

# The Jeffrey Town Model for Community Development

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## Abstract: **The Jeffrey Town Model for Community Development**

This paper will set out to show how the Jeffrey Town model for community development has been effectively applied to the deep rural community of Jeffrey Town in Jamaica. It will discuss the facets of the farmers association the vehicle that has led the process and driven the change, give a brief outline of the community history and highlight the tangible and intangible result components and the effect they have had on the process. The upgrading of infrastructure, social activities and beautification work have their place and other examples will include the application of ICT through multimedia, community radio and free Wi Fi access linked to the alternative energy used for sustainability and the critical climate change mitigation steps being applied throughout the districts. Special attention will be paid to the investment in the human capital through training in order to be able to now successfully access and use open and distance learning models including those being supported by the Commonwealth of Learning. It will speak to the securing of facilitators willing to help build the capacity of local youth without exploitation so that real empowerment could begin.

Jeffrey Town is a success story validating the modern development assistance programmes whereby communities are empowered and shown how to help themselves, allowed to select their own imperatives and in this case redressing some of those difficulties in the area of environmental management, social issues and maternal health with superb results. This presentation will cite the practical steps and occasions where the integrated approach to development shown in the Jeffrey Town Model is recommended and provide community visitors data to verify that this model; certainly in Jamaica and across the academic world is being expressed as an inspiration for others.

## Background

Jeffery Town is located in the north eastern portion of Jamaica, formerly called Victoria Town and subsequently named after the Jeffrey's family that owned the Salisbury property from as far back as 1838<sup>1</sup>; the other property of note is Decoy. It is fifteen miles in any direction from each of the rural towns, and forty-five miles from the capital Kingston. It is at an elevation of seventeen hundred feet and considered deep rural because of the social infrastructure in place and the quality of the access roads to the village. Jeffrey Town has nine different churches a school building made of containers joined together because the previous building opened February, 1928<sup>1</sup> was destroyed by fire in September 1996.

The community is officially made up of six districts although locally we have made our own divisions so that we have nine within the designated boundaries. In the census of 2011 the population was recorded as 2982, forty seven percent of which is female distributed between eight hundred and seventy seven households however many share dwellings with the number listed as six hundred and thirty seven. The same data source states that unemployment is at 33% of those at working age between 15 and 65; and of those working 42.2% are engaged in agriculture growing ground provisions, cash crops and banana on family owned lands.

The data doesn't speak to the reluctance of young people to go into agriculture, the number of teenage parents in the community and the dearth of students able to matriculate at the end of high school to access further education. If you look past the topical beauty of the location and relatively low crime rate one has to ask what would this community be like without its renown for self reliance and its drive for development. Since 1991 when the Farmers Association formed as a cooperative Jeffrey Town has been seeking ways to redress the lack of investment in a marginalized area in line with its mission statement to "*... harness all available assistance for community development using agriculture as the platform; to sustainably develop its human and physical resources, for the creation of opportunities to include all the residents of Jeffrey Town, especially the youth and women to achieve social and economic stability.*" The association had to lobby first for water in 1993, UNDP LIFE (United Nation Development Programme Local Initiative for the Urban Environment) supplied funds to purchase the pumps, the Member of Parliament provided the pipes and we supplied the volunteer labour to lay 3 miles of 4inch cast iron pipe. The group lobbied for rural electrification for the those not located on the main road in 1998 and a simple thing such as garbage collection took years of agitation: only when the tourist attractions on the coast north coast realized that garbage from the hilltop was degrading their beaches was resource found for a weekly collection service to commence in 2003. The farmers were rearing dairy cows, cocoa and banana until the late nineties but with the change in international trade laws and preferential treatments a tough but honorable way of life changed rapidly and with it the mandate of the association.

The group members embarked on their own research to find viable alternative crops and started the tradition of self assessment firstly of the community and then of ourselves as a group to see how we could best redress the major challenges in front of us: firstly mechanization, irrigation and the environment for the farmers and income generating activities for the under or unemployed and secondly a way to engage and provide opportunities for the youth.

## The Group

The history of the association can be traced back through its minute books of monthly meetings, general meetings and executive meetings, cash books as well as the data at the Companies Office of Jamaica. The association is a group of paying members who live in and around Jeffrey Town, previously led by Lucien Bennett and since 2005, Wordsworth Gordon has been inspirational at the helm; it has had up to seventy members actively involved at any one time in the early years when farming was all, but it now averages twenty five people with more in the category of associates particularly since the launch of the radio in 2008, where membership dues are not collected and secondary benefits may still be available. The group recognized that it needed help to meet its goals and was fortunate enough to be supported again by UNDP LIFE and Canada International Development Agency - CIDA in 2002/3 the first to strengthen and extend the executive to eight and to teach us how to operate in a transparent and sustainable way and the second to draft a business plan and register as a development company limited by guarantee. Thus empowered the members set out to create a model community for themselves looking at all the facets of village life; it was something of a dream and some thought of it as a joke, but it seems to have come to pass.

## The Approach

George Farquhar said that "*necessity is the mother of invention;*" in our case it was misfortune. Our business plan could not be launched as it stood and funding / loan monies to purchase a tractor were not available. We chose not to give up and with support and encouragement a new all encompassing development plan was segmented into four main areas

- Agriculture and the Environment
- A building as a permanent base
- Income generation activities
- Youth engagement

Applications to funding agencies were made for three areas, the idea was to do what we could until we could do what we wanted and although the tasks were categorized fate caused us to deal with them simultaneously, a UNDP project to install portable irrigation on five farms, two small

grants to purchase and convert a container and use it as an office, Inter American Foundation and Jamaica National Building Society Foundation, the conceptualization of the Breadfruit Festival and a project application for 'Community without Borders' with ICT for Development Jamaica. The projects were linked, not in the form of counter funding but as parts of the puzzle that when complete would become the Jeffrey Town Model. The cost of the container et al was prohibitive so we aimed to construct from block and steel on a parcel of donated land as a secure location was needed for the ICT project specifically selected to encourage the younger people to come and join the group.

The Breadfruit Festival has been held annually since 2005 at varying locations around the wider community and has become a house hold name in Jamaica, the hosting of this event and the struggle to build the first part of the JTFA Building brought our group to the notice of other people interested in development and the promise of computers to access the internet and a community radio reignited the volunteer spirit and a process was sent in motion.

The investment in the human capital started here however the recorded data begins in 2007 and is shown as man/days, the number of people engaged in a training activity multiplied by the number of days, broken down in to four focal areas as seen in Fig.1

| Year       | ICT days | radio days | strengthening | environment / disaster | Totals |
|------------|----------|------------|---------------|------------------------|--------|
| 2007 to 8  | 255      | 72         | 80            | 180                    | 587    |
| 2008 to 9  | 110      | 80         | 20            | 48                     | 258    |
| 2009 to 10 | 600      | 110        | 20            | 30                     | 760    |
| 2010 to 11 |          | 126        | 25            | 8                      | 159    |
| 2011 to 12 |          |            | 30            | 175                    | 205    |
| 2012 to 13 |          | 20         | 18            | 60                     | 98     |
|            | 965      | 408        | 193           | 501                    | 2067   |

Fig.1 Chart showing training data for the community since 2007 in man days.

The inset above does not reflect the services of the ICT specialist Peace Corps Volunteer who assisted all who used the multimedia centre on a one to one basis from its opening day in February 2007 to his departure in August 2008. On close inspection you will note a significant amount of ICT training in 2009/10 this is a result of the on line literacy classes offered in conjunction with HEART, the national training agency where the twenty three learners were exposed to basic computer skills and were certified on completion at the grade nine literacy and numeracy levels. The strengthening of the organization itself is ongoing as new members join or parties show interest in community work, the organization facilitates access to courses or programmes and naturally encourages participation. The results here are hard to express, up to 2012 this investment has been largely in a total of ten people and yet we still find real reluctance

from those within this group to offer themselves for leadership. It is possible to say they are satisfied with the status quo, but a question remains as to succession planning.

Prior to the radio our farming and environment training were empirical, a facilitator would be found, usually from the agriculture support services and field days would be organized or demonstration plots set up, one expects it is the same elsewhere, however in Jeffrey Town we took this one step further. Each of the soil retention techniques were written into the activities of the funded projects which enabled the farmers to collectively apply the measures on a series of farms. An example is shown in figure 2.



*Figure 2*

***Training in the correct techniques for contouring on the hillside 2008***

This was then reinforced with power point presentations at the monthly meetings and this served two purposes it allowed us to hone our ICT skills and introduce a new method of training to our community. Construction is a skill that was already present in Jeffrey Town but on the job training in the gabion wall building in late 2008 has reaped real dividends culminating in a 150 cubic yards intervention in the valley shown in figure 3. The state works agency offered advise prior to excavation and then priced the work after completion, not only were they impressed



*Figure 3*

***Community labour building Gabion wall for land Stability 2012 project supported by the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica.***

with the size of the structure, they recognized the impact it and the previous efforts had on preventing isolation for one part of the community. Their estimate in June 2012 suggested the sweat equity in the venture exceeded one million Jamaican dollars. As our community members mastered a skill we moved on, calling back for the "experts" as and when required. Our location and way of life forces us to acknowledge climate change and the environmental training and activities were tailored with that in mind using the holistic approach and tackling one area of obstacle at a time.

Land stability because of the clay based soil and the frequency of landslide during or after excessive rain is the greatest threat after the immediate damage caused by hurricanes. The aim was and still is to redress this risk; training advanced to mitigation measures and with it the activities, tree planting, but fruit varieties so income could be garnered, check dams, water harvesting from roofs and from natural sources, contours, terraces and of course a hybrid alternative energy system for many reasons:

- Sustainability for the environment.
- The costs associated with running a radio, multimedia centre and a bank of freezers.
- Promoting a better way of life.

Not yet mentioned is the radio component of the training. This too was integrated towards our mitigation intentions with the aim of commencing to air our first climate change series December 2009 so that we could have a climate change discussion in Jeffrey Town while the whole world was watching the Copenhagen conference. Our main learning facilitators in this area have been the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and through them, Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) in the persons of Lecturers Patrick Prendergast and Rosamond Brown plus ICT for Development Jamaica. Ours was the inaugural group in the Caribbean to pilot a new method of programme making where members of the wider community along with the relevant professionals were invited to participate in the programme making process along with our youth members thereby creating series' that reflected the true voice of the people. The content answered the questions of the target audience and reflected the main points the "experts" insist are relevant; beautifully combined with both popular music and original drama and aired at the times the target group felt most appropriate.

The first climate change series was an information packed ten part radio production on global warming it related directly to our communities but spoke to all the wider issues of hurricane, flood, drought, conservation, pollution and more. It proved to be the liberating factor, since then we have been able to address some critical needs, HIV/AIDS, Child abuse, Incest, run a vigorous anti-human trafficking campaign and a CXC integrated science syllabus support series for our high school students. Additionally we have run special broadcasts to the farming group for feedback and of course special interest groups to gather comments on relevance and content. We have run listener participation quizzes related to the maternal health series and included an

interactive segment where the community is able to “Ask Nurse”. We are now using text messaging using the computer and a cell phone sim card as an additional interactive tool and data collection system. Using the same formula and largely similar programme style we have created an annual environmental public education and awareness series to highlight and explain the actions being taken in our ongoing climate change mitigation work. In 2012 the training activities of the disaster preparedness team featured in the award winning series supported as part of a project with the Global Environmental Facility, Small Grants Programme and 2013 the CIDA<sup>2</sup> extreme hydro project formed the basis for a new series. The members of the production team have advanced to online distance learning still supported by COL.

In general we have been able to achieve because of determination and the facilitation has been good; people have helped and many have done more than their financial compensations required but there were challenges in finding persons with the necessary skill willing to come so far to share and on at least three occasions we saw clearly why Jamaica is ranked 83 out of 174 counties on the corruption index.<sup>3</sup> Disrespect of the people, the process or the funders can break a spirit, take away an individual's ability to strive for better or be the reason for a project to fail; integrity is critical on both sides of the development equation remembering we operate in small island states.

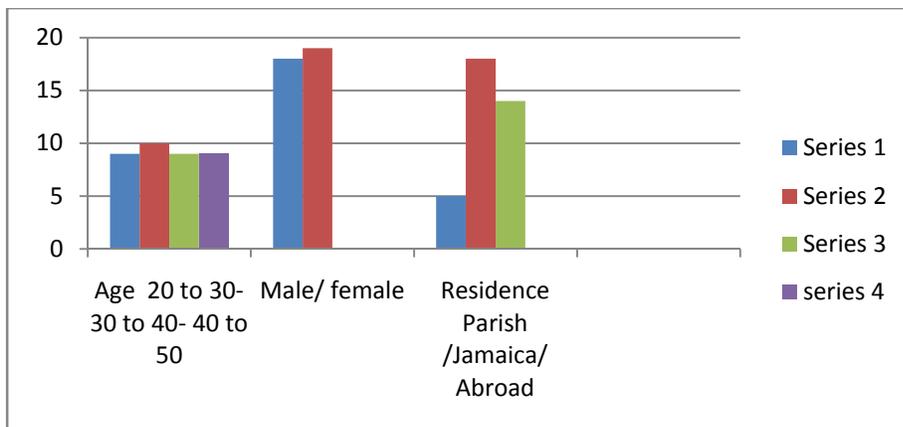


Figure 4

Jeffrey Town has been noticed, "The Teller"<sup>4</sup> has made sure of that with repeated prime time television showings of the community's major achievements, significant press coverage over the years, conference presentations over the last four years, university lectures writing about their work with the community plus two internationally funded projects<sup>5</sup> are currently using this community to collect data for their policy documents. During the week May 22 -28 the community hosted three sets of visitors and used this opportunity to turn the tables and ask some questions of our own. Of the sixty visitors thirty two gave written responses and five has their responses recorded digitally. Figure 4 shows the evenly spread age and gender details of all respondents and highlights where they visited from: within the parish 5, the Island 18 and abroad 14. Figure 5 identified the areas of achievement most appreciated by the respondents.

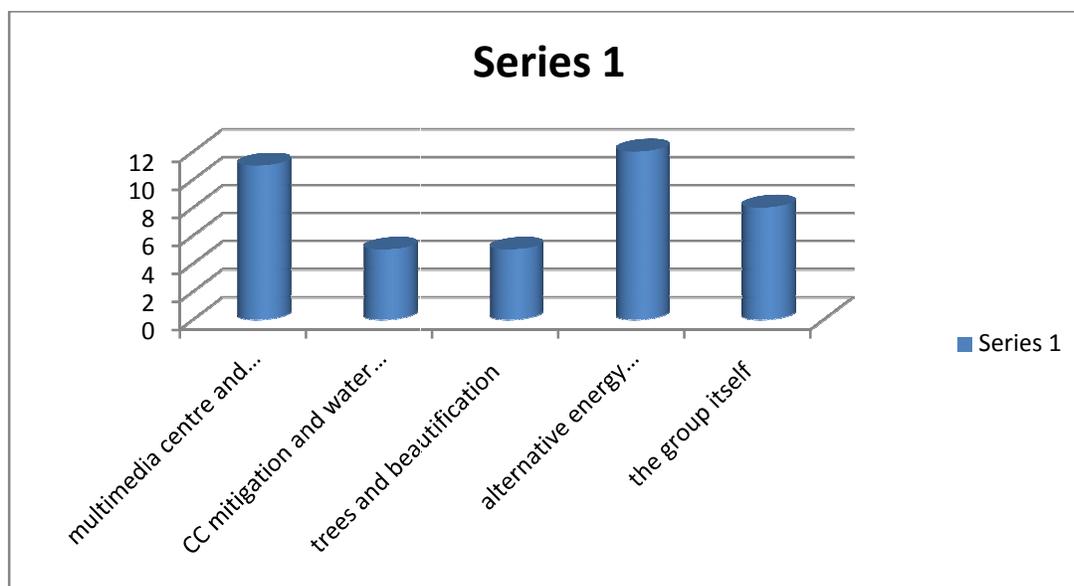


Figure 5

One should note here that the visitors were in the community for particular reasons, to view the multimedia centre, view the alternative energy applications and hear how they benefitted the community and the Custos / Governor General's party came to view overall development. The responses do not coincide directly with the reasons for their visits but it was curious to observe that the Jamaicans alone cited the group itself as the best achievement, perhaps here showing inherent understanding of how difficult organizing can be here. Two people said all of the above, but the multimedia including the radio and how we use it as well as the alternative energy were the clear favourites. The comments included anonymous praise, *much better because of the farmers group action; excellent; very inspirational community, your work here is commendable. The community is actively engaged and forward thinking.* The academics who visited from the International Federation for Information Processing Working Group 9.4 conference on Social Implications of Computers in Developing Countries were equally complimentary Professor Michael Barrett Cambridge University wrote; *"Impressed with how much has been done with relatively little. The sustainability agenda in action."* Professor Eivor Oborn University of Warwick; *"Very positive"* and Chris Westrup University of Manchester; *"All looks very good, one of the best telecentres I have ever seen."* Elizabeth Terry told the conference audience that; *"There were three beneficiaries to this project( Community without Borders) and the other two have folded but Jeffrey Town has really "run with it" and that is down to leadership, excellent leadership."*

The continuation of the process here must include community tourism and more economic activities and even here we were encouraged with *"Really good, strongly interested in coming again"* and Stan Karanansios University of Leeds wrote; *"Very impressed with the telecentre and the community effort. I would like to visit again and stay in the town."*

## Conclusion

Jeffrey Town has benefited from the work of a group of people within leading the process to a common goal of making their community a place where all can feel comfortable. In this society 58.4% of the residents own the land they live on, much of it passed down through the generations, making moving a very unlikely or unacceptable option. Who wouldn't want to live in structurally secure environs with tree lined streets and sufficient lighting for safety, water, recreational facilities and above all business opportunities or employment? The Jeffrey Town model through the farmers association has worked on all of these things.

- Six gabion walls for land security, check dams to slow the flow of rain runoff down the hill sides, terracing with pineapples to hold the top soil and for economic benefits.
- Planted a total of twenty- seven acres of fruit trees for further land stability and food source for value added activities plus five acres of Pride of Barbados planted uniformly on two miles of roadside for beautification.
- Solar street lights in four locations of our choosing for further security and alternative energy at the JTFA Building for sustainability of the multimedia centre.
- A revolving cadre of youth being exposed to radio production and multimedia moving on to tertiary education, main stream media and more.
- Water harvesting with access to treated water at three key locations in the community supplementing the unreliable national supplier and irrigating farms in the Spring Garden belt including the organic plot.
- Leveled an area to be used a play field, upgraded the entrance to main play field and is engaged in lobbying for an extension in size for the third on which our development plan was used to garner funding to construct the community centre.
- A brand new type 1 clinic and Basic School.
- A community radio station run by people from the community making programmes relevant to the rural lifestyle.
- An internet hot spot free to access for a radius of up to one hundred metres.
- Group chicken rearing with central storage.
- Value added coconut products a small line of jams, pickles and jerk seasoning with community tourism becoming a reality.

These are the tangibles, they can be touched, quantified and photographed; add to that a sparkling array of awards that include National Best Environmental Community Award in 2010 and 2012, the Scotia Goes Green Award 2011, two Michael Manley Awards for Community Self Reliance, 2006 and 2011, Best Telecentre in the Caribbean 2011, Best Radio Story, Climate Change at the Caribbean Agri-Media Awards 2012 and BEST Community in St Mary 2008 and 2012. We have been asked to prepare the official United Nations Radio message in English, for World Food Day 2012 and Unite to end Violence Against Women 2013. And not least commended by The Centre for Communication and Social Change for quote; "*Courage and*

*extraordinary commitment you have demonstrated to communication for social change. The Centre commends your contribution to innovative and practical communication that has contributed to grassroots-level sustainable development."*

But what of the people? How do you measure the feeling of collective pride residents feel in the community that they themselves have improved, this is not a gated, guarded enclave for the wealthy but deep rural Jamaica. The process has instilled a sense of belief in those of us who live here and inspired some visitors comments cited here:

*"Pioneering, the innovation is great, it's a great model for others to follow."* Dr. Arlene Bailey  
University of the West Indies- Mona (UWI)

*"You are helping to bring about the Millennium goals in a big way for your community, a small way for Jamaica and a smaller way for the world."* Jacqueline DaCosta Chairperson National BEST Community Foundation and Competition September 2011

The Governor General Sir Patrick Allen, Jamaica's head of state on a parish tour during May 2013 said of Jeffrey Town, " *This is a model community, setting an example for others to follow.*"

Dr. Peta - Ann Baker UWI told us in 2011 on the occasion of the association's twentieth birthday that we would have "*twenty more years of work to do*" and this is apparent as we strive for more mini enterprises for employment and make a determined push to increase the number of tourists coming to our community so the drive for development can move to the level of actualization.

<sup>1</sup> Gleaner Archives, Jamaica Almanac

<sup>2</sup> The Mitigation of the Adverse Effects of the Extreme Hydro-metrological Events in the Jeffrey Town Community

<sup>3</sup> Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI)

<sup>4</sup> A five minute video sponsored by Scotia Bank the Teller highlighting people and places the Foundation has supported aired Sunday night at 8pm on the most watched national station.

<sup>5</sup> Jamaica Rural Economy and Ecosystems Adapting to Climate Change(JaREEACH) project USAID and Government of Jamaica/ European Union/ UNEP Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction Project

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