



# Joint Programme 2023 Annual Progress Report

## Building Resilience & Ending Vulnerabilities in Small Island Developing States

### Cover page

**UNCT/MCO:** Jamaica

**Reporting Period:** 1 January - 31 December 2023

**JP title:** Building Resilience & Ending Vulnerabilities in Small Island Developing States

**Thematic SDG Areas:** Digital transformation; Decent jobs & universal social protection;

**Gender Marker:** Gender-sensitive (for example, the JP acknowledged and aimed to address gender to enhance the policy/programme, such as undertaking gender analysis to ensure policies/programmes do no harm)

**Engine Room Activities:** Shift in policy and regulatory frameworks;

**Total estimated expenditures:** USD \$579,728.05

**Total estimated commitments** (including expenditures): \$717,820.43

## Executive Summary

The extensive work to modernize Jamaica's Social Protection System, improving its response to exogenous shocks under the JP was launched in March 2022. UNICEF, WFP and UN Women have been strengthening the institutional capacity of the government and stakeholders to better manage economic, social, environmental, and other natural hazard risks, through evidence generation, the development of protocols and enhanced operating procedures to support increased coverage and coordination of key vulnerable groups; and the optimization of systems that support service delivery, especially in emergencies. This body of work aligns with the countries ongoing initiatives toward achieving the SDG's and National Development Plan- Vision 2030, for which the JP has contributed to:

i. Strengthening the national disaster risk reduction strategy and reduce risk exposure of the most vulnerable, especially through gender-responsive service delivery. The JP:

a. 2022

i. Developed and delivered training to approximately 41 government technocrats in the use of modern assessment tools, especially for emergencies.

ii. Digitized targeting processes used by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security for the National Household Damage Impact Needs Assessment, to enable quick decision making in emergency situations.

b. 2023

i. Completed a Gender Aware Beneficiary Assessment (GABA) examining and strengthening service delivery to persons registered under the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH)

ii. Completed a review of current payment modalities and developed Operating Procedures/Protocols to support expansion and increased collection of benefits programmed for Persons with Disabilities.

iii. Trained approximately 50 persons (32 persons with disabilities) from the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities and key Non-Government Organizations in Advocacy and Disability Inclusion, supporting the Social Protection System's alignment, and deepening of the institutionalization of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

ii. Promoting greater efficiency in the delivery of benefits and financial inclusion with the ability to scale up in times of crisis. The JP:

a. 2022

i. Completed research assessing the design of cash programmes and digitization options directed to women, men, and the elderly.

ii. Trained 11 key officers across the Government and NGOs in data collection and analysis using an interactive social assistance dashboard introduced through the Joint Programme.

iii. Delivered shock-responsive payment disbursement via a pilot Cash Transfer initiative to 17,942 vulnerable persons who are not beneficiaries of an existing social assistance programmes.

b. 2023

i. Trained 25 enumerators assigned to the MLSS on data collection tools and digital payments scoping for supporting beneficiary intake and registration, especially for persons affected by hazards and shocks.

iii. Embracing a systematic approach to data and information management across the sector, the JP

a. 2023.

i. Developed a framework for the GOJ, with protocols and a strategy for an Integrated Beneficiary Registry and Social Registry, promoting horizontal expansion and database interoperability across programmes, especially in emergencies.

ii. Commenced an 18-months technical work with the JCPD to strengthen service quality for families with children and persons with disabilities through an enhanced Management Information System.

## Annual Progress

### Overall progress against 3 key results in 2023:

Strengthening institutional capacity based on protocols and fast identification of people facing socio-economic and environmental impacts. The JP:

- Developed a Requirements Document for Financial Service Providers to support more efficient, effective, and safe payment modalities for social transfers by the MLSS.
- Developed protocols and Standard Procedures for the PIOJ for an Integrated Beneficiary Registry, promoting broader coverage and access to social assistance among target populations.
- Signed an MOU with the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD) to strengthen the quality of services for PwD's and develop child-sensitive, shock responsive social protection.
- Completed a Gender Aware Beneficiary Assessment (GABA) to examine service delivery to women and men registered under the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH).
- Completed a review of current payment modalities and developed Protocols to support expansion and increased collection of benefits programmed for PwD's.
- Trained 50 key government technocrats in Advocacy and Disability Inclusion, in alignment with the Convention on the Rights of PwD's using a Disability Advocacy Toolkit.

These achievements support the promotion of equitable access, strengthening the national disaster risk reduction strategy through tools, protocols capacity building and manuals on emergency SP and fostering the reduction of risk exposure for the most vulnerable.

More efficient and safe payment processes to quickly, efficiently, and transparently scale up in times of crisis. The JP has:

- Completed research on improving digital payment systems promoting gender and age dynamics in the design of future digital payments. The findings provided the government with analysis on the digital financial ecosystem for improved social protection delivery and rapid scale-ups in emergencies and were disseminated by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) during the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Social Security in November 2023.
- Completed a study on the effectiveness of current payment modalities used by within the SPS for PwD's and developed Operating Protocols for tailored payment delivery mechanisms to support the work of the national council for PwD's.
- Trained 11 technocrats in Data Collection and Analysis using an interactive social assistance dashboard.
- Piloted a vertically expanded cash transfer initiative to 17,942 vulnerable persons who are not recipients of social assistance across 8,874 households.
- Trained 25 staff from the MLSS and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) in shock preparedness and response and fostered peer-to-peer innovative strategies for linking social protection to disaster risk management.
- Trained 25 enumerators (16 females and 9 males) on data collection using the KoboCollect application, integrating digital tools in the national routine business processes for sustainability and ownership.

This work has been key to Jamaica's National Financial Inclusion Strategy, promoting efficiency, financial inclusion, and resilience against shocks, in keeping with the country's progressive targets under SDG 1.

Integrate information systems used by social protection agencies to support an increased coverage and coordination. The JP has:

- Secured additional financing through the Government of Canada to enhance the MLSS and JCPD's ICT, improving planning and response to PwD's, especially in covariate shocks.
- Developed a framework for an Integrated Beneficiary Registry toward promoting broader coverage, access to social assistance and interoperability of social registries.
- Completed information system assessment and mapping of SPP, including a business process review of existing SOPs to support increased coverage and coordination of interventions.

The JP has promulgated a systematic approach to data and information management across the sector. The integration of current systems us

## **Main Challenges, adjustments and lessons:**

### **Constraints**

- The lingering effects of COVID-19 on the operational functions of key stakeholders contribute to delays in implementation, specifically with respect to data needed to examine key policy issues which inform programmatic improvements.
- Slow response of the legislature to adopting bold policy changes, including laws which seek to protect women's economic rights and revamping the 1886 Poor Relief Act which govern Jamaica's social welfare system. The delays in these policy amendments impede the scaling-up and sustainability of social protection programmes for existing and newly identified vulnerable groups.
- Scamming and fraudulent transactions contribute to a level of hesitancy in the adoption of electronic transaction instruments which promote financial inclusion as part of Jamaica's National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS).
- Limited protocols to support data sharing among social protection agents at the national and sub-national level, contributing to targeting inefficiencies, a lack of coordination, and errors of exclusion in the planning and distribution of resources.
- Despite strong coordination among UN agencies and an active Oversight Steering Committee, the Government has experienced challenges in the formalization of a cash agreement to support the delivery of a pilot to test alternate digital payment systems to support additional vulnerable households.

### **Adjustments**

- The Joint Programme required an extension to the overall project implementation timeline to accommodate deliberations within the Government pertaining to the pilot and testing of new payment modalities.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Many of the proposed changes to the national social protection system requires legislative reforms. For example, Jamaica will need to amend its 1886 Poor Relief Law by fast-tracking the National Assistance Bill which is designed to cover many aspects of social assistance to vulnerable groups and ensure that provisions are enshrined in law.
- Issues such as the need to improve financial literacy, lack of formal identification documents, consumer protection, and the rural poor and gender inequality require concurrent attention while seeking to advance social policy around financial inclusion.
- UN joint programs can yield tangible results. Integrated program approach helped addressing cross-cutting issues, making cash-based payment systems more effective. There are also increased opportunities for technical knowledge sharing.
- Strengthening management information systems (MIS), and modernizing payment delivery mechanisms, case management, and referral systems are sustainable streams to demonstrate systemic change.
- Accelerating digital transformation is vital to improving access and the quality-of-service provision, particularly during shocks. The Joint Programme created an avenue for other programmes/sectors of the Government who rely on paper-based management and processes for record keeping and administration, with adequate funding, to accelerate digitizing and strengthening the national CCT.
- The recommendation to establish a Social Protection Sector International Development Partners Working Group based on the current Project Oversight Steering Committee has the potential to help address inefficiencies in service delivery at sub-national level.

## **Priority Cross-cutting Issues**

### **Cross-cutting results/issues**

## **Gender Marker and activities undertook for gender equality**

The JP is Gender-sensitive (for example, the JP acknowledged and aimed to address gender to enhance the policy/programme, such as undertaking gender analysis to ensure policies/programmes do no harm). Evidence, data collection and analysis (e.g. gender assessments of programmes; policy briefs, costing for scale-up of social services);

## **SDG Transitions Acceleration**

The JP has been working to accelerate multiple SDGs, in support of adaptable, inclusive shock responsive services given the interlink between social protection, poverty, zero hunger, and reducing the impacts of natural hazards. The activities under the JP which seeks to modernize shock responsive social protection contributes to the country's progressive realisation of achievements under SDG Goals 1, 2, 5, 10, and 13, with an emphasis on SDG 1, 5, and 10.

- SDG 5 (Gender Equality): More than two-fifths (44.2%) of Jamaican households are headed by women, with 55.8 per cent being headed by men. Female-headed households have a higher vulnerability to poverty, with 58.2% (no man, no children) and 66.7 per cent (with children) in the poorest quintile compared to 34.1 per cent of male-headed households (no woman, no children), and 20.1per cent (with children). Almost sixty per cent (57.9%) of female-headed households are food insecure. Just over two-thirds (36.2%) of female headed households reported their main livelihood was a reliable source of income, with 61.5 per cent reporting income vulnerability. The JP conducted an analysis on gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities, providing data and information from the Gender Gap Analysis and an Experience Survey of Beneficiary registered on the national Cash Transfer Programme-The Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education. The issues encompass a wide range of challenges, including lower labour force participation, the gender wage gap, female-headed households, informal employment, gender-based violence, maternity and childcare support, and economic vulnerability of female-headed households and elderly women. This body of work has identified policy and service-delivery barriers to the empowerment and income security of approximately 300,000 households headed by women and provided at least four key recommendations to the Government for adoption, in shaping the inclusivity and effectiveness of its social safety net, these include:

- o Supporting women working in informal employment and who are unemployed.
- o Improving laws which seek to protect women's economic rights.
- o The co-opting of women's social labour to ensure the effectiveness of PATH.
- o Incorporating the achievement of gender equality within the programme objective.

- SDG 1 ((No Poverty) According to the most recent Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (2019) an estimated 65.8 per cent of households in need of social assistance are not registered. Among the reasons include lack of awareness, challenges meeting prescribed household-based eligibility criteria and limited programme parameters to respond to shocks. The JP has been supporting the Government in the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems by enhancing targeting mechanisms at scale and response to larger and sudden onset shocks; developing and expanding the capacity of existing information systems that allow for determining vulnerability and exposure to shocks; and enhancing payment processes promoting the adoption of more efficient, effective, safe and accessible modalities toward strengthening the national disaster risk reduction strategy. These actions coupled with modern diagnostic tools and frameworks for determining vulnerability and exposure to shocks are helping to deliver comprehensive, inclusive protection against life-course vulnerabilities.

- SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) Examining policy options, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies. The JP has been strengthening the capacity of the PIOJ and the MLSS to respond to narrowing inequalities between women and men, by proxying household welfare or need during emergencies; and to quickly identify people in need and to expand social protection programmes to enhance targeting criteria. The JP ha also prepared a Concept Note to support the Government in undertaking future vulnerability research to identify people who may be in need of support.

## Annual Reporting on Results

### Exit strategy, scaling, sustainability and next steps

1. As a successor coordination mechanism to the SDG Joint Programme Steering Committee, which was convened across the lifespan of the SDG Joint Programme “Modernizing the Social Protection System in Jamaica” from 2022-24, consideration is advanced for the establishment of a standing International Development Partners-Jamaica Social Protection Coordination Group. The Group will work together to support Government of Jamaica priorities to strengthen the social protection system through provision of technical assistance and support to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and coordination among key development actors. It is anticipated that the working group will contribute to: Enhancing alignment of social protection system support generated through shared information; improving effectiveness and efficiency of support to the social protection sector through enhanced coordination and alignment to national priorities; and enhancing synergy between international development partners, development sectors, international development partners and government.

2. The JP, having secured additional financing, commenced work to give targeted focus to building the Social Protection System’s capacity to plan for and respond to the needs of Persons with Disabilities. Technical support will continue over the next 15 months to digitize the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities, making its National Registry and other functions interoperable with other state and non-state agencies, closing the gap in the number of persons with disabilities who are not registered or certified, thus limited, or unaware of critical services.

3. The JP has prepared a Concept Note to support the Government of Jamaica in undertaking future vulnerability research to identify people who may need support owing to their specific vulnerabilities, level of poverty, climate risks or other specific issues. This work along with the Integrated Beneficiary Social Registry will continue to help improve coordination, avoid duplication, combat fraud, improve efficiencies and ease the transition of beneficiaries between schemes as circumstances change, thereby ensuring continuation of services as needed.

4. The JP set important foundations for the development of broader knowledge based on digital technology, data visualization and digital platforms and their use in social protection. This includes groundwork for the development of a government-owned end-to-end digital platform, which can be used to accelerate assistance to vulnerable people affected by shocks/hazards, reducing the assistance time from six months to six weeks. Additionally, it also set the basis for integration of new payment modalities in standard processes.

### Measuring and reporting on impact

The Joint Programme has served as a catalyst to advance shock responsive social protection in Jamaica and contribute to a more responsive, and inclusive society where no one is left behind. This work has supported the leveraging of resources through a Canadian Government Global Initiative Project, of which approximately US\$120,000 was secured to support the optimization of the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities’ Management Information System, as part of the broader objective of Modernizing the Social Protection System. This project will extend the scope of the Joint Programme beyond the project life cycle and improve data systems linked to the national registry of Persons with Disabilities to accelerate disability medical verification, case management and referral, registration, and certification of PWD's. The Council’s Information System is being enhanced to support digitization of health and social assistance records and operational procedures to improve access and services for persons with disabilities, with technical support and coordination provided through the Joint Programme.

## **Overview of progress toward Financial Instrument(s)**

### **Completed transactions**

# Strategic Partnerships, Documents and Communications

## Multi-stakeholder engagement

### Stakeholder groups you closely partner with, as part of your JP approach

National Government;

### Brief description of the nature of engagement. Outline the main outcomes and achievements resulting from the partnerships.

The United Nations agencies, UNICEF, WFP and UN Women has been working very closely with the Government of Jamaica and particularly the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Planning Institute of Jamaica to operationalize and implement the SDG Joint Programme, ensuring systematic involvement of all stakeholders in the conceptualizing of its technical work. The JP aligns with the mandate, collaborative and comparative advantages and partnerships of each stakeholder and leverages existing programmes and expertise towards modernizing Jamaica's social protection system.

The Joint Programme has supported the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) to successfully develop a framework to expand the social protection system to better respond to exogenous shocks and contribute more pointedly to supporting the most vulnerable in the society, leaving no one behind and planning for those furthest behind. Through the Project Oversight Committee monthly meetings have increased the collaborative partnership between the MLSS, PIOJ and International Development Partners; Social Workers across the island have increased capacity to improve the shock responsiveness of social interventions, and the parameters of payment modalities are increasingly agile in their design and response to beneficiaries. Altogether, this national dialogue builds on and complements other initiatives being undertaken in social protection and strengthens the partnerships between the Government and development partners.

### How did the JP facilitate collaboration with diverse stakeholders

## Financial leverage

### Financial resources leveraged

The Joint Programme has served as a catalyst to advance shock responsive social protection in Jamaica and contribute to a more responsive, and inclusive society where no one is left behind. This work has supported the leveraging of resources through a Canadian Government Global Initiative Project, of which approximately US\$120,000 was secured to support the optimization of the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities' Management Information System, as part of the broader objective of Modernizing the Social Protection System. This project will extend the scope of the Joint Programme beyond the project life cycle and improve data systems linked to the national registry of Persons with Disabilities to accelerate disability medical verification, case



management and referral, registration, and certification of PWD's. The Council's Information System is being enhanced to support digitization of health and social assistance records and operational procedures to improve access and services for persons with disabilities, with technical support and coordination provided through the Joint Programme.

#### Donor and Strategic events attended by JP in 2022

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| JP steering committee/<br>programme board meeting | Strategic partners/ donors event |
| Yes, in 2023                                      | Yes, in 2023                     |

**Explanation if you have not held any key meeting/events for the above question.**

N/A

#### JP contribution to SDG Financing

|   |  |  |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| Drafted a bill, strategy, and/or approved a law increasing the fiscal space for the policy in focus | Produced financing, costing, diagnostic and feasibility analyses as a basis to invest or increase spending on the SDGs | Improved efficiency (cost savings) in the management of programmes/schemes | Improved effectiveness (value for money; i.e. social impact of \$1 spent) of spending | Drafted policies/regulatory frameworks or developed tools to incentivize private sector investment on the SDGs | Structured new financial instruments (public, private or blended) to leverage additional funding |
| No  | No   | Yes  | No  | No   | No   |

#### Briefly explain how and in which area your JP contributed to enhancing SDG financing

The Joint Programme improved the Public Assistance Division within the MLSS's efficiency for beneficiary intake and registration through the improved data collection and analysis using an interactive social assistance dashboard and vulnerability scorecard. The JP supported the digitalization of the Jamaica Household Damage Impact and Needs Assessment (JHDINA) form, a tool that seeks to enable quick decision making as a unified instrument to be used by multiple agencies engaged in disaster response to households affected by shocks. Digital tablets used by the MLSS were preloaded with the JHDINA form utilizing the Kobo Toolbox platform. The Toolbox platform is an open-source tool that seeks to enable humanitarian response with high quality data collection tools. Forty-one (41) technical staff were trained in the use of the tool and to date 1,500 clients have been registered using this digital tool.

Additional training and capacity building interventions have focused on data visualization tools and techniques, notably through utilization of Microsoft Power BI and fundamentals of Microsoft Excel (as a basis for using Power BI). These training exercises have focused on the Social Security and Planning, Research, and Monitoring Units within MLSS.

### Focus on LNOB cross cutting principles

|              |                           |       |                                    |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Human Rights | Persons with disabilities | Youth | Environmental and social standards |
| Yes          | Yes                       | No    | No                                 |

### Provide any other comments or descriptions on how your JP contributed to cross-cutting issues and principles.

The JP is based on the principle that social protection strategies and shock- and gender- responsive social protection must be viewed through a human rights lens, making gender-responsive social protection a response to meeting human rights obligations and guaranteeing that those furthest behind are considered first along the development pathway in line with the “leaving no one behind” (LNOB) principle. In keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, the country’s national development plan – Vision 2030 Jamaica, and importantly Jamaica’s National Social Protection Strategy, the JP has developed a Country Action Plan for Shock-Responsive Social Protection and completed a Gender Aware Beneficiary Assessment.

The GABA addresses frontally the fact that Women in Jamaica lag behind due to social and cultural norms which impact their opportunities in life. The GABA highlighted invisible gender-based inequalities that block the realization of women’s economic rights based on practices of occupational segregation, undervaluation of the occupations predominated by women; and the wage penalties on women not actively engaged in the workforce. Poverty disproportionately affects those living in rural and peri-urban areas in female-headed households and in families with children with disabilities. This body of work has identified policy and service-delivery barriers to the empowerment and income security of approximately 300,000 households headed by women and provided at least four key recommendations to the Government for adoption, in shaping the inclusivity and effectiveness of its social safety net, these include: Supporting women working in informal employment and who are unemployed; Improving laws which seek to protect women’s economic rights; Co-opting of women’s social labour to ensure the effectiveness of PATH; Incorporating the achievement of gender equality within the programme objective. More broadly however, the Country Action Plan for Shock-Responsive Social Protection which was developed through a consultative process covers institutional arrangements, financing, data, and information management, targeting and enrolment, implementation & delivery, and monitoring & learning. The plan seeks to, inter alia, ensure ministries, departments and partner agencies foster wider collaboration and information sharing through the use of established DRM social protection mechanisms to execute effective shock responsive social protection by 2030; Improve human and physical resources (physical/tools/work conditions) among stakeholder entities to ensure effective shock responsive social protection by 2030; establish a sub-national disaster fund that will finance shock responsive social protection during the response phase of disaster by 2027; and develop and implement a program for raising awareness of citizens to insurance and other risk transfer measure. Through this work the JP has elevated the plight of marginalized and vulnerable groups, at risk of being left behind as they are confronted with a series of important risks. Leaving no one behind matters on all development fronts as this represents a violation of human rights, with poverty and inequality representing wasted human and productive potential. The Action Plan is to be reviewed by MLSS and ODPEM to engage on any potential areas of collaboration and technical support required beyond the Joint Programme.

## Beneficiaries

### Number of beneficiaries

414651

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| Percentage (%) of women benefited among the total number | Percentage (%) of children & youth (0-24 years of age) benefited among the total number | Percentage (%) of older persons (age 60 and above) benefited among the total number | Percentage (%) of persons with disabilities benefited among the total number |
|--|---|---|--|

|    |    |      |    |
|----|----|------|----|
| 95 | 37 | 20.2 | 15 |
|----|----|------|----|

**Please briefly explain how people benefited from the joint programme**

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) is the premiere agent of the Government responsible for national development through the provision of efficient and effective labour and social security services within the context of a globalized economy. A core area of focus for the MLSS is the effective management of social protection programmes including those for groups with special needs, to include households below the poverty line and persons with disabilities. The SDG JP is coordinated through the MLSS under three major programmes developed to respond to, plan for, and seek to improve services, especially for Persons with Disabilities, the poor and most vulnerable. This includes Jamaica's flagship social protection programme - the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) which is the largest social assistance programme in the country registering approximately 350,000 persons; the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities with 46,709 persons registered and the Public Assistance Division designed to provide temporary relief and support to all citizens. The JP's collaborative work to strengthen the institutional capacity of these agencies has aided in narrowing inequalities in support of adaptable, inclusive shock responsive services, leaving no one behind. This is being achieved through tailored protocols, piloting more efficient, effective and safe payment processes with an emphasis on accessibility, and faster identification of people facing acute/socio-economic and environmental impacts and has directly impacted 151 key public officials and service providers; 17,942 individuals who are not in receipt of routine social protection; and indirectly contribute to supporting enhanced services and strengthening human capital accumulation of 396,709 or 14% of Jamaica's population registered under the Social Protection System.

**Did your JP support the localization of SDGs by moving SDG actions to the local level and enhancing abilities of local and regional governments to promote the SDGs?**

No;

**Provide information of how your JP supported localization of the SDGs as outlined above:**

N/A

## Communications

### Voices from the field

Director, Social Protection & Gender at the Planning Institute of Jamaica, Collette Robinson notes that “The thrust of the project remains relevant to the direction and trajectory of planning in the area of social protection, and it is anticipated that the work of ongoing reforms to create a responsive SP system will definitely benefit from this modernization project. Several key aspects of institutional improvements have been highlighted and are in the main aligned both with our national goals and global agendas”. Project Oversight Committee Meeting, March 2022

Pearnel Charles Jnr, Minister of Labour and Social Security “The geographic position of the small island developing states within our region makes our Caribbean countries particularly vulnerable to climatic events. The threat is compounded by socio-economic realities, and in some instances, lack of information, that often force many of our most vulnerable population to establish their homes in river courses and other flood prone areas and engage in survival practices that progressively endanger their lives and livelihoods and ultimately increase our collective vulnerability to disaster. The effective Social Protection policies being supported under the SDG Joint Programme do more than offer poverty reduction strategies: they implement policies and measures that diminish people’s exposure to risks and enhance their capacity to manage economic and social risks, including climate-related and other environmental vulnerabilities.” Remarks during Shock Responsive Social Protection Training, August 2023

Dr. Richard Ameyia, United Nations Resident Coordinator ad interim. “Already, the [Joint] Programme is responding to Jamaica’s national development priorities in disaster management and social protection. The training of technical teams further optimizes Government’s capacity to consistently reach its most vulnerable citizens especially in times of crises and disaster. The JP has been enhancing payment processes within Jamaica’s social protection system, making them more efficient, effective, and accessible; strengthening institutional capacity for evidence-based emergency expansion of social protection programmes for the most vulnerable; ensuring that Information-systems used by the Social Protection systems are well integrated to support increased coverage and coordination. We are also working to close gender gaps on the policy and legislative frameworks of the social protection system and strengthening the responsiveness of social protection service delivery – in a way that leaves no one behind.” Remarks during Shock Responsive Social Protection Training, August 2023

Ambassador, Marianne Van Steen “The European Union reiterates its commitment to raising awareness on the living conditions of persons with disabilities, highlighting the challenges they encounter in everyday life as we assist with providing tools and resources to improve their lives” Memorandum of Signing Ceremony – Modernizing the Social Protection system for Persons with Disabilities., May 25, 2023.

### Declaration

We hereby confirm that the information provided in this update is duly reviewed and approved by the RC and all PUNOs involved in the Joint Programme.