

**POVERTY ALLEVIATION,
DISABLED & ELDERLY**

Gender mainstreaming

We are committed to the principle of gender equality. Implicit in that commitment is the need to redress the negative imbalances that our women have suffered. While legislation has addressed some of these concerns, there still remain cultural and societal biases against women which we must proactively strive to eliminate.

Our Pledge

36.1 Gender balance

- Ensure that policy formulation and implementation are gender-sensitive.
- Keep under constant review legislation and policy initiatives designed to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and take action where necessary.
- Prioritize the employment of women in our investment and job-creation drive to redress the imbalance reflected in the fact that the unemployment rate among

women is twice that of men.

36.2 Protection from violence

- Enforce strict measures to eliminate domestic violence, especially against women, and provide adequate support facilities for victims.
- Enact legislation to provide protection against sexual harassment.

A modern, streamlined safety net for the poor

As a society, we cannot ignore the basic needs of those who live in the bowels of poverty.

Our approach will be two-fold: to provide opportunities for those, especially children, who can be lifted out of poverty through education and training and to provide reliable assistance to those whose capacity for productive activity is diminished.

Our Pledge

37.1 Review public assistance programmes

Undertake a comprehensive review of all public assistance programmes to:

- evaluate their impact on poverty alleviation
- ensure that those who can be graduated out of poverty are being optimally assisted in doing so
- ensure that programmed assistance is being delivered to the defined target group.

37.2 Opportunity programmes for adult beneficiaries

Establish programmes for training adult beneficiaries for income earning activity.

37.3 Establish National Assistance Act

Enact a National Assistance Act to govern the administration of public assistance programmes, define the categories of beneficiaries, assign responsibilities for the delivery of benefits and provide systems of accountability.

37.4 Care and shelter for the homeless

- Establish in conjunction with churches and charitable and civic organizations shelters in major towns for homeless persons.
- Include these shelters in the routine programme of public health delivery to ensure proper medical and psychiatric evaluation and treatment.

- Assign social workers to assist those who can be reintegrated with their families or restored to a life of dignity.

Enabling the disabled

It is estimated that there are approximately 165,000 persons in Jamaica with disabilities.

Almost 50% of them experience functional limitations.

The disabled community has demonstrated a strength of will and determination that are an inspiration to all Jamaica. They deserve our support.

Our Pledge

38.1 Removal of impediments

- Enact the National Disability Act and review all other relevant statutes and policy initiatives to remove provisions that discriminate against disabled persons.
- Require all new buildings and facilities accessible to the public to be disabled-friendly.
- Require operators of public passenger vehicles, as a condition of their licence, to provide facilities

or offer special assistance to disabled persons.

38.2 Special facilities for the disabled

- Establish a Rehabilitation Centre for disabled persons at the Cornwall Regional Hospital.
- Collaborate with non-governmental organizations to provide additional facilities for the care, treatment and rehabilitation of severely disabled persons.
- Reserve 5% of places in all public educational institutions, jobs within the public sector and public sector housing solutions for disabled persons who satisfy the normal requirements.

38.3 Empowering the disabled

Strengthen existing programmes such as vocational training and early stimulation for persons with disabilities and support the efforts of the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities

and the Abilities Foundation.

38.3 Early detection of disability

Conduct early detection programmes through schools, health services, children's services, poor relief departments and non-governmental organizations to identify children with disabilities in order to provide treatment and special assistance.

38.4 Protection from violence

Enact legislation to impose special penalties for violence against disabled persons.

Security for the elderly

People worldwide are living longer because of improved access to health care and more effective medication. But, unable to work or find work and without family members who are able to support them, many find themselves in the evening of their days in the darkest of despair.

The care we provide to our elderly is a measure of the moral conscience of our nation.

We recognize this as a crucial policy responsibility.

Our Pledge

39.1 Register of dependent elderly

- Establish a register of dependent elderly with an assessment of their basic needs and what assistance, if any, they are already receiving from any source.
- Expand the PATH programme to include those in need who are not already registered.

- Primary health care programmes will place special emphasis on home visits by community health aides.

39.2 Homes for the Aged

- Refurbish and maintain adequate standards of nutrition and medical care at all public infirmaries and Golden Age Homes.
- Train staff to provide counseling and group therapy and organize productive activity programmes.
- Provide subventions to individuals and community organizations that offer shelter and care for dependent elderly.

Securing the best deal for our pensioners

Retired workers who have to rely on their pensions to survive often find that the pension payments are incapable of meeting even their modest living expenses let alone cope with the additional cost of health care they are likely to need and the ravages of inflation. We owe it to them to ensure that they get the best deal at the time when they need it most.

Our Pledge

40.1 Review National Insurance Scheme to provide greater protection and benefits

- Institute new, secure administrative procedures for the recording of contributions to ensure that they are properly credited to the accounts of the individual contributors.
- Provide annual statements to each contributor indicating the number and value of contributions for that year and to date.

- Increase the prescribed limit of one year within which applications for retirement benefits must be submitted.
- Amend the existing legislation to require that the National Insurance Fund be invested in the best interest of the Fund and not be available for use by the government as it sees fit.
- Require that an actuarial valuation be conducted every two years to determine increases in benefits that can be paid without impairing the integrity of the Fund.

40.2 Funded contributory pensions scheme for the public sector

- Establish a contributory pension scheme for the public sector to replace on a phased basis the existing pension arrangements in which public sector workers are “granted” pensions but have no legal, enforceable entitlement to a

pension and in which increases in pension benefits remain at the benevolence of the government.

- Provide the option for current employees of the public sector to enter the new funded scheme or remain with the existing arrangements.

40.3 Regulation of pension schemes

- Establish a Pensions Commission as an independent regulatory body to oversee the administration of all pension schemes (public and private).
- Make provision for portability to preserve the pension rights of members of any pension scheme and allow for the transfer of these rights when workers change jobs.

Our commitment to the people of Jamaica

The Jamaica Labour Party is ready to govern our country and is qualified to provide a more responsible and experienced leadership; a kinder brand of leadership; a leadership that is confident responsive and accessible; a leadership that can share your dreams and feel your pain.

Much painstaking work has gone into formulating this plan and we have benefited greatly from our ongoing consultations with a wide cross section of Jamaican people. This consultative approach will be the hallmark of our government.

We pledge:

- To bring social, cultural and economic development to benefit all Jamaicans.
- To foster the principles of true democracy.
- To provide equal opportunities for all the people of Jamaica.
- To develop the economic resources of Jamaica.
- To encourage Individual ownership and initiative, subject to Government regulation, where Necessary, for the common good.
- To promote and protect the economic and social well-being of all Jamaicans.
- To foster cooperation among the people regardless of colour, race or creed.
- To instill in the hearts of the people reverence for God, and respect for lawful constituted authority.
- To ensure and protect the constitutional fundamental human rights of each individual.

We ask for your support and your vote, but more than anything else, we ask for your prayers as we prepare to serve you as the next Government of Jamaica.

May God Bless and guide you all.