

**JAMAICA'S PROGRESS REPORT (SEPTEMBER 2009 – MARCH 2010)**  
**Under Rule 31 of the Rules of Procedure of MESICIC**

**SECTION 1 PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FIRST ROUND OF REVIEW**

**Recommendations:**

- 1 Strengthen the systems for registration of income, assets and liabilities

**Adopted measures**

**Intensify awareness campaigns and provide training for public officials on their legal and ethical duty to furnish their declarations of income, assets and liabilities, as well as for officials in charge of enforcing the obligation to file declarations.**

**Steps taken:** The Corruption Prevention Commission advises all relevant Government Ministries, Departments, Companies, Statutory Bodies, and Local Government Agencies on an ongoing basis of the legal requirements under the Corruption Prevention Act and seeks their assistance in informing public servants of their duties under the Act. The Commission was established under the Corruption (Prevention) Act to reduce corruption in public life by receiving and analyzing statutory declarations of the assets, liabilities and income of public servants. The Commission is also charged with investigating acts of corruption.

- 2 Strengthen the mechanisms for ensuring public access to information

**Adopted measures**

- (a) **Continue developing training and dissemination programs dealing with the mechanisms for public access to information, in order to help civil servants and citizens understand them and to optimize the use of available technology to that end.**

## **Steps taken:**

### **Public Education & Training**

For the Period September 2009 to March 2010, the Access to Information Unit has implemented Public Education Programmmes targeted towards several stakeholder groups including:

- Senior Citizens
- Youth at the High School, Tertiary, Community College Vocational/Training Institutions level
- Service Clubs and Community Groups
- Church Groups

Major public education activities conducted during the period included:

### **Right to Know Week Initiatives**

- The Unit marked International Right to Know Day (September 28, 2009) with a public display at the Pavilion Mall in Kingston. The aim of Right to Know Day is to raise awareness of every individual's right of access to government-held information, and to promote the tenets of transparency and accountability in the public sector and public participation in national decision-making. This venue was strategically chosen on the basis that it is located in the busy commercial district of Half-Way-Tree, with over 40 stores, and used by a large population of Jamaican shoppers as well as students from the several high schools in the vicinity. The Unit distributed 236 pieces of literature at the event.
- As part of the weeklong activities, the Unit launched its second Access to Information National Essay Competition (2009) for high school students in partnership with civil society stakeholders. The competition invited high school students from third to sixth form to write on the topic: *The right to access official government documents granted to members of the public by the Access to Information Act (2002) strengthens our democratic system of government.*

## **Public Expos in Urban and Rural Communities**

- The Unit participated in a major career expo in Montego Bay on October 29, 2009. This allowed the Unit to sensitize persons on their rights and through discussion and the distribution of published literature on access to information to 280 persons.
- In commemoration of Civil Service Week, the Access to Information Unit joined other public entities in a grand exhibition at Emancipation Park in Kingston, on November 17, 2009, where over 80 Access to Information kits and brochures were distributed.
- In January 2010 the Unit attended the University of the West Indies Annual Research Day. Over the two day event, three-hundred and thirty nine (339) pieces of literature were distributed.

## **Schools Access to Information Education Programme (S.A.T.I.E.P) in Urban and Rural Communities**

- Sensitization Sessions were held with schools in major parishes, namely Manchester, St. James and Kingston/St Andrew. A total of 312 students were included in these sessions.

## **Electronic Media & Online Initiatives**

### **Television**

- The Unit currently runs a television advertisement on the Public Broadcasting Channel

### **Web Presence**

- The ATI Website continues to be a focal point of the Unit's internet efforts to share information on the Access to Information Act. The site is updated with news and dates of different events and sessions involving the Unit.

- The Unit continues to utilize user driven content to take advantage of the new and exploding online social networking sites to promote access to information. Its Facebook page contains information about the Act and contact information, as well as a discussion board. The Unit monitors the number of FaceBook page members and views of its Youtube advertisement.
- The website also promotes the activities of the Joint Select Committee to Review the Access to Information Act, including summaries of the discussion topics in Parliament;

### **Training**

- A series of training sessions in collaboration with the Ministry of Education were held for principals from public schools across the island. These training sessions involved principals from all six school regions – with over one hundred and fifty principals and school representatives in attendance. This allowed the Unit to address issues specific to the operation of public schools and their administration of the Access to Information Act (2002) including records and information management practices.

Staff members of the Unit participated in a major public sector training workshop focused on customer service. This initiative is part of the Unit's efforts to continuously enhance service delivery to external and internal customers.

- (b) **Take the appropriate measures to ensure that requests for access to information are responded to within the time-frame established by the Access to Information Act**

### **Steps taken:**

The Access to Information Unit continues to provide guidance to public authorities on their legal obligations under the Access to Information Act, Regulations & Guidelines.

The activities undertaken during the period include:

- Ongoing guidance provided to individual access officers with regard to best practices and responding to requests in the timeframes requested;

- Continued Implementation of support programme designed to assist new Access Officers in carrying out their duties under the Act;
- Ongoing advice on complaints and the appeals process provided to members of the public and public authorities;
- The continuous review and update of the contact list of Access Officers and Principal Officers in government entities which is uploaded to the Unit's website. This ensures that members of the public in Jamaica and foreign jurisdictions have direct access to the contact details (including telephone and e-mail information) for public officers with key responsibilities for responding to requests and performing internal reviews. The contact information on the Unit's website supplements the information that is available on individual public authority websites;
- Increased monitoring of response and processing times for access to information requests including those from the media based on complaints received; and
- Increased Unit intervention where necessary to resolve disputes between requestors and public authorities.

## **SECOND ROUND OF REVIEW**

### **Recommendations**

- 1 Strengthen systems for the procurement of goods and services by the Government.

### **General Recommendation**

**Select and develop procedures and indicators, when appropriate and where they do not yet exist, to analyze the results of the systems, standards, measures and mechanisms considered in the Final Report adopted on June 27, 2008, and to verify follow-up on the recommendations made therein.**

**Steps taken:** The Contractor-General is an independent Commission of Parliament charged with monitoring the award and implementation of Government contracts and the grant, issue, suspension and revocation of all Government licences with a view to ensuring that such contracts and

licences are granted impartially and on merit. The Contractor General is also responsible for ensuring that the circumstances in which each contract or licence is granted, suspended or terminated do not involve impropriety or irregularity. The system of reporting introduced by the office allows probity and transparency in Government contract awards and compliance with Government procurement procedures.

Since the last meeting of the Committee, the Office of the Contractor General has made further efforts to ensure that all Public Bodies comply with its new system of reporting government contracts. Any person or body which fails to comply with a lawful requisition of a Contractor-General to file a report commits a criminal offence.

As of February 2010, the rigidly enforced Zero Tolerance Policy of the Office of the Contractor General (OCG), which was first introduced in October 2006 to combat Public Bodies who refuse to comply with the lawful requisition of the OCG, has succeeded in producing an unprecedented and record 100% compliance rate for the fourth consecutive quarter running and for the entire 2009 year. This compares to the low compliance rate of 13% which was first recorded when the new reporting regime was introduced in May 2006.

**17 March 2010**