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120 Youth Ready for the Workforce

The future of 120 youth from the communities of Tawes Meadows, March Pen and Whitfield Town is now brighter since their participation in a youth workforce project being implemented by the JSIF under the Alternative livelihoods and Skills development subcomponent of the Inner-City Basic Services project (ICBSP). These three communities are typical of other inner city communities of Jamaica with high levels of unemployed youth, many with no skills, no academic qualifications nor the capital required to start their own business.

JSIF's Social Development Manager, Mrs. Mona Sue-Ho explained that "this project reflects JSIF's commitment to address the matter of youth unemployment which is a national concern." Participants aged 16-24 years of are engaged in activities utilizing the AGANAR methodology which utilizes soccer and other team sports to help youths find jobs, learn entrepreneurial skills, or re-enter the formal education system. Sue-Ho further noted that "many of the participants have received certification from HEART NTA and City and Guilds which brings the added possibility for matriculation into the formal education

system. They also gained experience through internships at various companies organised by the youth for development network. The project has helped participants to transform lessons and intellectual skills developed through sports, into marketable job skills that can either help them find a job or start their own business."

Proud Island Grill food service employee Alicia Henry spoke on her new job reflecting that, "the project is nice... working is good and I thank god for the opportunity to work because if it wasn't for the project most of us would be unemployed. Being able to work now is helping me in a lot of ways. I'm sending my son to school and being independent. I no longer have to depend on anyone for anything."

Rushcek Gordon an apprentice in the maintenance department at Restaurant Associates Limited expressed his happiness at participating in the programme: "The training is beneficial because we were integrated with other communities and no one was watching the other person. The training motivates us to try to aim bigger. It gives you a start in life. It's a big push. Everyone wants a little help right now and trust me, I grabbed on to my chance. I really appreciate the opportunity a whole lot. It taught me a lot of self- respect and the programme disciplines you. You are taught the right way to go about things. You know how to function in working world."

The wider community has also benefitted from the JSIF programme as a train the trainer workshop in AGANAR methodology was conducted for the community representatives. An alumni network has been established aimed at increasing the participant's ability to make the transition to successful job placement and incorporates job placement, business involvement, school integration and quarterly workshops with youth in the communities to share experiences and

learn about new activities. Programme participants “gave back” during training, volunteering on and assisting in the completion of community projects.

Trainees, JSIF and other stakeholders all have a vested interest in the success of this programme.

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