Efficient and Effective Criminal Justice  
Jamaica  
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Context

Jamaica’s rate of violent crime and homicide ranks among the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean. It’s a major source and transit point for illegal drugs to North America and Europe, and hundreds of active gangs perpetrate various illicit activities.

A well-functioning criminal justice system is one of the biggest deterrents to crime and violence in any country. In Jamaica, the criminal justice system faces significant challenges to effectively accomplish its role. The conviction rate for murder and other significant crimes is very low, and Jamaican courts struggle to render judgements in a timely manner. An additional challenge comes from the fact that courts, in lieu of adequate forensic evidence, often depend on public witnesses, testimonies, and jurors. With such prevalent violence and high impunity rates, widespread public fear and distrust prevents citizens from testifying in court. Attempting to enlist public collaboration is often an effort in vain.

The national police, Jamaica Constabulary Force, needs support and technical assistance to keep up with the rapidly changing modalities of crime. It must strengthen its ability to cooperate with the prosecution and the criminal justice system as a whole. In addition, the prosecution and the courts must effectively use all forensic techniques that are available to them. Doing so requires transforming current practices and procedures while strengthening the institutional capacity of all agencies involved.

Objectives

The Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) is implementing a two-year project to make Jamaica’s criminal justice system more efficient, fair, trustworthy, and effective.
Activities

By providing high-level technical assistance, the program will work in close collaboration with government authorities to address gaps in the system and put necessary reforms in place. The project diagnoses the current workload, evaluates prosecution and court performance, gauges the effectiveness of police investigations and judicial cooperation, and identifies new methods for improving the criminal justice system.

In cooperation with Jamaica’s law enforcement and local officials, the program provides three high-level experts to advise on criminal justice effectiveness: a Forensic Advisor, an Investigations Advisor, and a Prosecution Advisor. They provide training and guidance to their colleagues in their respective fields, placing special emphasis on efficiency and performance measurement. In each field, the advisors are developing a comprehensive baseline study to systematically measure the progress of the program, in comparison with a set of previously identified impact indicators.

Partners

The project is being carried out thanks to funding from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL). The following national authorities are involved with the project: Jamaica’s Constabulary Force, the Department of Public Prosecution, the Judiciary, the National Forensic Science Training Centre, and others.

About PADF

The Pan American Development Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, brings together many stakeholders to improve livelihoods, empower communities, strengthen civil society, support human rights, protect the environment and respond to natural disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean. Established by the Organization of American States in 1962, PADF has worked in every country in the region. In the last decade, PADF has reached more than 92 million people, investing more than $600 million in development resources throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

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