

## **MINISTRY PAPER NO: -**

### **INFORMATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

#### **OVERVIEW**

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a central feature of the Government of Jamaica's strategy for accelerated social and economic development and for ensuring greater accessibility to government information and improved efficiency in the public sector.

Locating the Information and Telecommunications Subjects within the Office of the Prime Minister signals, that prominent attention will be given to leveraging the ICTs and the Creative Industries in the upcoming period, to improve the quality of life of Jamaicans and attain first world status by 2030 in keeping with the country's vision.

The challenge of the global economic downturn will have to be overcome by (among other things):

- the creation of a knowledge based society; open governance and widened participation of the citizenry in national decision making;
- keeping pace with fast evolving requirements of commerce and technology;
- exponential increase in Jamaica's productivity, efficiency and competitiveness;
- attraction of significant local and international investments and enabling all key sectors in Jamaica (education, health and security inclusive) and
- expansion of ICT, media and other services.

It is within this context that the government continues to pursue with greater purpose and determination, policy, legislative and regulatory reform in the area of Information Communication Technology recognizing its unique potential to support these imperatives. There is also tremendous opportunity for maximizing the use of the alternative media (viz the internet) for capacity building, exchange of information and arriving at best solutions to profound issues affecting the local, regional and international community.

Implementation of a government driven 'ICT Agenda' therefore, with equal focus on:

- access to local and diverse content, and
- providing universal access to the technologies and related services,

will be the backbone for achieving the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals; the Declaration of Principles and the Information Society Plan of Action ( adopted at the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society). Government is prepared to lead, facilitate and partner as appropriate to secure for the country all the benefits to be derived from the various media and technological platforms.

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2008/2009**

- 1. Top Ranking in the Region for Jamaica in International Index and Reports for advancement and use of information and communication technologies**

**Advances made in Telecommunications** have registered in the 2009 ICT Index<sup>1</sup> produced by the International Telecommunications Union which ranks Jamaica at number four (4) in the Latin America and Caribbean Region (behind Argentina, Chile and Uruguay) and at the top position in the Caribbean. Notably, this index captures the level of advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in more than 150 countries worldwide. The Global Information Technology Report 2008 - 2009<sup>2</sup> also places Jamaica in the number four position behind Barbados, Chile and Puerto Rico. Encouragingly, a joint publication of the International Telecommunications Union and the United Nations World Information Society 2007 Report<sup>3</sup> cites Jamaica as an example to the Caribbean in the development of its mobile telephony noting that “Jamaica’s ... success is significant, as it disproved a long-established theory that small island economies were too small to sustain competition”. **Jamaica also continues to be among one of the top ranked countries regionally as it relates to the use of ICT:-**

- a. The **E-Learning Project** is successfully establishing the technological infrastructure required to enhance the teaching/learning experience through increased access to educational sources and diverse multi media tools. At the secondary and tertiary levels, institutions are being supplied with a modern and online platform inclusive of CDs, DVDs and video. Already 166 high schools, 5 community colleges, 6 special schools and 8 teachers’ colleges have been outfitted with audio-visual equipment. Computers and networks have been fully installed in 113 high schools, 1 special school and 6 teachers’ colleges.

The Project has trained just under 7,000 teachers and lecturers and of this number over 2,200 are fully certified to utilise ICT in teaching. Work is also being done in conjunction with UWI/ Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) and the University of Technology - University of Plymouth alliance to ensure that our teacher training colleges now equip graduates to effectively use ICT tools.

- b. **Online Government** - Significant advances have been made in government’s online presence resulting in an additional and more efficient interface between Government Ministries and Agencies.

*The tax process has been reengineered to streamline functions and prepare for online implementation of a fully functional tax system. This GOJ/IDB ICT Project provided the necessary hardware, software and training to efficiently deliver critical tax and trade services online.*

*As of October 2008 Jamaicans can now both file and pay GCT and STC returns online. Through this online portal the government collected just under \$1Billion during the last fiscal year representing an increase of just under 30% over the previous year. To date over \$1.8 Billion has been collected through the online tax portal. During this fiscal year, a number of new services will also be offered online including: - Pay as you earn (PAYE; National Insurance (NIS); HEART and Education Tax.*

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<sup>1</sup> International Telecommunication Union (2009). *Measuring the Information Society - The ICT Development Index 2009*. Geneva

<sup>2</sup> Dutta, S. & Mia, I. (Eds.) (2009). *Global Information Technology Report 2008-2009: Mobility in a Networked World*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>3</sup> ITU and UNCTAD (2007) p. 31

*Fiscal Services Limited (FSL) Service Delivery Network Infrastructure has been upgraded. The GOJ/IDB ICT Project, financed hardware, software, training and support services needed to provide the capacity and reliability for the projected increase in electronic transactions and electronic payment services.*

The above services complement the already established online trade services offered through Jamaica's Trade Facilitation portal, Trade Point.

## **2. Increased Communication Channels between the Government and the Citizenry**

Jamaica maintains its leadership position in the region relative to the **Access to Information Programme**. An all media island wide campaign; face to face sensitizations across Jamaica and public sector wide training over the period have raised awareness of the public's general right to access official documents on the one hand and on the other, has increased government's capacity to respond to the requirements of the Act and augurs well for standard implementation of the Access to Information Programme.

**Jamaica House Live**, a live call-in programme hosted by Prime Minister Hon. Bruce Golding every last Wednesday of the month from 8:30p.m – 10:00p.m makes toll free lines available for callers from Jamaica and the diaspora. The programme facilitates direct interface with the citizenry with structured regularity. The feature is carried on all radio stations and may be viewed on both the PBCJ and JNN Cable Channels.

**Government information Available on Television:-Jamaica Magazine**, is aired daily on TVJ and CVM at 5:00 p.m., Love TV at 7:00 p.m., PBCJ at 7:30 p.m., JNN at 8:30 p.m. and provides broad exposure to government initiatives among other matters of public interest and concern. **Issues and Answers** – (45 programmes 2008/2009) presents another opportunity for Jamaicans to be briefed in relation to Government's programmes and projects in some detail. **Voice of Jamaica** is a 5-minute programme with three news items, a one-minute segment for Ministry projects, and Chat to Mi which gives a breakdown of policies in Jamaican parlance. This programme is aired on CVM at 7:50 p.m. on Mondays.

**Government Information Available on Radio** – During 2008/09, 2,388 radio stories were produced and aired on all radio stations in time allowed for Government broadcast. These included **Jamaica Magazine** 252, **Sunday Magazine** 60, **News Stories** 984, **Weekend feature to Roots FM** 300, **Health Line** 60, **JIS Notebook** 60, **Career Talk** 60, **You and the Law** 60, **Calling Farmers** 252, **Science in Action** 48, and **Round About JA** 252. **Jamaica House Weekly** a review of some of the important policy statements and initiatives of Government, and activities of the Prime Minister is also aired. Kool 97 FM has been transferred to the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica to roll out the radio component of Public Service Broadcasting with an emphasis on cultural elements. Public/Private partnership is being pursued to give effect to other obligations of the PBCJ remit.

**Government information Available on Television and Cable:-Jamaica Magazine**, is aired daily on TVJ and CVM at 5:00 p.m., Love TV at 7:00 p.m., PBCJ at 7:30 p.m., JNN at 8:30 p.m. and provides broad exposure to government initiatives among other matters of public interest and concern. **Issues and Answers** – 45 programmes were produced and aired on television and presents another opportunity for Jamaicans to be briefed in relation to Government's programmes and projects in some detail. **Voice of Jamaica** is a 5-minute dynamic and interactive programme with three news items, a one-minute segment for Ministry projects, and Chat to Mi which gives a breakdown of policies in Jamaican parlance. This programme is aired on CVM at 7:50 p.m. on Mondays.

The Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica has for the second year broadcast **live sittings of the House of Representatives, the Senate and Committees of Parliament** and has also expanded its public services offerings to include **Post Cabinet Briefings; Up-to-Date News Headlines on weekdays at 6:00 p.m;** and **state of the art weather forecasts week days.**

#### **Government information Available in Print Media and via Website:-**

The JIS produced and disseminated a total of 3,598 stories averaging 10 a day this year. Of the number of stories written, 3,441 were news releases and 157, features. The organization's **Bulletin Board** page is published every Monday in the Gleaner and focuses on informing the public of Government initiatives in the mainstream media uncut. Similarly an **E-Newsletter** is available to local, regional and international audiences of more than 300,000 media houses and individual subscribers on a weekly basis. It provides online readers with current news on the Government's policies, programmes and projects. **News-in-Brief**, is another online publication which keeps Jamaicans in the diaspora in touch with the major daily news stories carried by the Gleaner and Observer newspapers, 250 issues were produced for 2008/2009. The JIS website is updated daily with all news stories produced by the Agency and webstreams special events including Budget presentations, select Government events and Jamaica House Live. **Stories Mounted on JIS' Website total 3,598** for the year in review. A 3-time Winner of Best Website Representing a Nation by the Black Web Awards; it receives an average of 6 million hits a month.

The **creation of a PBCJ Website** this year, allows the Jamaican audience to view on demand, their coverage of Parliament and its Committees and other features which provide information on government activity from anywhere in the world.

## **PROJECTIONS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2009/2010**

### **Progress in Ongoing ICT and Media Initiatives – (Highlights)**

There are several critical ICT based projects being undertaken or facilitated by the government to improve education, expand the provision of electronic services, access and best use of the ICTS. Reference is made in this regard to:

- A. **The E-Learning Project** – Work is far advanced for the development and delivery of content in support of the project. The Creative Production and Training Centre (CPTC) is testing 50 video lectures developed for delivery to schools during the summer term. Instructional material for teachers and students have been delivered to over 150 schools for English, Mathematics, Information Technology, Chemistry and Biology. Similar materials are being procured for six additional subjects namely; Building Technology, Physics, Geography, Spanish, Integrated Science and Resource and Technology. In addition, over 9000 test questions have been developed by specialist item writers, reviewed and accepted for all pilot subjects and these are now available online. An additional 19,000 test questions will be available for the new school year.
- B. **Islandwide Broadband Network** – Consistent with government's commitment to facilitate the roll out of the telecommunications infrastructure in Jamaica, an islandwide broadband fibre network is to be established and is scheduled to commence in this

fiscal year. On completion, all Jamaicans will have access to the internet and be able to conduct critical business anywhere

The process for awarding the contracts for the roll out of this network is far advanced and negotiations are underway with respect to the 2.5GHz spectrum over which the wireless broadband including third generation (3G) mobile services will be delivered. The provision of broadband services will enable the private and public sector to efficiently conduct business across the island.

- C. **Licensing of Wireless Island-Wide Subscriber Television Operators** – Two Licenses of this kind are to be awarded for purposes of increasing competition in the cable industry on an island wide basis. At present there is only one entity licenced to provide Cable services across the country (by wired technology) and the objective is to present consumers with affordable choices and access to high quality cable, value added media services and information sources.
- D. **Community Access** – Under the GOJ/IDB ICT Project, Community Access Points (CAP) have been established in 12 marginalised communities, enabling the residents of those communities to access services online. Similarly the Universal Access Fund Company Ltd (UAFCL) has outfitted all public libraries across Jamaica as well as the National Library of Jamaica with the facilities to enable public access to the internet. Nineteen (19) of these libraries have also been provided with specialized software for the hearing impaired. In addition Five (5) Post Offices have been equipped in a pilot phase of the project. Several specialised insitutions which provide care and support for the deaf have also been provided with CAP facilites, including the Hope Estate, Execelsior Community Collage (EXED), The Danny Williams School for the Deaf, and St Christopher's School in Browns Town, St Ann.
- E. **Policy Framework** – The development of a robust and integrated (policy, legal and regulatory) framework for content, media and telecommunications is ongoing and its final phases will ultimately position Jamaica as an ideal and attractive location for investment and entrepreneurial endeavours, media and telecommunications services and will provide the basis for a knowledge based society grounded in our rich historical and cultural heritage.

Instructions have been given for the finalisation of the National Information and Communications Policy, currently in draft form, to promote and entrench open governance; provide a basis for regulation of traditional and emerging media and ICT services, encourage growth of the important sub-industries which have developed (offering economic opportunities for a broad swath of media professionals) and facilltate a wide modern telecommunications network with heavy deployment of broadband. Once fianlised the Policy in conjunction with the National Development Plan 2030 will guide the development of relevant legal and regulatory structures to establish and sustain a certain and competitive environment.

- F. **Digital Switch-Over Plan for Jamaica** – Large sections of the broadcast television sector in Jamaica currently use analogue systems for production, ENG activities and for transmission. In line with changes in technology globally, eventually, all television broadcasting will be delivered using digital signals and tools. This transition to a fully digital platform is called Digital Switch-over. In January 2009 a Steering Committee for Digital Switch-over was established and will continue to meet throughout this financial

year to prepare for the inevitable transition. A feasibility study will be conducted in this regard. It is recognized that a shift to the digital platform could address the shortage of spectrum for broadcasting and confer a number of other benefits inclusive of a better quality picture and wider choice of channels.

- G. Preservation and Promotion of Audio Visual Assets through Digitization:** The Government is prioritizing the digitization of the JBC Audio Visual Collection; the Creative Production and Training Centre; Jamaica Information Service; the National Library of Jamaica, and all other public repositories of cultural audio visual material. Focus is being given to this exercise in full recognition of their value to Jamaica and the region with reference to both the implications for cultural preservation and the revenue earning potential that these products hold. Marketing and web delivery of cultural products locally, regionally and internationally are services currently being explored/developed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The government is committed to facilitating greater interface between the government and citizens. By creating an effective legal, regulatory and infrastructural environment the government is confident that Jamaica can become more productive and competitive by removing or leap frogging the developmental hurdles which have been the bane of developing countries over the past few decades. Technology however is not static and there are always new frontiers emerging which reshape our world view of development and productivity. Our challenge is to harness the best use of ICTs so Jamaica will achieve developed country status by 2030.