, resulted in the following commitments under each of the five thematic action tracks. *The Government of Jamaica is cognizant of the fact that education cannot wait, and that as a country we must act now! “Every Child Can Learn, Every Child Must Learn.”*

Under Track 1: Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools, the Government of Jamaica will focus on:

- Prioritizing early childhood education and development to ensure equal and equitable start for all children.
- Advocating for, and implementing, interactional pedagogical methods and approaches in which the instructional core is a collaborative interaction involving flexible teachers, engaged students, active parents, and a dynamically relevant curriculum.
- Scaling up holistic education to support the holistic development of all children and youth – focusing on education beyond the curriculum, that fosters character development and positive behaviour, socio-emotional learning and positive cultural norms paying due attention to gender inequality and ensuring participation of children in sports, the arts, and service to develop teamwork and leadership skills.
- Incorporating STEAM (Science, Technology, Education, Arts/Annuals and Mathematics) curricula at all levels of the education system to create a technologically driven and knowledge-based education system.¹
- Improving focus and resources to address students with special needs and children with disabilities, including equipping more schools island wide with specially trained and/or sensitized teachers, as well as having in place accessible buildings and infrastructure, and available communication and assistive technologies.
- Developing and implementing robust real-time data management systems across the sector to allow for better measurement and tracking of progress on learning outcomes and facilitate increased data driven decision-making.
- Engaging parents, guardians and caregivers as key partners and building their capacity to better understand the pivotal role of parental involvement in education.
- Creating an enabling environment to better understand the potential of each student, all of whom are uniquely talented – ensuring that students are supported to create learning goals that are consistent with their interests, learning styles and future aspirations, towards ensuring that no child is left behind.

¹ Annuals – Jamaica will ensure that the shifts in its curriculum also consider the country's unique history.

- Creating and maintaining child-friendly environments to ensure that all children feel safe at school and are free from exposure to corporal punishment by school staff.
- Improving the overall safety of the school environment.

Under Track 2: Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development, the Government of Jamaica will focus on:

- Developing and implementing a public education campaign on the importance of education from early childhood and continuing through one's entire life.
- Teaching at least one life skill to all students before they leave the secondary education system.
- Eliminating by 2030, unattached youth or NEETs², and providing them with dynamic opportunities for education and learning to support their transitioning to a productive life.
- Creating the enabling policy framework and institutions and updating/revising curricula as needed to support and foster innovative lifelong learning opportunities for all, with special emphasis on children and persons with disabilities.

Under Track 3: Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession, the Government of Jamaica will focus on:

- Creating diverse opportunities for teachers to improve their educational levels so that Jamaica has more teachers that hold university degrees and teacher certification and continue to pursue structured professional development pathways.
- Continuing incentives and support for the development of comprehensive policies for teachers and teaching personnel, thereby improving teachers' motivation and retention.
- Improving pupil-teacher ratios in schools in which they are presently too high.
- Supporting and providing teachers with the requisite resources and enabling environments to better utilize constructive theory, enquiry-based learning, reflective student-centred practice, and collaborative learning approaches based on positive student-teacher relationships in classrooms to improve the engagement of students and, consequently, learning outcomes.
- Fully engaging teachers and educators in decision making processes at the school and national levels.

Under Track 4: Digital learning and transformation, the Government of Jamaica will focus on:

- Ensuring higher levels of connectivity within schools and communities in both urban and rural areas to enable learning opportunities for all, significantly reducing the digital divide and internet poverty, including the gender divide and fully incorporating children with disabilities.
- Continuing to invest in the further expansion of the country's national digital infrastructure and accelerating the digitization of all schools in both urban and rural areas.
- Integrating information and communication technologies in education and practice for teachers and students.

Under Track 5: Financing of education, the Government of Jamaica will focus on:

- Reducing inequalities between rural and urban schools, including in human, technological, instructional, infrastructural, accessible and amenity resources.
- Improving spending efficiency in the education sector and focusing on increasing spending on those areas that support effective learning such as teacher professional development and access to learning resources.
- Ensuring that public expenditure on education is progressive, aligned with national objectives and the SDGs, and leaves no one behind, and that more resources are dedicated to pre-primary education level compared to the secondary and tertiary levels.

This statement reaffirms Jamaica's commitment to achieve SDG #4 and reflects the shared vision and consensus of all stakeholders including education administrators and experts, teachers, students, youth, academia, the private sector, civil society and our development partners, *"to transform and reimagine our Education System to enable all Jamaicans to fulfil their potential and contribute to Jamaica's development in the 21st century, in which no one is left behind"*.

² Neither in employment nor in education and training