



## The voluntary sector in Jamaica: Youth issues highlighted By Winsome Wilkins

Youth development is vital element of overall development in any country, and Jamaica is no exception. Young people are key stakeholders in the implementation of new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, having a vested interest in its success now and in the longer run. There are numerous crucial areas where youth and development activities are strongly linked, and one of those areas has been the voluntarism and youth nexus—already strong and growing fast.

The voluntary sector has been an important segment of the Jamaican social landscape since the early 1900s and has contributed greatly to social and community development. The sector, notably the section affiliated with the Council of Voluntary Social Services (CVSS), comprises over 110 agencies offering services across the spectrum of social development disciplines. The disciplines include child rights, education, health, gender and community development and environmental education.

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The Council of Voluntary Social Services has been in existence for 75 years and has demonstrated its capacity in project management in such areas as technical assistance for the child sector; training for early childhood institutions; support of the project to scale up HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment; institutional strengthening, capacity building and management training for non-governmental organizations and other activities.

In trying to broaden the existing evidence-base on youth development, the Council of Voluntary Social Services organized in Kingston, Jamaica, in October 2015 a Community Research Day, the third in a row, making it an important tradition. The theme of the Research Day was "Youth Making a Contribution through Change and Development." The sessions explored the impact of voluntary organizations on the development of youth in communities and, by extension, country, along the lines of involvement in agriculture, leadership and volunteerism. The forum provided the opportunity to gather primary research data from youths and young adults (14-35 years old) in the thematic areas of youth volunteerism and youth in agriculture; which will be used as a catalyst in future programme planning and delivery. The presentations and other activities sought to determine the why's or why not's of youth involvement in different areas of emphasis and how young people can be motivated to be more involved and contribute to community and national development.

#### *Why the Research Day?*

While the contribution to nation-building has been significant, specifically youth volunteerism/leadership, youth in agriculture and the voluntary sector's role in strengthening family and parenting, evidence is lacking to substantiate the impact on

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national development. Research on the sector itself has been sparse, and much of the work conducted has been in the nature of programme evaluation, specifically looking at the achievements of specific project targets, institutional reviews and other aspects of project management. Not much research evidence exists to support trends, employment benefit, training, personal development and other aspects of programme outcomes. The voluntary sector is, therefore, lacking in empirical data to better inform and support its planning process.

In light of the Council's 75th anniversary and in keeping with the theme for the year "Treasuring our traditions, innovating for the future," the Council decided to embark on a Research Day Project, as the sector seeks to build on evidence-based practice, which has become necessary as it is the demanded benchmark for service delivery. Benchmarking has shaped the national development discourse and has demanded that more specific sector-focused research be

conducted to identify the needs and demands of the entities and population/clients being served.

According to the CVSS, the way forward calls for capacity-building at all levels of the sector, making it important for planning and development activities to be evidence-based. To that end, the Research Day Workshop for the Voluntary Sector was an important step in initiating an evidence-based approach to the voluntary sector in Jamaica.

#### *How the objectives were chosen*

The theme for the day was "Youth Making a Contribution through Change and Development", with the deliberate objective of gathering and collating primary research data from young adults all across the island, conducted in collaboration with two institutions that train social workers, namely, the University of the West Indies – Social Work Unit and the Portmore Community College-Social Work Unit. As noted earlier, the key objective of the Research Day was to gather information that would be used in programme planning and delivery. As anticipated, sharing this information sector-wide has stimulated interest, explored issues, provided additional avenues for inter-agency collaboration and promoted visibility of the sector.



The goal is to strengthen the capacity of voluntary sector agencies to engage in evidence-based service delivery and planning with four key objectives:

1. To demonstrate the value of evidence-based approaches to service delivery, through guided research resulting in increased awareness among participating private voluntary organizations of the relevance of evidence-based planning; and improvement in the documentary approaches among private-sector voluntary organizations;
2. To improve knowledge of basic research techniques, through participation in guided focus-group sessions resulting in improved knowledge among participating youth groups in basic research techniques - data collection and the collation and distribution of findings.
3. To share the findings from research and evaluation into selected programme areas, including an exhibition to showcase research findings and the outcome of evaluative work.
4. To provide an opportunity for knowledge exchange among voluntary-sector agencies, public and private sectors; share findings from research and evaluation into selected programme areas. The hosting of a research symposium, which would result in increased collaboration among sector players

and increase awareness and willingness to participate in national development.

To set the tone for the discussion, Dr. Ronald Blake, Executive Director of the Jamaica 4-H Clubs, the leading youth affiliate of the Council in Jamaica with over 90 thousand members, did a presentation from a study conducted by 4-H International in partnership with the National 4-H Council and the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, led by Professor Richard M. Lerner of Tufts University.

Other speakers included representatives of CUSO International, which had previously partnered with the Council of Voluntary Social Services to do a mini-research on the "Contributions of CVSS Member Agencies to National Development" and the University of the West Indies.

An additional feature of the Research Day was an exhibition in which twelve agencies: Office of the Children's Advocate, Ministry of Labour and Social Security (PATH), Jamaica 4-H Clubs, Jamaica Agricultural Society, Rise Life Management Services, Abilities Foundation, Child Development Agency, Uniform Groups, Unite for Change the Planning Institute of Jamaica, YMCA and National Parenting Commission, showcased their goods and services in keeping with the thematic areas for the Research Day: Youth Volunteerism/Leadership, Youth in Agriculture.

#### *The major findings of the research*

In response to the question '**Can agriculture and volunteering become more attractive to youth and the general public?**' numerous responses were provided, and they were very positive. They recommended that agri-centres be established in inner cities and town, and that there be more exposure to best practices and

information sharing, emphasizing how volunteerism can enhance job-search prospects and recognition for youth volunteers.

These responses were illuminating, especially when compared with the responses from those who were in the volunteer group. They were asked, "**What can young people do to get more persons to volunteer?**" The responses included the use of social media, more public fora and consultations, engaging powerful persons, and planning special events to build awareness. The medium of music and sports were also powerful tools for volunteer engagement.



According to the full report, it is clear that, although young people feel that others will volunteer, if there were more formal methods of persuasion being used whether by agencies, organizations or government, more persons would become involved in agriculture if they were able to see how it would build their personal capacities/skills/strengths. Important here is the need for public spaces, events, exhibitions and forums, both nationally and at the community level, which shared experiences in agriculture.

The last point made by the agriculture group about "The feeling you get from volunteering,

a sense of fulfilment getting recognition for the work done" echoes the sentiment of the volunteer group, when they emphasized that feeling as a benefit they have experienced from being volunteers.

Challenges facing both groups include lack of resources. For the agricultural group, that would include (mainly) the unavailability of land, lack of any financing, praedial larceny and drought. The ongoing climate change has resulted in more severe droughts and natural disasters. The provisions for irrigation have been inadequate or non-existent in most farming areas.

For the volunteerism group, the following elements have all contributed to the negative approach to volunteerism: persons who have had a negative experience may share that with newcomers and dissuade them; new volunteers are being brought up to believe that compensation should be provided for work done; the general acceptance of the feeling that 'slavery is done'; new volunteers do realize that volunteerism is giving.

In reality, volunteers often have to use their own money to buy the material they need. For them, the benefits from being a volunteer were personal and societal. In terms of the latter, the act of helping others in need was the foremost benefit. In addition, there were unexpected spin-offs that accrue as well as the exposure that they now had working in new environments with new experiences. Participants called for a systematic programme by the government and other agencies such as CVSS to engage in the promotion and recognition of volunteers. They believe that much can be done through the social media. Further, they recommended that the CVSS develop a training manual with guidelines for volunteer engagement for both volunteers and agencies.

### *A way forward*

The events of the day were rewarding, with many issues relating to the way forward for voluntary organizations and youth involvement made clearer. The consciousness of the Council to recognize the weakness in research relating to the contribution of youth through change and development and the need to not only identify these weaknesses but to make a difference.

It is clear that the need exists for awareness to be created about the activities of voluntary organizations and for youths to see the 'blessing' in volunteering. It was noted that many were not volunteers, because they did not know what to do and where to go; for some, it was simply a lack of understanding of the concepts and benefits.

A number of participants expressed the strong desire to volunteer but were constrained because they are unable to afford transportation and the related cost of going out every day to volunteer.

For those who would be interested in farming, the physical resources problems (land, things to grow, lack of finances etc.) posed fundamental challenges, especially for those in urban areas.

In a nutshell, it is obvious, that youth can be an important contributor and a positive force for development when provided with knowledge and opportunities. Bringing young people onboard in the quest for more effective development efforts is part of the solution to both economic and social problems that Jamaica is facing.

## Social welfare for all: the potential of a Social Solidarity Economy

By Yvon Poirier, *Quebec, Canada*

2016 is the first year of the ambitious United Nations plan to achieve sustainable development by 2030. What is striking is the close link of many, if not most, of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals to issues related to social welfare, social justice, human rights, health and education, housing, food and nutrition, in other words to all aspects of human life that are at the core of the ICSW's work.

These issues are also at the core of a Social Solidarity Economy (SSE)—a framework that explores forms of production and exchange that aim to satisfy human needs, build resilience and expand human capabilities through social relations based on varying degrees of cooperation, interaction and solidarity. All over the world, organisations promoting such economic organization are strengthening their efforts in areas such as cooperative housing and community land trusts, local foods systems, health services, financial services, and so on. SSE has many similarities with the historic social economy (cooperatives and mutuels). For the SSE movement, the sense is that this is not enough, and there is a need for a more global approach leading to deeper changes in society, addressing inequality, promoting community participation and solidarity with society at large and not only for the members of the coops and mutuels.

Over the past 20 years in particular, the SSE approach has grown in many countries, both developed and developing. In good part, these initiatives are the result of grassroots

initiatives by people joining their efforts and getting together to satisfy existing needs that neither the State alone nor the market-driven economy can provide for. In the wake of the 2008-2009 financial and economic crises, with their effects still felt even now, this approach has increasingly inspired strategies and activities to fill part of the unmet needs of the population. People need jobs and income to live. In many countries, people initiate SSE for that purpose. SSE has also gained visibility, given its resilience in the financial crisis and the recognition that it provides an alternative to the speculative financial economy.

Many countries have also developed programs, and in some cases passed laws, to support this approach. For example, there was already legal infrastructure, including laws and regulations, for traditional social-economy organizations, such as cooperatives, mutuels and associations. Many of the new initiatives involve other types of organizations, such as non-profit businesses, community supported agriculture, fair trade, etc. In South America, for example, Ecuador and Colombia each passed laws, and even included pertinent provisions in their Constitutions, while national secretariats on a solidarity economy were set up in Brazil and Bolivia.

In May 2013, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) organized the largest United Nations conference on SSE (<http://www.unrisd.org/sse>) in Geneva. Organized in collaboration with the ILO and UN-NGLS, that event led to the publication of a book "Social and Solidarity Economy: Beyond the Fringe" (Utting 2015) and the creation of the [UN Inter-Agency Task Force on SSE](#) in September 2013. The Task Force now has 19 UN Agencies as members and 5 Observers, including my organisation, the [International Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy \(RIPESS\)](#). In

2014, the Task Force published a [Position Paper](#) on the Social and Solidarity Economy and the Challenge of Sustainable Development. The Position paper identifies the potential in eight areas, most of which have a social welfare component:

1. Transitioning from informal economy to decent work;
2. Greening the economy and society;
3. Local economic development;
4. Sustainable cities and human settlements;
5. Women's well-being and empowerment;
6. Food security and smallholder empowerment;
7. Universal health coverage;
8. Transformative finance.

The paper provides many examples of social protection schemes and programmes, including health insurance, as well as the social benefits that derive from moving people from the informal economy to the formal economy.

Besides examples in the paper, other examples can be seen in a paper under preparation by the FAO Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition, on the role of rural organisations in social protection. A webinar was held on last November 25 and can be consulted [here](#). The report will be published soon.

One of the case studies, on ASSEFA in India, was prepared by the author of this article.

**ASSEFA - ASSOCIATION FOR SARVA SEVA FARMS**– Over 11 000 villages, in the states of Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand,

Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh (INDIA) have set up multiple social protection schemes, with women's self-help group (AHG) at the core.

**Crop-Loss Compensation** – The scheme is managed by Mutual Benefit Trusts (MBT, a federation of SHG'S) and is activated when farmers achieve lower yields than an established threshold. To reduce the risk of loss, farmers are trained and provided with agricultural inputs. The progress of the crop growth is monitored regularly and supported by the MBT. A nominal fee is collected from registered farmers accruing to the financial stock of MBTs.

**Cattle-Protection Scheme** – This scheme is run by the Federation of Dairy Cooperatives and compensates farmers who have lost their livestock. Farmers get credit to buy animals and pay a nominal fee (4% of the credit amount), which also pays for the insurance on the animal.

**Wage-Loss Compensation** – This scheme is also run by the MBTs and provides compensation for women who cannot attend their work during the last 3 months of pregnancy. MBTs organise recurring fundraising campaigns every year between September and October on the occasion of the Vinoba (a Gandhi follower) anniversary and Gandhi's birthday. These funds are used to subsidise the scheme. An average of 2500 women benefit from wage-loss compensation: they are paid for travel to public-health clinics, and receive maternity kits and training to take care of the newborn.

Provision of **health services** is another area where SSE-related initiatives have developed in recent years. In Rwanda, 90% of the population have health services covered by a mutual insurance scheme. In Mali, 1070 community health centres provide basic services, work on malaria and HIV-AIDS prevention, with priority given to children and women. In 2014, on the occasion of the

International Cooperative Summit, [An international survey of co-ops and mutuals at work in the health and social care sector](#), research led by Jean-Pierre Girard presented the situation in over 50 countries around the world. In some countries, such forms of assistance are complementary to public services, as in the case, for example, of home-care services for the elderly or people with disabilities. In other countries, SSE organisations manage part of the public service, such as hospitals in Japan (about 25% of hospitals). In other countries, considered less developed, as in Western Africa, they are often the main means for accessing health services.

SSE organisations are very varied in nature. Some are coops and mutuals, some are non-profits and associations, and some are networks at the country or international level. There are networks of researchers. They all have a common approach, which includes the mobilization of community members who govern and manage them; they not only foster solidarity in the community and social cohesion, but also create more resilient communities when disasters, manmade or natural, strike. Some examples:

- In Sierra Leone, in Kailahun district, the hardest hit district in the country, [SEND West Africa](#), a social enterprise development organisation, helped affected members of the community. They assisted orphans and restructured livelihood programs to adjust to the situation. SEND mobilizes the Kailahun Women in the Governance Network (KWIGN) to educate the community through community radio on prevention and care.
- In Tamil Nadu (South India State), 152 villages in the ASSEFA association were affected by heavy rains in

December 2015. Within days, they were able to provide food to 1336 families and are organising to rebuild 130 homes and 2 community schools. They rapidly organised that work with field staff and with financial help (for building materials) from organisations in India, from Italy and from France (long time partners).

The above examples have a common denominator in that they are all grassroots initiatives involving the mobilisation of the community members themselves, in organised structures (varies from country to country depending on their history and culture, and the legal possibilities), to self-provide basic services. However, the role played by the public authorities is also essential. For example, in New South Wales in Australia, where the State Home Care Service has been totally (including staff) transferred to Australia Unity, a 175-year-old mutual, the Government continues to provide funding.

We strongly believe that for achieving the first three of the SDGs (*Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere. Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*), SSE is essential. The recent history of humanity, in particular the past 30-40 years, clearly shows that exclusion and marginalisation are the result of neo-liberal globalisation. In adopting the 2030 Agenda, Governments all over the world agreed to implement those goals. But the mobilisation of citizens, in partnership with States, in the delivery and management of social protection and health services and organising sustainable livelihoods, is essential. Achieving those goals will not come automatically through a "trickle-down" effect of globalisation, and certainly not without reversing the flow of wealth to the 1% or the population who controls 50% of the wealth.

That inequality, which is increasing, is the seed of injustice and violence in the world. It feeds fundamentalism and sectarianism (divisions amongst various communities based on ethnic or religious affiliation) all over the world.

Similar to ICSW, our members are active in a wide range of fields within the general areas of social development, social welfare and social justice. That includes issues in such areas as food and nutrition, welfare and health services, social protection, education and housing, as well as many fields related to economic development, human rights and community participation.

In our [Global Vision](#) declaration, we affirm that a change in the development paradigm has to come about:

*' In SSE, ordinary people play an active role in shaping all of the dimensions of human life: economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental. SSE exists in all sectors of the economy—production, finance, distribution, exchange, consumption and governance. It also aims to transform the social and economic system that includes public, private and other sectors. SSE is not only about the poor, but strives to overcome inequalities, which includes all classes of society. SSE has the ability to take the best practices that exist in our present system (such as efficiency, use of technology and knowledge) and transform them to serve the welfare of the community based on different values and goals'.*

Since the Second World War our world has seen many upheavals, wars, economic crises, dire poverty, uneven development, and the over-exploitation of natural resources beyond the capacity of our planet. As people, we should be ashamed that other human beings still die of malnutrition, the lack of maternity services, and the absence of safe drinking water or decent homes to live in.

Humanity has all the knowledge and capacity to arrange our socio-economic system

differently so as to provide all that is needed for the basic needs of human kind. For the SSE, our contemporary market-driven economy is fundamentally misdirected and geared towards the needs of investors. Contrary to such approach, our philosophy is based on the fundamental needs of the people, embracing a human rights approach, solidarity and peace, and saving Mother Earth for future generations.

A last thought-- a quote from Gandhi:  
"The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed."

***Opinions expressed in the preceding articles are those of the authors and should be equated with the opinions of the ICSW Management Committee.***

## ICSW Board meeting charts new directions for the organization

On 29-30 January, the ICSW Board meeting took place in Dublin, Ireland. During two days of intensive discussions the participants highlighted the activities of ICSW-affiliated organizations at the regional and global



levels, presenting achievements, obstacles encountered and lessons learned.

The 2015 Annual Report, submitted to the Board in advance, summarised activities under six priority areas: empowerment, resilience and social protection; networking and policy innovations in our work; communicating with our stakeholders; on-going global advocacy and socially responsible global governance; regional-level cooperation; policy-dialogues and capacity-development. The Board discussed at length such issues as financial and human resources, budget, membership growth, cooperation with partners and outreach activities.

The President of the North-East Asia Region, Professor Heung Bong Cha, informed the Board about the preparatory process for the Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development, to be convened in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in June 2016 by ICSW

together with its partners -- the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers. The participants paid particular attention to the need to strengthen vertical and horizontal links within the organization, exchanging ideas and best practices. The important role of the ICSW global and regional Newsletters as a medium of communication with members was underscored.

The draft of the new ICSW Global Programme for 2016-2020 was presented to the Board. The document will be thoroughly discussed by the member organizations prior to its adoption by the ICSW General Assembly later this year. The new Global Programme outlines the core functions and objectives of the ICSW in the contemporary world, and spells out available tools. It is noted that the introduction of sustainable universal social-protection-floor policies should become a major agenda item in all advocacy campaigns. ICSW considers social protection not only as one of the best ways to reduce poverty, insecurity and inequality in the world, but also as an effective means for achieving sustainability.



The sessions of the Board were chaired in turn by the outgoing ICSW President Michael Cichon and the President-elect Eva Holmberg-Herrström. The participants cordially thanked Mr. Cichon for his commitment to the organization during the

past four years and his intellectual leadership. Warmly received, the new President, Mrs. Holmberg-Herrström outlined her vision of the existing and new challenges

## The useful resources and links – the find of the month

### **World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2016.**

ILO, Geneva, 2016

The World Employment and Social Outlook released on 19 January 2016 is the ILO's flagship report on world of work issues. Exploring the inter-connected nature of macroeconomic policies on the one hand, and employment and social outcomes on the other, it analyses which policy combinations are most effective in delivering high employment and balanced incomes. The publication also provides readers with the most up-to-date global as well as regional labour market and social indicators.

For more details:

[http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2016/WCMS\\_443480/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2016/WCMS_443480/lang-en/index.htm)

### **A Global Policy Laboratory: Reforming Pensions in Developing and Transition Countries (Research and Policy Brief),** UNRISD, Geneva, 2015

Pension reform has been something of a global policy laboratory over the last three decades. UNRISD research on the drivers of pension reform and the diversity of models and outcomes provides evidence to undermine three of the most unhelpful myths around pension reform, showing that

privatization is not a silver bullet; declared blueprints for reform are not in fact suitable for all country contexts; and policy space can be regained to reform pension systems for the better.

For more details:

[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=2AE50049D2A0EC9AC1257EED0050A438&parentdoctype=brief&netitpath=80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpAuxPages\)/2AE50049D2A0EC9AC1257EED0050A438/\\$file/RPB19-Pensions.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=2AE50049D2A0EC9AC1257EED0050A438&parentdoctype=brief&netitpath=80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpAuxPages)/2AE50049D2A0EC9AC1257EED0050A438/$file/RPB19-Pensions.pdf)

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