

NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY

Trends of population growth in Jamaica will be among the important factors determining the quality of life of its citizens. Improved living standards, social stability of the nation, conservation of the natural environment and the stability of our democratic system will in no small measure be influenced by the nature of growth of Jamaica's population. A national population policy is therefore an indispensable component of a long-term programme for the balanced social and economic development of our nation.

2. The longlasting concern for population issues intensified during the past several years. Numerous experts from various bodies of the government, academic institutions, and from public and private organizations, worked together in an inter-agency Population Policy Task Force, which also organized the Jamaica Population Policy Development Conference in June, 1981. These activities culminated in the formulation of a Statement of National Population Policy (Appendix), which has been thoroughly discussed and is hereby being passed to Parliament.

3. Trends of population growth since Independence are proceeding in desirable directions. Yet infant mortality and particularly fertility levels are still higher than in the more developed societies and represent a serious obstacle in our development efforts. In 1980 the average life expectancy at birth was around 70 years and the crude death rate around 7 per thousand. The crude birth rate had declined from a peak of above 40 around 1960 to about 27-28 around 1980. The rate of natural increase thus remains as high as 2% per year, which could have resulted in an increase of over 500,000 population during the 1970s had there been no emigration. Continued emigration has meant that the actual population increase of the 1970s was only about 300,000 and even so over 250,000 Jamaicans remained unemployed or underemployed. The high rates of population growth have also made it more difficult for the government to provide such social services as education and health care in adequate

quantity and quality. Family size has been declining from an average of about 6 children in the 1950s and 1960s to a size of approximately 4 children per woman in the 1970s. Despite this decline in family size a large proportion of families cannot provide adequate facilities for the healthy physical, mental and educational development of their children.

4. Jamaica's 1982 population was about 2.1 million. The future growth of Jamaica's population depends largely on how fertility will change. The forces of modernization are so strong that some continued decline in fertility and average family size seems inevitable.

A slow fertility decline whereby an average of 2 children per woman would be reached by the end of the 20th century would result in a total population in the year 2000 of over 3 million (high projection). A rapid fertility decline whereby the average of 4 children per woman of the late 1970s would be reduced to 2 children by the late 1980s could bring about a population of only 2.5 million in the year 2000 (low projection). These projections assume a decline of emigration, however, if emigration were to be curtailed, population growth would be larger than outlined above.

5. The chances for a significant enhancement of the material and spritual well-being of all Jamaicans for a successful social, economic and political development of our nation will be considerably improved by the attainment of the following basic population policy goals which will seek to:

- a) Achieve a population which will not exceed 3 million by the year 2000.
- b) Promote a continued improvement in the health status of the nation, thus increasing the average life expectancy at birth from its present level of 70 years to around 73 years by the year 2000.

- c) Ensure access to high quality family planning services for all Jamaicans of reproductive age who wish to use them, thus providing conditions for a continued fertility decline from the average of 4 children per woman in the late 1970s to an average of 2 children per woman in the late 1980s, thereby achieving replacement level fertility.
- d) Create sufficient new and additional employment opportunities for the growing population of labour force age through the vigorous development of our economy, thus permitting a reduction in unemployment and underemployment and leading to a reduction in out-migration.
- e) Promote balanced rural, urban and regional development in line with the National Physical Plan and thereby achieving an optimal spatial distribution of the population.
- f) Improve the satisfaction of basic human needs and the quality of life in such areas as housing, nutrition, education and environmental conditions, thus providing favourable conditions for the achievement of all the other population policy goals.

6. The implementation of the national population policy will be a concern of all agencies of the Government of Jamaica. While several population policy measures that are already operative might require revision or strengthening, new measures will be developed in order to achieve the basic population policy goals. Also numerous existing and new social and economic policy measures that have indirect demographic effects will have to be reviewed in order to establish whether their effects are not in conflict with the population policy goals. It will be the responsibility of the designated agency of government, but in particular of

the National Planning Agency, to ensure that all population - sensitive policy measures are supportive of the basic population policy goals.

7. Significant population policy measures and activities directly needed for the implementation of the national population policy are outlined in the Statement (Appendix) and include the following:

- a) The promotion of health, with special attention to maternal and child care and to the neediest in urban and rural areas, by strengthening the network of health facilities of the Ministry of Health and of the private sector.
- b) Ensuring access to a comprehensive system of family planning services to all those who want them under the leadership of the National Family Planning Board.
- c) Monitoring and analysing the economic and social incentives and disincentives of fertility and migration behaviour, in particular by the National Planning Agency, with the objective of preparing policy recommendations for modifying national and sectoral development strategies.
- d) Dissemination and wide publicity of the national population policy in all its various aspects through all possible means, in particular through the communications media and the educational system.
- e) Improvement of the data and information system needed for the implementation and monitoring of the national population policy.
- f) Strengthening of evaluation and research activities relating to the national population policy.

8. Implementation of the national population policy is the responsibility of the entire Government of Jamaica. However, the following agencies will assume specific responsibilities in the process of implementing and monitoring this policy:

- a) the National Planning Agency will ensure the integration of the goals of the national population policy in developing economic and social plans and will monitor the activities of other agencies in matters of population policy;
- b) The National Family Planning Board will:
  - 1) establish and maintain standards for family planning education and clinical services;
  - 2) promote the delivery of these services through its own facilities and those operated by other public and private institutions;
  - 3) monitor and coordinate the activities of other agencies in matters relating to family planning and;
  - 4) act as a central coordinating body for external financial and technical assistance to Jamaican institutions delivering family planning education and clinical services.  
The results would be processed in the established manner between the NPA and the potential donor country or foreign institution.
- c) Research and evaluation activities at the National Planning Agency, the Department of Statistics and the University of the West Indies, relating to Jamaican population and development trends and to programmes aimed at achieving the objectives of the national population policy will be strengthened.

- d) A Population Policy Coordinating Committee has been at work. It is comprised primarily of the heads or senior representatives of the National Planning Agency, National Family Planning Board, the Department of Statistics, the Ministry of Health, the Town Planning Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Registrar General's Office and the University of the West Indies, with consultancy status being given to USAID and UNFPA.

The Major functions of this Committee are:

- 1) to advise the Minister of Finance and Planning and the Minister of Health on population policy matters;
- 2) to monitor the implementation of the population policy and movements of the three main population determinants, fertility, mortality, and migration;
- 3) to ensure consistency in the activities of the different agencies involved in population matters in relation to the stated population goals;
- 4) to ensure that the ongoing Population Policy is in keeping with the stated National Development and Economic Goals;
- 5) to examine and make recommendations re Laws and Acts related to Population Matters;
- 6) to stimulate broad dissemination of information on all aspects of population.

E.P.G. Seaga  
Prime Minister and Minister of  
Finance and Planning.  
June 22, 1983.

C-24-2

Statement of National Population Policy removed  
& classified. Check catalogue to locate