

Overview of the Mission Context

Jamaica is a country renowned as a holiday destination, with warm tropical beaches and beautiful countryside. We are recognized for the richness of our culture – as the home of reggae music and Bob Marley; and admired for the outstanding sportsmen and women we give to the world, such as Usain Bolt and Shelly Ann Fraser-Pryce. Visitors observe that our people are passionate and expressive, creative and hospitable.

But for most Jamaicans going about their daily lives, life can be a constant struggle. Jamaica has been for some time under a deep economic recession. The unemployment rate is at 14.3%, 16.5% of the population lives below the poverty line, and the literacy rate is at a mere 77%. More and more Jamaicans are finding it difficult to make ends meet, and for too many of our people, it is a daily challenge merely to survive.

Located in this country where there is so much economic hardship, we in the Diocese of Mandeville have committed ourselves to serving the people of God and helping them to build their lives through our education ministry, health ministry, housing ministry, children's homes and senior's home. In order to do this work, however, we must seek financial help from sponsors and donors as our parishes are themselves underfunded and unable to sustain the work that is needed.

The rewards are great. The joy on people's faces when they finally have a safe place to call home, and the gratification of seeing a child who has succeeded in her exams and begun to secure her future – these are our greatest sources of satisfaction. And then, there are persons like Monique, a 19-year-old unemployed and under-educated single mother struggling to support her 1-year-old son. She lives in a two-room board house with nine other family members. Her home is located in a "bush community" in which residents simply set up house in the middle of the bush wherever there is open land. Oftentimes she and her family members are lucky to receive one meal of rice and beans per day, yet this doesn't stop her from traversing deeper into the bush each day to feed the 94-year-old deaf man who is hungry and lives alone. When asked why she does this, she responds "because there is someone worse off than me who needs my help."

The Diocese of Mandeville is buoyed up by persons such as Monique, and inspired to continue to do what it can to help her so that she in turn can help others.

With your help, prayers and support we are able to continue to preach the Gospel message of loving our neighbor and serving one another through Christ. We thank you for considering participating in a Diocese of Mandeville Mission Service Experience.