

JSIF Investing in Community Development through Education

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Abstract: *In 1996, some of the first projects funded by the JSIF were school infrastructure projects. Through partnership with the Ministry of Education the Fund targeted small scale projects that resulted in basic schools being upgraded to meet the minimum requirements for operation. Since then, the Fund has completed sub-projects for more than 284 such basic schools. Combined with work on primary schools and all-age schools, the Fund has completed infrastructure work on more than 591 schools across the island at a cost of more than J\$1.8 billion.*

This article builds on previously published work regarding the nature of social investments funds and the role that the Jamaica Social Investment Fund has played in contributing to sustainable development in Jamaica. The article also highlights the significant contributions made through projects funded by the European Union's Poverty Reduction Programme (EU-PRP), and the Caribbean Development Bank's (CDB) Basic Needs Trust Fund and the Community Integrated Project (CIP). Results from summary reports, interviews, and surveys are presented to support JSIF's contribution. Among the social impacts are: increased sense of community, enhanced sense of security for teachers and students, reduction in student absenteeism, and an environment conducive to learning.

Keywords: *Jamaica, Jamaica Social Investment Fund, Education, School Climate, School Size, Built Environment*

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1996, some of the first projects funded by the JSIF were school infrastructure projects (Mitchell, 2016a). The primary reason for this was that many of the schools located in the communities served by JSIF were too ill-equipped and grossly underfunded to independently undertake the rehabilitative work required to keep them in operation. So, in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Fund targeted small scale projects that resulted in basic schools being upgraded to meet the minimum requirements for operation. Since then, the Fund has completed sub-projects for more than 284 such basic schools. Combined with work on primary schools and all-age schools, the Fund has completed infrastructure work on more than 591 schools across the island at a cost of more than J\$1.8 billion (JSIF, 2016a).

This article builds on previously published work regarding the nature of social investments funds and the role that the Jamaica Social Investment Fund has played in contributing to sustainable development in Jamaica (Mitchell, 2016a). As indicated previously, more than 70% of the communities served by the Fund fall into quintiles 1 and 2 of the Planning Institute of Jamaica's (PIOJ's) poverty index. This is a "Consumption Based Approach, which refers to the ability of the residents to provide for their basic needs" (JSIF, 2012a, p. 5), with one being the lowest and 5 being the highest. The article continues to highlight the significant contribution that JSIF has made to the education sector in Jamaica through projects funded by the European Union's Poverty Reduction Programme (EU-PRP), and the Caribbean Development Bank's (CDB) Basic Needs Trust Fund and the Community Integrated Project (CIP). Results from summary reports, interviews, and surveys are presented to support the contribution that JSIF makes to these underserved communities.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Investment Fund

As a social investment fund (SIF), the JSIF was established in 1996 as part of the GoJ's National Poverty Eradication Programme. Since that time it has implemented social and economic infrastructure, and provided social services and organizational strengthening. They have focused on ten broad sectors for development, including: Education, Agriculture and Tourism, Health, Security, Water and Sanitation, Transportation and Access, Training and Certification, Community Governance, Disaster Vulnerability Reduction, and Technical Assistance to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (Mitchell, 2016a).

Historically, SIFs are characterized by rapid disbursement, institutional efficiency and a demand-driven approach (Wurgaft, 1995). However, since the JSIF has become a permanent SIF of over 20 years, the processes have been adjusted to conform to the GOJ's procurement guidelines which lengthens the time from the community's application for assistance, to the project being approved, and funds disbursed after approval. However, it does not

diminish the necessity of the JSIF, but validates that the work accomplished by the Fund is so integral to the survival of these communities that are volatile and need the urgent assistance that can be provided until a more permanent solution can be found.

Investing in educational infrastructure, and more recently in skills training, accomplishes the goal of inclusiveness and ensuring access to basic services for the poor. Table 1 below summarizes data from the Denbigh Survey that was conducted at Jamaica's largest annual agricultural show held in August 2016. The results indicate that schools are the most frequently mentioned responses, followed by roads which improve the travel experience.

Table 1: JSIF Project Activities

Project activities	Percent of responses	Percent of cases
Schools	18.6% (75)	67.6%
Roads	13.4% (54)	48.6%
Water supply	5.7% (23)	20.7%
Health centre	8.7% (35)	31.5%
Tourism	7.7% (31)	27.9%
Agriculture	15.8% (64)	57.7%
Community clean-ups	14.6% (59)	53.2%
Summer camps	5.4% (22)	19.8%
GSAT classes	4.2% (17)	15.3%
Don't know	1.7% (7)	6.3%
Other	4.2% (17)	15.3%
Total	100% (404)	364%

The JSIF has a varied menu of project activities which responds to both the infrastructural as well as the social capital development needs of the poor. Over the years, the project menu has expanded in response to national priorities, environmental imperatives, donor guidelines, socio-economic trends, and more. Notwithstanding this, the organization has become predominantly known for the infrastructural activities. This is corroborated by the findings of Table 1 which reveal that more than two-thirds of the respondents (67.6%) were aware that the JSIF invests in educational facilities. This is noteworthy given that the education portfolio constitutes a significant proportion of investment project activities (JSIF, 2016b, p. 7). Some reports estimate more than 50% of the total expenditure goes to education-related projects.

School Size, Built Environment, and School Climate

As rural poverty continues to be more severe than urban poverty, it follows that most of the Fund's school infrastructure activities are concentrated in the rural communities. Research shows that for rural schools, size matters much more than in urban schools as there is a significant advantage for the students from poor communities to learn in small classes (Howley, 1994). Decades of research continues to reinforce the positive effects of small schools on academic achievement. For example small school sizes have been found to be positively associated with "attitudes and satisfaction, extracurricular participation, attachment to school, and attendance" (p. 1). However, with regards to school size and academic achievement, there has been a consistent negative relationship demonstrated through research. "All else held equal, small schools have evident advantages for achievement, at least among disadvantaged students (Friedkin & Necochea, 1988; Huang & Howley, 1993)" (p. 1). Some experts even suggest that the maximum size of a school should be 400 students (Cotton, 1996, 2001; Howley, 1994). However, in Jamaica, much of JSIF's work is aimed at rehabilitating dilapidated structures, expanding schools, and in a few cases building entirely new schools. The sizes vary, but the infrastructure is always necessary for the members of the community – the teachers, the students, the parents, and the wider community which may use the facilities for social events (ITAD, 2002; JSIF, 2012a; JSIF, 2012b; JSIF, 2016b; PCMU, 2004).

As much of JSIF's projects have involved children at the early childhood level in the basic schools, the design of the space, the security of the space, and also the equipment provided, especially playground equipment is also of importance to not only provide access to education, but more importantly to provide opportunities for physical and psychological safety, and enhance motor development. Research by practitioners confirms a strong relationship between the built environment of the school and students' academic achievement and social competence at school, particularly contributing to a reduction in absenteeism among students. This is particularly so for young children who spend a lot of time engaged with the equipment in the space, more than they do interacting with their peers or adult teachers at school (David & Simon Weinstein, 1987). So, chairs, blackboards, partitions, learning aids, and the like have to be considered in light of how they will enhance the learning experience for the students.

Jamaica has a long sporting history and has produced many Olympic athletes, including the famed Usain Bolt (Mitchell, 2015a). Like Bolt, many children begin their sporting career on a rural playfield running races or

playing cricket. “Pines (1973), for example, found that children who were allowed to roam, explore, play with interesting materials, climb, and move were more competent in the intellectual and social skills required in the classroom and school yard than children who had been restricted with pens and gates” (David & Simon Weinstein, 1987, p. 9). To this end, teachers have significant influence over the development of the student’s physical competence in sports (Mitchell, Elias, & Branche, 2015). However, the inclusion of playfields and playareas in JSIF’s infrastructure projects for schools reflects an awareness that schools are more than just structures erected, but that they structures have an intended purpose to give opportunities to citizens of Jamaica from every socio-economic level.

The very first psychosocial conflict that individuals must resolve is on of *Trust versus Mistrust* (Erikson in Mitchell, Elias, & Branche, 2015). “In stimulating, yet safe environments children can experience the risk taking process of “doing, failing, redoing, and succeeding” which are necessary for growth” (David & Simon Weinstein, 1987, p. 10). However, when away from home and from their primary caregiver’s watchful eyes, a child’s sense of security is heightened by perimeter fencing of the school compound. In Jamaica, we hear stories on the news of criminals running through school yards to escape the police, or in the rural areas, animals wander onto the school grounds making young children fearful and placing them at risk for injury (JSIF, 2012a; JSIF, 2012b; PCMU, 2004). JSIF’s commitment to the physical security of the schools by providing fencing is a recognition of the fact that “Unless children feel secure they will not explore their environments (Little & Ryan, 1978), and such exploration is crucial to cognitive, emotional, and motor development” (David & Simon Weinstein, 1987, p. 10).

Further research on the built environments of schools has revealed that the physical layout of the facilities can communicate intended or unintended symbolic messages to the community about the values of those who control the setting (Proshansky & Wolfe, in David & Simon Weinstein, 1987). For example, “the construction of elaborate open-space schools in ghetto areas was intended not only to bring about quality education, a direct effect but also to foster the development of a more positive self-image” (David & Simon Weinstein, 1987, p. 6). Through the CBC process, much of these unintended consequences are avoided when the community is allowed to collaborate on the project design and implementation process. High levels of satisfaction are generally reported (BRAC Consultants, 2015). However, where there are instances of dissatisfaction, it can be traced to poor communication and a lack of community involvement. For example, one of the complaints that have been received from communities where the projects were not well received is that the residents were not included in the design. For example, at the Chepstowe and Moore Town Basic Schools, the residents felt that the partitions should have been sliding doors rather than concrete walls to facilitate the building being opened up into a single hall that would hold community social events (PCMU, 2004, p. 20).

Justification for this Study

With the primary aim of investing in community development, and understanding that the people drive development, the Fund is aware that their investment is facilitating an increased sense of community among residents, enhancing citizenship empowerment and facilitating collaboration and strengths through the requisite community contributions. From the initial appraisal process, to the interim reports and final assessment, the Fund records data and evaluates the project to ensure that challenges are addressed promptly and that best practices can be applied to future projects. Therefore, this study attempts to understand the impact of JSIF’s investment in the education sector for the last two decades through the infrastructure implemented, as well as the social impact on the communities.

III. METHODOLOGY

Community Selection

JSIF’s projects are community driven for the Basic Needs Trust Fund, the Community Integrated Project, and the Poverty Reduction Programs. This helps to foster togetherness in the community, strengthening that sense of community. This is facilitated through an initial appraisal process and follow-up consultations during which the community members must agree on their primary problems and also commit to working together to provide the community contribution which is generally 5% of the cost of the project. Also, the project management committee (PMC) must work for the life of the project to liaise with JSIF and the contractor to ensure that the work is according to the agreed design (Mitchell, 2016a; PCMU, 2004, p. 20).

Although the projects are demand driven, there are instances where the Ministry of Education’s priority focus will inform the community selection. Such as special project cycles to expand schools and get them off the shift system as was the case for cycle 7 of the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF). From highlights shared at the Denbigh Agricultural Show, BNTF 7 saw the rehabilitation, expansion, or construction of more than 6 schools across 3 Parishes. They are: Old Harbour Primary, Browns Hall Primary, Mandeville Primary, Christiana Moravian Primary, Discovery Bay All Age, and Ocho Rios Primary (JSIF, 2016d). The overall infrastructure investment

resulted in “3 shift school transitions to all day school; 80% of students in exam grades (grades 4 and 6) transition to full day school; and, 40% overall reduction in student teacher ratio in schools (JSIF, 2016d). Although not the focus of this article, it is noteworthy that more than 35,000 teachers, students, and other community members have directly and indirectly benefitted from the numeracy and literacy skills programs, youth violence prevention programs, teacher training in special education, and sanitation and hygiene training funded by the BNTF (JSIF, 2016d).

Poverty Reduction Programme (PRP) schools are also demand driven, as previously stated. In a newspaper supplement in May 2016, the PRP Team reported on their progress for PRP3 as follows:

The PRP remains committed to education and creating a wholesome environment in which children can learn in comfort. Through the EU funding for PRP III over JMD 380 million dollars has been spent on 6 basic schools 2 infant schools, 5 primary and 2 all age schools in the parishes the project serves. Additionally the PRP considers the maintenance of the facilities to be of great importance and as such the schools which benefitted from PRP assistance were exposed to maintenance training to ensure sustainability of the schools.

The project now in its 4th phase, will continue to take steps in promoting education and creating a better learning environment for the children of Jamaica (Jamaica Observer, 2016, p. 2).

IV. RESULTS

The results of JSIF’s investment in the education sector have been compiled across more than a decade’s worth of appraisal reports, evaluation reports, interviews, surveys, and a documentary. The following section presents the successes and the challenges that the JSIF has encountered in fulfilling its mandate to provide access to basic services for the most vulnerable.

Appraisal Reports

The appraisal reports conducted at the initial stage of each project provides much description of the physical conditions of the site and also the extent of the work to be undertaken. They also reveal that communities apply to JSIF for much more than assistance related to the schools, but resource constraints force the Fund to limit their assistance in order to assist as many client communities as possible. Common to the appraisal reports assessed, the conditions of the schools require urgent assistance in many areas. For example, at the Austin Primary School, the project officer identified the following needs for a facility estimated to be about 30 years old:

1. The absence of an adequate perimeter fence for the school.
2. Leaking Roof.
3. The absence of appropriate partitions to separate classes.
4. Lack of adequate space to accommodate School Library.

They also indicated that 89 of the 124 students are on the Government’s welfare programme, PATH (JSIF, 2012a, p. 4). It is the only school within 5 – 8 km radius of the community. Stakeholders expect to see an “Improvement in the quality and security of the learning and working environment students (boys and girls) and staff (men and women) by November 2013” (p. 10) by providing the following,

1. Perimeter Fencing
2. two (2) Removable Partitions for classrooms
3. Repairs to roof of existing building
4. Rehabilitation of old/abandoned building attached to the school for use as a library (p. 5).

In the case of the Harewood Primary School (JSIF, 2012b), the project officer identified the following needs for a facility estimated to be about 50 years old:

1. Absence of perimeter Fence
2. Inadequate kitchen and food storage facilities
3. Inadequate classroom partitions
4. Absence of staff room and sick bay
5. Incomplete multipurpose Court
6. Dilapidated Chalkboards (p. 5).

They also indicated that at least 41 students (representing 41% of the community) from Harewood are enrolled on PATH (JSIF, 2012b, p.7). There is only one similar school within a 5 – 8 km radius of the community. Stakeholders expect to see an “Improved physical environment that will enhance the safety of students and delivery of curriculum at the Harewood Primary School by December 2013” (p. 11) by providing the following,

1. Perimeter Fencing
2. Completion of multipurpose Court
3. Provision of Chalkboards

4. Provision of classroom partitions
5. Rehabilitation of kitchen and provision of equipment
6. Rehabilitation of staff room and sick bay (p. 6).

Information extracted from an evaluation of projects completed up to 2004 revealed also that some basic schools like Moore Town, Chepstowe, and Canaan Heights were in need of buildings to be constructed, furniture and equipment. In the case of Chepstowe, the school had been operating from an unfinished concrete structure at the Principal's house, which happened to be at the edge of a river, making it extremely dangerous for the children. There was limited space and sanitary conveniences were poor. If the school closed, the nearest alternative would be 4 km away (PCMU, 2004, p. 27).

The Education Sector Report (JSIF, 2016, pp. 4-6)

JSIF undertakes a number of different kinds of interventions to address the needs of the educational institutions that are assisted. If there is an infrastructure component (construction, rehabilitation or expansion of the facility) then furniture (for the classrooms, offices and sick bay) and equipment (for the kitchen or playground) is usually supplied to ensure that the assistance is as holistic as possible. Some interventions focus on specific needs where JSIF will provide a sanitation solution only or supply furniture/equipment or install fencing as is needed. Table 2A and Table 2B provide details from the project database supplied by Michelle Moses (JSIF, 2016b) on the type of school project completed by the Fund.

Table 2A: Details of Completed Infrastructure and Equipping Sub Projects 1996 – February 2015

Type of Institution	Number of Sub Projects	JSIF Approved Cost (JMD\$)
Basic/Infant Schools	284	1,864,475,824.00
Primary Schools / with Infant Departments	77	494,515,095.00
All Age/Junior High	96	615,486,816.00
TOTAL	457	2,974,477,735.00

Table 2B: Infrastructure and Equipping Sub Projects Which Have Had Funding Approved and Are In Implementation

Number of Sub Projects	Type of Intervention	JSIF Approved Cost (JMD\$)
3	Basic Schools - Construction, Rehabilitation, Expansion of Educational institution and Provision of Equipment and Fencing as needed	193.6 Million
2	All Age Schools - Construction, Rehabilitation, Expansion of Educational institution and Provision of Equipment and Fencing as needed	92.9 Million
6	Primary Schools - Construction, Rehabilitation, Expansion of Educational institution and Provision of Equipment and Fencing as needed	282.6 Million
21	SUB TOTAL	569 Million
1	Construction of an auditorium	37.6 Million
2	All Age Schools - Provision of Sanitation only	
1	Primary School with Infant Department - Provision of Sanitation only	
3	Primary Schools - Provision of Sanitation only	
6	SUB TOTAL	30.4 Million
28	GRAND TOTAL	637 Million

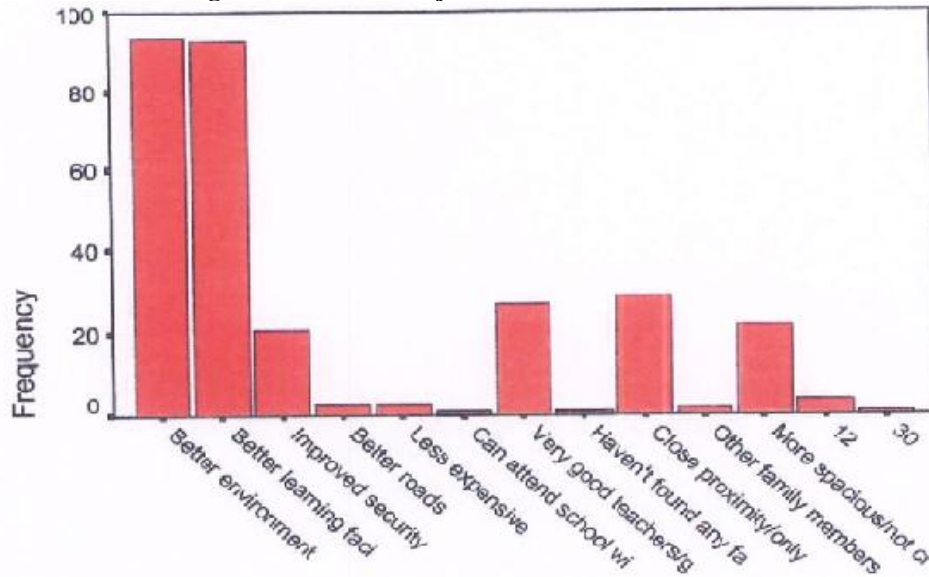
Evaluation Reports

Most reports indicate that where projects have been completed, that the facilities are being used for their intended purpose. For example, CIP impacts revealed the following results for use: Schools- 78% satisfaction; Water-73%; Roads-63%. They also reported that the facilities were accessible to a wide range of intended beneficiaries. (BRAC Consultants, 2016, slide 29).

In terms of meeting the intended outcome of reduced absenteeism or improve academic achievements, the results were positive. For example, an evaluation conducted by ITAD (2002) hypothesized that JSIF's investment in Basic Schools would improve the quality of learning for 3-5 year olds and reduce fluctuations in attendance. A

survey conducted among the households where students resided, indicated that 62% were influenced by JSIF’s work to continue to send their child to the school or to start sending their child to the school if the child had attended another school (See Figure 1 below). 38% of those surveyed said that it had not influenced their decision. When those who said they were influenced by JSIF’s work were further explored, 31% said that it was because it provided a better learning environment. The same per cent said that it was because of the better learning facilities available (p. 66).

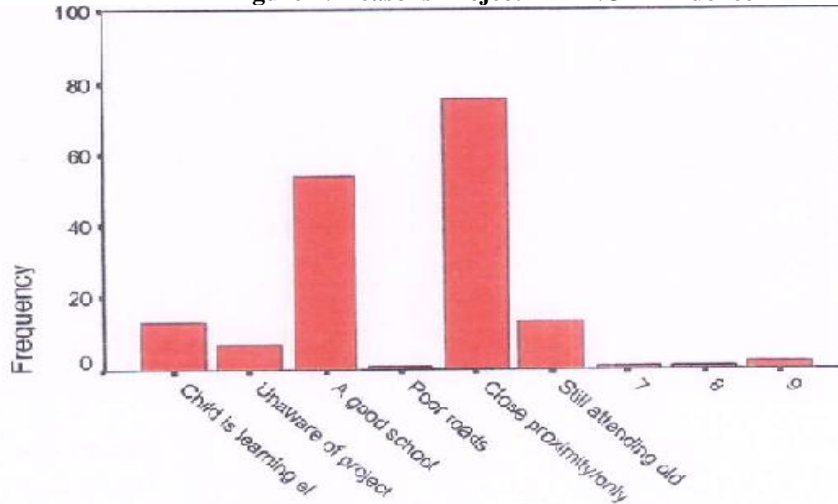
Figure 1: Reasons Project Influenced Decision



Copyright ITAD 2002, p. 66

Among the reasons given by those who thought that JSIF’s work had not influenced their decision, was that the school was the only one in their community, or was the closest to their home (45%). A situation supported by appraisal reports previously reported (JSIF, 2012a, 2012b). Others reported that the school was already a good school (32%). Figure 2 below shows additional results.

Figure 2: Reasons Project DID NOT Influence



Decision

Copyright ITAD 2002, p. 66

In terms of the impact on school performance, less than 25% of the sample believed that the project had influenced academic performance. For three-fifths (60%) of these, improvements were observed in better overall performance or general improvement in performance. Thirty percent of the sample actually attributed the higher grades that their children received to the improvements made by JSIF at the school.

When parents and teachers were asked to provide some indicators of improved performance, they reported “improved concentration and comfort for pupils, and where extensions have taken place, that they can now cater to

more pupils” (p. 67). The hypothesized relationship between JSIF’s investment being inversely correlated with absenteeism was proven. Table 4 below shows the actual reduction in absenteeism and the percentage reduction over time.

Table 4: Absenteeism

Pupils	Pre	Post	Change
Girls	22%	15%	-7%
Boys	25%	20%	-5%

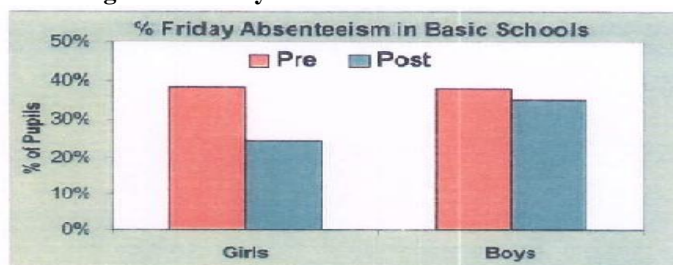
Copyright ITAD, 2002, p. 67.

The researchers noted that girls saw the largest reduction in absenteeism, falling from 22% to 15%, while boys noted a smaller reduction from 25% to 20%. What was noteworthy was the reduction reported in Friday absenteeism. Historically, Jamaican children of low socio-economic status are known to be absent from school to assist their parents in economic enterprise for the family. However, as a result of JSIF’s improvements to the school community, and by extension generating economic activity in the community, fewer students had to assist their parents in the usual economic enterprise (See Figure 3 below). This may be due to additional income going to the households in the community as persons are employed in various capacities as the project is in implementation. Some of the positions for which employment is available are:

1. Masons
2. Plumbers
3. Cooks and water carriers
4. Sweepers
5. Shovel men
6. Flag men – direct traffic
7. Electricians
8. Administrative/secretarial workers
9. Truckers
10. Cleaners (PCMU, 2004, p. 29).

The income earned by the household may contribute to the decrease in absenteeism reflected in the data. The results also showed that girls benefitted more from the investment than boys. Friday absenteeism for girls moved from 38% to 24% (-14%), while boys moved down from 38% to 35% (-3%) (ITAD, *ibid*).

Figure 3: Friday Absenteeism in Basic Schools.



Copyright ITAD, 2002, p. 68

Research has validated the increasing sense of community and citizen participation that has resulted from JSIF’s investment in basic schools. Appraisal reports and evaluation reports indicate that residents hold social events on the grounds or in the buildings when they are not being used for school. Consequently, the community has to negotiate the types of events that can be held on school property as well as the fees that can be charged for rental of each area. When buildings were constructed without the input of the residents, and walls used instead of sliding doors to partition classrooms, making it difficult to convert the structure into an auditorium, the community residents expressed dissatisfaction with the project, as happened at Moore Town basic school (PCMU, 2004). This is an important income generating feature that cannot be minimized in considering the contribution that JSIF makes to strengthening the local sense of community. The school buildings become an alternative community centre for hosting community meetings and other activities that bring the community together. This strengthens the sense of community for all stakeholders in the community, and strengthens citizen participation by reinforcing their individual responsibility to care for the facilities (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001, 2007; Mitchell, 2016a; Mitchell, 2016b).

Impact of Primary and All-Age schools

“It was hypothesized that JSIF investments in rehabilitating primary schools would lead to:

- Increased rates of attendance

- Improved rates of performance and advancement from primary to secondary school” (p. 68).

Table 5: Reasons why JSIF Project HAS influenced decisions to send child to this school

Reason	Percent
Better environment	35.8
Better facilities	25.8
School is fully equipped with learning aid	10.0
Will greatly benefit students	6.7
Other	5.0
School now looks attractive	4.2
School is running better now	3.3
Child is learning	2.5
Increased opportunities	1.7
Now have confidence in school	1.7
Find no fault	1.7
Other family members did well there	0.8
Canteen provides hot meal	0.8
Total	100.0

Copyright ITAD, 2002, p. 69

Table 6: Reasons why JSIF Project has NOT influenced [why parents send their child] to this school

Reason	Percent
Close proximity/only school in the area	67.3
Was always a good school	15.3
That’s my choice	9.2
Unaware of project	3.1
Other children are going there	2.0
Involvement in gang warfare	1.0
Attending school before project	1.0
Don’t know	1.0
Total	100.0

Copyright ITAD, 2002, p. 70

Documentary Interviews

In October 2016, the JSIF launched its 20th Anniversary year of celebrations. As part of this exercise, a documentary (JSIF, 2016c) was prepared which included highlights of significant contributions that the Fund had made to various sectors over the last two decades. The following section summarizes two interviews that were conducted with the Principal and a long standing teacher at two flagship school projects – the Discovery Bay All-Age School and the Giddy Hall All-Age School. The interviews were conducted by Doreth Montague, Electronic Content Coordinator with the JSIF. The documentary reported the significant contribution that the Fund has made to the education sector over the last two decades: 591 schools at \$4.5 billion (mins. 3.35-3.40). The interview conducted with June Clarke, Principal of the Discovery Bay All-Age School in St. Ann (3.56- 5.10 mins.) revealed that the school received a classroom block which allowed the school to be taken off the shift system. This was a significant milestone in the school’s history as some teachers have been there for close to 19 years, and this is the first time that they have now been able to be at school in a single shift. Consequently, school now operates during the standard hours of 8am to 2:30pm. The project was as a result of the partnership between the JSIF, the MOE, and the CDB through the BNTF. A second interview corroborated the report of the first, and previous positive evaluation reports. Ms. Jennifer Rodney, a teacher at the Giddy Hall All-Age School in St. Elizabeth (6.34 - 7:39 mins.). She had once been a student at the school and now had the opportunity to teach at her alma mater. She recalled that she had once used the pit toilets that had existed before the new flush system installed by the JSIF. Her story revealed the challenges that the current students had faced in walking through heavy showers of rain to get to the toilets. She expressed the concern of all the teachers and the parents too for the babies who had to use the pit toilets. The fear was that they would accidentally into one of the pits. She thanked the JSIF for the new toilets which had been provided.

The documentary also highlighted that additional projects had been approved for the upcoming year. These school related projects included upgraded sanitation facilities funded by the PetroCaribe Development Fund in 10 rural primary and all-age schools. This would possibly benefit 2009 persons, and 1 urban all age school.

Ultimately, these infrastructure improvements would contribute to the provision of a more conducive learning environment, benefitting 4000 teachers and students at the early childhood level (13:52 -14:47 mins.).

V. DISCUSSION

As JSIF has continued to partner with the GOJ through the NPEP, the CRP and other programmes, it has been committed to increasing access to high quality education, particularly early childhood education among the poor (ITAD, 2002; JSIF, 2016b; JSIF, 2016c; PCMU, 2004). This is particularly significant as in many communities served by JSIF; the school is the only one of its kind within a 5km to 8km radius of the community. To this end, JSIF has built and/or furnished a number of schools across the island, many of which are operated by churches. “The new building constructed by JSIF is more conducive to learning and is of course much more comfortable and secure for both teachers and students alike. The school is also accessible to more students” (PCMU, 2004, p. 27). This not only provides the safe learning environment necessary for physical safety, but it also contributes to the psychological safety. Children need this psychological safety if they are to grow, to explore their world, and most importantly to develop their physical competencies. Teachers can capitalize on this sense of security by encouraging students to explore the grounds and develop their environmental awareness.

The results presented have been extracted from previous evaluation reports, current reports on the education sector, interviews conducted by community beneficiaries in celebration of JSIF’s 20th Anniversary (JSIF, 2016c), and a survey administered at the Denbigh Agricultural show. Results indicate that the communities that receive assistance with their schools benefit in tangible as well as intangible ways. The school becomes a better facility conducive to learning. The safety of the teachers and students are improved from the perimeter fencing and rehabilitative work done on various units. The sense of community is strengthened through community contributions as communities have to agree on the identified need as well as what they can contribute to the project’s implementation and maintenance (PCMU, pp. 27-28). Employment is also provided as a result of the school-related projects conducted within communities, which may contribute to the reduction in student absenteeism, particularly for the girls (ITAD, 2002; PCMU, 2004). The results can be validated across communities and over the last two decades as JSIF provides services in underserved communities.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There is one major limitation to this study and it relates to the time permitted for the study. With only six months to evaluate 20 years of impact of an organization the size of the JSIF, and with the extensive portfolio for community development that it manages, it meant that much of the research had to be conducted through reviews of pre-existing reports. This meant that less time could be spent in the field collecting additional data from communities that may have had even more satisfying experiences with the Fund because of the investment made in their school. However, this limitation does not invalidate the findings of this study as the study sites early reports as well as the most current reports available.

Future research could engage a team of researchers to conduct surveys and interviews amongst a larger number of the more than 591 school communities that have been impacted by the Fund. Future studies could use previously used instruments to create a longitudinal study of JSIF communities. Additionally, a team of researchers will be able to assess a greater number of variables in a shorter time period than a lone researcher with the same compressed time period.

Funding

This study was funded by the JSIF during its 20th anniversary celebrations to assess the impact that the organization has made in the underserved communities of Jamaica. The information will be used to ascertain the way forward for the organization, as well as harness the best practices that have been honed from two decades of investing in communities for development.

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