

Abstract: The Jeffrey Town Model for Community Development

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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, hence the Jeffrey Town Model with ICT as a key element. It will discuss the facets of the farmers association the vehicle that has led the process and driven the change.

It will give a brief outline of the community history and highlight the tangible and intangible result components of the model 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 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 starting with basic computer literacy classes for the volunteer group to use the technology; securing facilitators willing to help build the capacity of local youth without exploitation so that real empowerment could begin.

It will show collaborative partnerships with common aims and the best use of local expertise to create award winning community learning programmes that have engendered social change.

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 maternal health, social issues and environmental management with superb results. This presentation will cite the practical steps COL has supported in the wider picture and occasions where the integrated approach to development shown in the Jeffrey Town Model is recommended.

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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. 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 was destroyed by fire in September 1996.

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. It further states that unemployment is

at 33% of those at working age between 15 and 65; and of those working 42.2% is engaged in agriculture growing ground provisions, cash crops and banana on family owned lands.

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 renowned 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 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, for rural electrification for those not located on the main road in 1998 and a simple thing such as garbage collection took years of agitation before service could 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 internally to see how best to redress the major challenges: 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 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. The group recognized that it needed help to meet its goals and was fortunate enough to be supported by United Nations Development Programme LIFE and Canada International Development Agency 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 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

Our business plan could not be launched as it stood and enough funding to purchase a tractor was 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 LIFE project to install portable irrigation on five farms, two small grants to purchase and convert a container and use it as an office, 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 significant 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 The inset below 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, February 2007, to his departure in August 2008.

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

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. In the previous years it was all about youth involvement through ICT. In this community youth unemployment is above the 33 percent average with this sector showing a real reluctant to go into agriculture. We had a series of local facilitators engaging up to as many as twenty five young people at a time in the use of software applications, digital photography, video, creating music and audio production editing. Of this original youth cadre nine still give voluntary service to the multimedia centre and radio station, eight have gone on to further education, seven more to full time employment with two in main stream media.

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 was written into the activities of the funded projects which enabled the farmers to collectively apply the measures on a series of farms. 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.

Our location and way of life forces one 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. 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. As our community members mastered a skill we moved on, calling back for the "experts" as and when required.

Training advanced to mitigation measures and with it the activities, tree planting, check dams, water harvesting from roofs and from natural sources, contours and of course a hybrid alternative energy system for sustainability of the environment and relief from the costs associated with running a radio, multimedia centre and a bank of freezers.

Last but not least is the radio component of the training; our main learning facilitator has 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. Training courses commenced in 2007 with basic principles, guidelines towards preparation plus voice and speech work for the core group a little after the license arrived but before the broadcast equipment. The three COL interventions of 2008 and 2009 in Jeffrey Town and St. Vincent were geared towards purpose, sustainability and content, helping us to understand the true value and power of this platform, allowing the team to carefully consider the pressing issues and ask which areas reflect the widest pool of local knowledge. The environment and agriculture naturally, hence the integration of radio programming towards our mitigation intentions with the bold 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.

Ours was the inaugural group in the Caribbean to pilot a new method of programme making nominally called the participatory approach, where members of the wider community along with the relevant professionals were invited to get involved 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; 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. Each of the shows consists of a seven elements illuminated here:

- The Narrator.
- The Fact File, a four minute inset that states the most interesting or relevant facts.
- The Voice of the People a question is asked of members from the communities.
- The Discourse; an interview with an expert; these experts varied from internationally famous authorities to local people with empirical knowledge of a specific event.
- Drama is written as an independent feature with a set of characters in the imaginary Jet Town named after the radio station. Each episode elaborates on the show theme. This slot is the most popular feature within the community and is now a well loved independent production.
- Music
- Advertisements from the Voices for Climates Change series supported by Panos Caribbean.

This series 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. We will this year upgrade to live call in shows.

Using this formula and largely similar style we have created an annual environmental education and awareness series to highlight and explain the actions being taken by the group in our ongoing climate

change mitigation work. In the 2012 edition training activities of the disaster preparedness team featured in the award winning series supported as part of a project with the Global Environmental Facility, and 2013 the Canada Disaster Risk Reduction Fund, Extreme Hydro project formed the basis for a new series. Of note here is that financial support for the process and the radio as a whole is being considered at an institutional level as an element of each project written that can be quantified, justified and delivered.

The members of the production team have advanced to online distance learning still supported by COL and the drought mitigation series now due will be a product of this process showing the fulfillment of a dream, ordinary community people sufficiently empowered firstly by contact teaching in an informal setting, graduating to distance learning; passing on their skills to their peers and producing meaningful content related to the local realities. Skills must be shared and passed on as the team evolves.

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 countries on the corruption index. 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; some of these scars remain in the community. Integrity is critical on both sides of the development equation just as vision and passion drive the process. When the burning ambition for broadband internet was articulated and supported initially in 2008 by a European Union funded project our community couldn't know how this type of access would advance our independence and self reliance. It was exorbitantly expensive due to our location and lack of basic infrastructure but has since been supported by the Universal Service Fund, a national agency with the added proviso of free to access "wi fi". Once a person has a wireless enabled gadget they can access the internet outside our facility twenty-four hours a day. This is something that can be observed at road side, the bus shelter, the local bar even the grave yard. The thirst for internet access has been ignited community wide and to an extent is being fulfilled.

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 an 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, check dams to slow the flow of rain runoff, terracing with pineapples
- Planted a total of twenty- seven acres of fruit trees plus five acres of Pride of Barbados on two miles of roadside for beautification.
- Solar Street lights in four locations and alternative energy at the JTFA Building.
- A revolving cadre of youth being exposed to radio production and multimedia.
- Water harvesting and irrigating farms including the organic plot.
- A brand new type 1 clinic and Basic School.
- A community radio station making an airing programmes relevant to the rural lifestyle.
- An internet hot spot free to access.
- Group chicken rearing and value added products.

These are the tangibles, they can be touched, quantified and photographed; add to that an array of awards, Best Telecentre in the Caribbean 2011, Best Radio Story, Climate Change at the Caribbean Agri-Media Awards 2012 an invitation 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 a commendation from The Centre for Communication and Social Change.

How do you quantify the intangibles? The pride of a community, the collective and individual empowerment through more than two thousand days of targeted training, replication at community meetings using power points, the drip feeding from the community radio reinforcing best practises? It's not possible, however we do know from a recently conducted survey that of the three hundred residents questioned seventy percent said they listened to Jet Fm and that none could imagine the community without the station now. Since 2006 the drive for development has been at full pace with ICT leading the way with internet cafe, literacy classes, summer school in 2013, multimedia classes and radio programming underlining all of the physical activities, supporting social issues as well as the school curriculum. This is a model that requires consideration based on the evidence presented, a group of people taking a penetrative look at their situation and then through hard work, critical support and good fortune a marginalized community has risen and changed its situation. It is our contention that development must be a process, the initiative should be present in a location and the capacity can be built as it has been here; all else can be replicated to fit the community at hand.