



Shock-Responsive Social Protection in the Caribbean Jamaica Case Study

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¹ Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Republic of Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Turks & Caicos Islands and the Virgin Islands.

Preface

This report is part of a series of case studies on Shock-Responsive Social Protection in the Caribbean commissioned by the World Food Programme (WFP, www.wfp.org) for Oxford Policy Management to conduct (OPM, www.opml.co.uk). The OPM Project Manager is Rodolfo Beazley rodolfo.Beazley@opml.co.uk and WFP Project Managers are Regis Chapman regis.chapman@wfp.org, Francesca Ciardi francesca.ciardi@wfp.org (Barbados Office for Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Caribbean), and Giulia Baldi giulia.baldi@wfp.org (Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean).

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Disclaimer

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Executive summary

Introduction

There is global recognition of the promising linkages between social protection and disaster risk management (DRM) in responding to and mitigating shocks, and in contributing to strengthening the humanitarian–development nexus. It is in this context that the World Food Programme (WFP) and Oxford Policy Management (OPM) began a research project in 2016 on shock-responsive social protection in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). In 2019 and 2020, the study focuses on the Caribbean where several governments have used social protection programmes and systems to reach people impacted by disasters. This report studies the case of Jamaica and identifies the factors that would allow the social protection system to be more responsive. The box below briefly summarises the theoretical framework for this case study.

Shock-responsive social protection: theoretical framework

This research explores two dimensions to analyse how social protection systems relate to DRM and could be used in emergency response. The first is the extent to which social protection systems in place are prepared to respond to major shocks. This concerns:

1. Institutional arrangements and capacity: the legislation, policies, and mandates of key DRM and social protection institutions.
2. Targeting system: the protocols, processes, and criteria for identifying people and families that should receive social protection or DRM support.
3. Information systems: the socioeconomic, disaster risk, and vulnerability information required to enable decision making before and after a shock. This includes social registries and beneficiary registries, DRM information systems, and issues related to accessibility, sharing protocols, data collection mechanisms, data relevance, and accuracy and security and privacy protocols.
4. Delivery mechanisms: mechanisms in place for delivering cash or in-kind assistance to social protection beneficiaries and/or people affected by shocks.
5. Coordination mechanisms: mechanisms and protocols for coordinating DRM activities before and after a shock, including the role of social protection.
6. Financing mechanisms: strategies and mechanisms for funding DRM such as budgetary instruments, contingency financing and insurance, including any financing of social protection responses.

The second dimension is the ways that social protection programmes systems can directly provide assistance or play a supportive role in an emergency response, which can be used in any combination:

1. Vertical expansion: increasing the benefit value or duration of an existing social

protection programme or system.

2. Horizontal expansion: temporarily extending social protection support to new households.
3. Piggybacking: utilising elements of an existing social protection programme or system for delivering a separate emergency response.
4. Alignment: aligning some aspects of an emergency response with current or possible future national social protection programmes.
5. Design tweaks: making small adjustments to the design of a core social protection programme.

Sources: OPM (2015) and Beazley et al. (2016)

Disaster Risk Management in Jamaica

This section describes the disaster risk management (DRM) system in Jamaica, focusing on the institutional arrangements, the coordination mechanisms, and the financing mechanisms.

Institutional arrangements

The DRM Act, revised in 2015, forms the legal backbone of the DRM system in Jamaica. In accordance with the act, the system is implemented at three levels: national, parish, and community. The National Disaster Risk Management Council (NDRMC) heads the system at the national level. NDRMC is chaired by the Prime Minister, and the deputy chairman is the Minister of Local Government and Community Development. The General Director of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) is the National Coordinator for DRM actions. ODPEM is the main agency within NDRMC responsible for coordinating preparedness and response actions, established in 1980. In addition, there are seven sectoral committees in charge of preparedness and response actions in the different areas.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) plays a key role in DRM. The ministry chairs the national Humanitarian Assistance Committee, which oversees and ensures coordination of all shelter, relief and distribution activities, as well as leading the National Humanitarian Policy and Strategy, which articulates welfare and relief issues within the context of DRM in Jamaica. MLSS is the primary agency responsible for coordinating welfare activities to support people affected by disasters.

Coordination mechanisms

ODPEM is responsible for coordinating preparedness actions across levels (national, parish, community) and sectors (committees). When there is a national threat or emergency, the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) is activated, and ODPEM coordinates the relief efforts (including the support of the international community) through this centre. The National Disaster Plan establishes that donors and partners should be invited to attend meetings of the National Disaster Committee.

Financing mechanisms

The main disaster risk financing mechanisms in the country are as follows.

- The DRM Act of 2015 creates the **National Disaster Fund**, the main budget instrument for disaster risk financing in the country. As of March 2015, the National Disaster Fund was capitalised at US \$2 million, which is considered largely inadequate when compared to the estimated annual average losses in a country with the risk profile of Jamaica (World Bank, 2018).
- A **Contingencies Fund**, established by the constitution and capitalised at US \$825,000 (JMD \$106 million) in 2014, can be disbursed for unforeseen expenditures like natural disasters. However, according to the World Bank (2018), as of September 2017 no payments have been made for weather-related events and the fund has primarily been accessed for retroactive salary payments and pensions.
- Jamaica is also a member of the **Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility Segregated Portfolio Company** (CCRIF SPC), which uses parametric insurance to provide quick disbursing and short-term liquidity for financing responses and recovery. However, Jamaica has not been able to access the CCRIF insurance funds in recent years because the disasters insured have not met the pre-established parameters for pay-outs.

Although Jamaica has a mix of different disaster risk financing instruments, **in practice there seems to be a reliance on *ex post* retention instruments**, because the *ex ante* retention instruments (the National Disaster Fund and the Contingency Fund) are still of limited size—in particular related to losses due to major events—and the country has not received CCRIF SPC payments in recent years, which is the main risk transfer instrument.

Social protection in Jamaica

The national social protection strategy from 2014 establishes a rights-based approach for social protection in the country, rooted in constitutional rights. It mainstreams considerations for disability, gender equity and other cross-cutting issues through each of its strategies; and considers emerging issues that may impact social protection such as climate change, migration and new vulnerable groups (Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), 2014).

The strategy gives social protection a clear role in DRM and establishes the need to ‘ensure mechanisms are in place to flexibly respond to the varied needs of expanding vulnerable groups, to prevent long-term undesirable outcomes’. These include access to goods and services, appropriate housing and facilities to ensure physical access, health services, employment opportunities and other forms of income support, human capital development, and access to social security.’ The social protection programmes studied in this report are as follows.

1. **The Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH)** is a conditional cash transfer programme initiated in 2001. PATH benefits are conditional on behaviours that promote human capital development, including visits to health clinics and school attendance. The

programme had 338,481 beneficiaries as of February 2018 and is one of the largest in the Caribbean.

2. The **Rehabilitation Programme** includes four types of grants, with a total of 5,183 beneficiaries in 2018:

- a. the **Compassionate Grant** provides aids and medication, household items, house repairs, and burial expenses;
- b. the **Emergency Grant** provides assistance to people who suffer from disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and fires, and who do not have access to an insurance scheme;
- c. the **Education and Social Intervention Grant** is used to support children who cannot attend school, or whose regular attendance is affected by their parent/guardian's inability to provide uniforms, books, and other basic needs; and
- d. the **Rehabilitation Grant** provides self-employment opportunities through small projects with the objective of improving income. The grant provides the working capital and inputs to begin the income-generating project.

3. The **National Insurance Scheme** is a compulsory contributory funded social security scheme, offering financial protection to the worker and his/her family against loss of income arising from the injury on the job, incapacity, retirement, and death of the insured. As of early 2019, the number of current NIS beneficiaries was 114,189.

4. The **Poor Relief Programme**, under the Poor Relief Act, is a decentralised programme implemented by the Municipal Corporations and managed centrally by a Board of Supervision under the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development. The aim of the programme is to 'relieve destitution in all its forms.'²The programme has five main interventions: **indoor institutional care; outdoor assistance; assistance on behalf of children; the Homeless Programme; and the Indigent Housing Programme**. The programme reaches approximately 20,000 people.

Jamaica is one of the Caribbean countries that has made more progress in adapting the social protection system to be more responsive to shocks. There are a few key reasons for this. First, Jamaica's social protection system is fairly strong (particularly when compared with other countries in the region), with a flagship conditional cash transfer programme like PATH with substantial coverage, as well as relatively robust administrative systems and capacity. Second, MLSS plays a crucial role in the country's DRM system and has programmes and protocols in place for providing

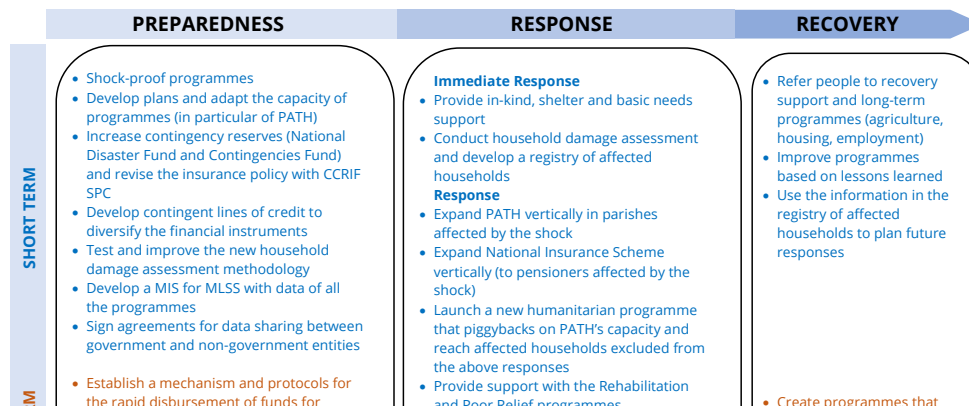
² Poor Relief handbook.

support to people affected by shocks (e.g. the Rehabilitation Programme), leads the national Humanitarian Assistance Committee, and works together with ODPEM and other actors in developing policies and plans and response actions. Third, the Government of Jamaica, with the support of the World Bank, has been investing in strengthening the responsiveness of the social protection system.

Towards a more shock-responsive social protection system

The recommendations below focus on PATH having a central role in social protection responses to large-scale shocks. The evidence presented in this report indicates that PATH is the most suitable programme for this role, although there is a need to adapt its processes and systems to make it more flexible. Therefore, we propose a shock-responsive social protection strategy centred on the role of PATH and complemented by other programmes. Other schemes, such as the Rehabilitation Programme and the Poor Relief Programme, are more suitable for providing support to people affected by smaller-scale shocks and for providing support beyond cash transfers (for example social care). The National Insurance Scheme could also provide support to pensioners affected by a shock, but since it does not reach the poorest and most vulnerable and is not feasible for a contributory programme to scale up, its vertical expansion could be a complementary rather than a main strategy.

Figure 1: Recommendations for shock-responsive social protection along the disaster cycle



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