December 14, 2021

INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Situational Study on Transitions for Students with Disabilities in Jamaica:

Preparing Youth with Disabilities for Future Work and Citizenship

Submitted by:

Inclusive Development Partners

Submitted to:

UNICEF Jamaica

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Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by Inclusive Development Partners led by Hayley Niad, David Johnson, Valerie Karr, and Wael “Lilo” Altali, with support from Maureen Webber. Inclusive Development Partners would like to thank the team at UNICEF Jamaica and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information’s Special Education Unit for their support and collaboration in producing this study report. Thanks as well go to the following individuals and institutions that provided information for this report:

Young adults with disabilities and dedicated parents of youth with disabilities

And, in alphabetical order:

Abilities Foundation
Church Teachers’ College
Digicel Foundation
Eleven inclusive high schools nationally
HEART Trust / NSTA
Jamaica Association for the Deaf (JAD)
Jamaican Association on Intellectual Disabilities (JAID)
Jamaica Autism Support Association
Jamaica Employers’ Federation (JEF)
Jamaica Society for the Blind
Lister Mair/Gilby School for the Deaf
Mico University College
MoEYI- Guidance and Counselling Unit
MoEYI- Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD)
MoEYI- National School Leaving Certificate (NSLC)
MoEYI- Special Education Unit
MoEYI- TVET Unit
National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL)
Promise Learning Centre
Randolph Lopez School of Hope
Salvation Army School for the Blind
University of West Indies Centre for Disability Studies (UWICDS)
Windsor School of Special Education
Woodlawn School of Special Education

1. Global Context

The Caribbean's most valuable resource is its human capital, and its greatest hope for the future lies in the holistic development and strategic engagement of that resource (Charles & Jameson-Charles, 2013). In 2016, 263 million children and adolescents worldwide were out of school, representing nearly one fifth of the global population (UIS, 2018). Data demonstrates that children with disabilities of primary and secondary school age are more likely to be out of school than their peers without disabilities (United Nations, 2018). Among all youth, disturbingly high rates of poor learning outcomes, dropping out, and youth unemployment have emerged, and these are even more pronounced among youth with a disability. In low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), one in five youth are not in education, employment or training and young women, in particular, constitute the bulk of youth in this situation (UNICEF, 2019a). In Latin America and the Caribbean, data shows an 8.5% decrease in school attendance for boys with disabilities and a 7% decrease for girls with disabilities at the primary school level as compared to their peers without disabilities. This gap grows at the secondary level to 11.8% and 8.2% respectively (Hincapié, Duryea, & Hincaipié, 2019).

The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic underscored these existing inequities in educational access and widened the barriers for those with disabilities. This includes students with disabilities who face barriers with digital learning platforms which are inaccessible, widening gaps related social exclusion, parents unfamiliar with supporting specific learning needs, and the lack of access to support services typically available at schools (UNESCO, 2021). A recent global survey examining the impact of the pandemic on the education of children with disabilities included perspectives from respondents based in the Caribbean and Latin America regions, where specific barriers highlighted included limited internet connectivity for digital learning, pedagogical approaches not responsive to student needs, feeling that policy responses did not consider the needs of people with disabilities, and even reduced access to food linked with closure of schools (UNESCO, 2021).

Global trends also indicate increases in unemployment found in Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Western Asia, and in South Eastern Asia and the Pacific (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2016). Yet, basic unemployment figures understate the true extent of youth labour market challenges since large numbers of young people are working, but do not earn enough to lift themselves out of poverty. In fact, roughly 156 million youth in emerging and developing countries live in extreme poverty (i.e., on less than US$1.90 per capita per day) or in moderate poverty (i.e., on between US $1.90 and US $3.10) despite being employed (ILO, 2016). Preparation for the skills needed for the transition to work following secondary school is lacking in most countries. For example, the employment outlook is particularly poor in sub-Saharan Africa where nearly two in three young workers do not have the level of education expected to work productively on the job. It is also important to note that not all young people are benefiting from public education and millions of youth in lower-income countries are still leaving school early to take up employment at early ages. Based on recent ILO school-to-work transition (STWT) survey data, 31% of youth in low-income countries had no education qualifications at all (ILO, 2016).

Research shows global workforce participation rates for persons with disabilities are also particularly low in many countries; persons with disabilities are only 60% as likely as persons without disabilities to have employment (ILO, 2020). Figures from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicate that the employment rate for persons with disabilities was slightly less than half (44%) compared to persons without disabilities of working age (75%) (WHO, 2011). One estimation from Latin America and the Caribbean identified employment rates among 24-35 year-old men with disabilities are 24 percentage points lower than for men without disabilities; employment among women with disabiltiies in the same age group was 12 percentage points lower than women without disabilities (Duryea, Salamanca, & Caicedo, 2019). No known statistics are available on this subject from Jamaica, but globally, women with disabilities are less likely to be employed in comparison to both men with disabilities specifically and persons without disabilities generally; 52.8% of men with disabilities are employed while this number is only 19.6% for women with disabilities (United Nations, 2018; WHO, 2011).

Persons with disabilities in general are also more likely to participate in precarious work, such as the informal labour market, resulting in lower wages than persons without disabilities or unpaid work (ILO, 2020). In fact, data from Chile, Spain, and the United States show wage gaps of 16%, 12%, and 14% respectively between persons with and without disabilities (ILO, 2020). Among those with disabilities who are employed, more than 8 in 10 are in informal employment and the majority are in poor quality jobs – evidenced by low earnings, low job satisfaction, and inadequate benefits of service for those in paid jobs (e.g., low medical insurance and social security coverage, lack of written contracts).

On average, youth fare worse than adults in the labour market. The rights of youth with disabilities have become an increasing international concern, largely due to high unemployment levels experienced by those with disabilities. Research in Scotland demonstrated that while labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities are poorer than labour market outcomes of persons without disabilities, this is especially true for young persons with disabilities (16-24) who are shown to face double disadvantage in the labour market due to disability and their age. Young persons with disabilities (aged 16-24) have a lower employment rate (43.2%) than their non-disabled peers (59.4%) (Scottish Government, 2019). Employment ratios for Latin America and the Caribbean show that only 31% of persons with disabilities over the age of 15 are employed while the employment rate of persons without disabilities is 50% (United Nations, 2018). As for Jamaica, the ILO (2021) estimated the rate of youth unemployment for Jamaican 15-24 year olds was 22.1% in 2019, down from a high of 38.9% experienced in 2013, although this estimation was not specific to individuals with a disability.

Multiple barriers exist for youth when seeking employment. For example, while employers note a lack of adequate workforce skills as a constraint, youth have reported that distance and cost of training (both direct and opportunity cost) are barriers to participation in skills development programmes in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador (UNICEF, 2019a). Additionally, while young people may have skills, they are sometimes unable to offer them due to social constraints linked with disability, family responsibilities, lack of job search skills, or discouragement. This includes youth available for work but not seeking jobs due to beliefs that jobs are unavailable, and youth who have been unable to find jobs in previous searches.

The above statistics highlight the importance of international and domestic policies that aim to ensure the right to work. At the international level this is being translated into the development of global strategies by organizations such as the ILO, World Bank, UNICEF and others. Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) provides a legal framework for a coherent and complete protection of persons with disabilities in the employment sector. Explicitly, this is the right of persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to work on an equal basis with others freely chosen in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive, and accessible to persons with disabilities. In addition, Sustainable Development Goal 8 aims, by 2030, to "achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value" (United Nations, 2018, p.150).

To ensure a right to work, other basic human rights must be actualized to create enabling environments that address systemic barriers encountered by persons with disabilities, such as the right to inclusive education (CRPD, Article 24), raising awareness on the capabilities of persons with disabilities (CRPD, Article 8), and accessibility, including accessible buildings, transport, and information and communication (CRPD, Article 9). Once actualized, the right to decent work provides essential benefits of well-being, dignity, and inclusion resulting in improved health outcomes, economic empowerment and independent living, and poverty reduction (United Nations, 2018).

Presumed competency
Many Jamaican youth with disabilities attend segregated special schools catering to intellectual, hearing, or vision disability. Others with high-incidence disabilities such as learning difficulties, or those with physical disabilities, may be more likely to attend inclusive schools.

Irrespective of disability category or perceived "severity," this study 'presumes competence,' that ALL young people are capable of learning and developing skills. This includes those who may require significant support to demonstrate these skills, including accommodations or modifications to curricula to show individual strengths and abilities. Post-secondary transitions affect ALL students, and by presuming students' competencies, educators can support each student to show their greatest skills and communicate their unique goals and aspirations.

2. Study Methodology

2.1 Overview of Study

The purpose of this study report is to describe the current situation of STWT for students with disabilities in Jamaica, with linkages to current trends and promising practices in STWT for students with disabilities globally. The study report was developed in close consultation with a wide variety of Jamaican stakeholders, and through review of documentation from Jamaica and globally. The sub-sections within this report review the themes of stakeholder engagement, skills and competency development, transition planning, school-based curricula, experiential learning opportunities, and post-secondary transition. The report also includes recommendations for further action to progressively expand the opportunities available to students with disabilities in their transition from school. Furthermore, although

reform is needed at all levels, including the school, community, and institutional levels, the focus of this study is on the role of **school-level initiatives** that can best support the preparation of students with disabilities for STWT. Finally, the underlying assumption of this study is the presumed competence of all, including youth with disabilities (see textbox below).

The content generated from this report was gleaned from a variety of sources. This includes both primary and secondary-source data collection and analysis, described further below.

2.2 Primary Source Data Collection

Feedback from diverse stakeholders was gleaned directly through focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and a school stakeholder electronic survey. A total of six focus group discussions and 11 key informant interviews were conducted, in addition to a survey of school-level stakeholders which received responses from 16 individuals. This data was collected between September to December, 2021[1]. The sample of stakeholders consulted for this study is displayed in Exhibit 1 below.

Exhibit 1: List of Stakeholders Consulted

Stakeholder Type	**Number of Stakeholders**
Youth with disabilities	5 (includes hearing, vision, and intellectual disabilities)
Parents of youth with disabilities	5 (includes parents of students with hearing, vision, and intellectual disabilities)
School-level stakeholders from segregated and inclusive schools	18 (includes principals, special educators, guidance counselors, APSE/Student Support Coaches, and Transition Officers)
Representatives of NGOs/DPOs	4 (includes advocates for persons with hearing, vision, and intellectual disabilities)
Government non-school employees	14 (includes SEU, Guidance and Counselling, TVET, HEART/NTA, JCPD, NSLC)
University representatives	3
Other	2
Total	**51**

The 18 school-level stakeholders listed above include ten respondents from mainstream schools and eight respondents from segregated special schools. Among those in mainstream schools, some respondents indicated 1-2% of their student population has an identified disability, two school respondents had higher rates of 7% and 22% respectively, and an additional mainstream school respondent did not provide a number but suggested a majority of students have learning disabilities based on observations and their academic outcomes. Schools ranged from serving rural areas, urban and rural populations, and urban populations. Disability categories among the identified students with disabilities include hearing, vision, intellectual, physical, and learning disability, in both segregated and mainstream schools.

To ensure all stakeholders were aware of the study's purpose, the report authors only reached out to respondents after an official introduction was sent by the SEU. Each stakeholder interviewed via Zoom provided consent for the conversations to be recorded. Furthermore, a detailed informed consent protocol was utilized for youth with disabilities and their parents, which included advice that all participation was voluntary, confidential, and

[1] Informed consent was obtained from parents of and students with a disability.

consent could be withheld at any time. Participant identities have been anonymized in this report.

In addition to the above direct consultations, study authors were also able to observe three different virtual advocacy events led by local stakeholders, during which the transition of persons with disabilities to employment featured as a focal point. The population of individuals who served as guest speakers and on panels is not counted in the list of stakeholders above.

2.3 Secondary Source Data Collection

Report authors conducted open-ended electronic searches for relevant publications, journal articles, and open-source website content that pertained to the STWT process for young people with disabilities globally. Although most of this content was produced in the United States and other countries of the global North, sources from the global South were located and analyzed to the greatest extent possible. The IDP team used a qualitative note-taking rubric to glean core messaging around planning, curriculum, competencies, and stakeholder engagement for STWT, and used these notes to synthesize content into this report. Other open-source websites and online resources were located based on authors' experience and knowledge in the field.

Furthermore, during primary source data collection, IDP also requested access to secondary source documents, such as curricula, syllabi departmental policies, or reports. These documents have been analyzed and referenced where relevant in this report.

2.4 Limitations

Although study authors made reasonable efforts to interview a wide variety of stakeholders involved in supporting STWT for students with disabilities in Jamaica, it was not possible to connect with every individual involved in this work. Thus, the stakeholders identified through this study are merely a sample among many thousands of passionate and dedicated educators, advocates, and individuals with disabilities themselves. Furthermore, this study was conducted on a fully virtual basis during the global pandemic, prohibiting the study authors' ability to triangulate findings through in-person observations of school facilities or face-to-face discussions.

3. What is School to Work Transition?

Transition is about planning for life after secondary school. It includes planning for academic and non-academic courses and learning experiences, employment and related training opportunities, community living, and leisure activities. A goal of transition is to help youth understand their disability and choices to determine their future. One way transition does this is by connecting youth to teachers and other caring adults, support services, and experiences that build skills and help them reach their goals. Transition is based on family values, priorities, and culture, and is focused on an individual's interests, preferences, strengths, and needs.

The concept of STWT has rapidly taken hold across the Caribbean, Latin America, and most nations of the global North and South in response to high rates of youth unemployment. STWT, however, is far more than a strategy to resolve youth unemployment. STWT must also become a vehicle for the development of active citizenship (Charles & Jameson-Charles, 2013). The Jamaican MoEYI's own 2021 Policy on Special Education clearly identifies STWT planning as a responsibility for all educators to support, and the Policy outlines a commitment to "provide guidelines for the development & implementation of STWT programmes for students with exceptionalities" (p. 54), a task which this study aims to support. Momentum to support STWT in the Caribbean is not limited to Jamaica. For example, the Skills for Youth Employment in the Caribbean ('SkYE') programme aims to develop skills relevant in the marketplace among young people (aged 15-30) in the Eastern Caribbean. Ultimately, STWT offers a strategy to prepare young people with disabilities for life, work, and citizenship by systematically expanding access to and strengthening systems for developing a breadth of skills through multiple learning pathways – formal, non-formal, on the job and community based.

Research referenced throughout this study consistently emphasizes that effective STWT must be comprehensive and holistic in nature. According to UNICEF (2019a), STWT should be characterized by comprehensive interventions responding to multiple areas of need among youth, including school and community-based training and work experience, counseling, and career planning, as well as targeted follow-up based on individual need. The MoEYI's Policy on Special Education (2021) similarly identifies STWT planning and implementation as requiring the comprehensive involvement of students, families, schools, and community service-providers, using a multi-disciplinary team approach.

Thanks to decades of research on STWT globally, and particularly in the United States, there are a number of evidence-based practices that, when applied, support the likelihood of improved post-secondary transition outcomes. These strategies include community-based training experiences and vocational education; development of self-care, self-advocacy, social, and career awareness skills; interagency collaboration, parental involvement and mentorship, among others (Rowe et. al, 2021; Test et. al, 2009). When provided to youth with disabilities, each of these strategies can help support the chances of achieving employment, further education, or independent living after secondary school. This study will unpack in greater detail these and other factors that comprise a comprehensive STWT programme for students with disabilities in the context of Jamaica.

4. Stakeholder Engagement in STWT

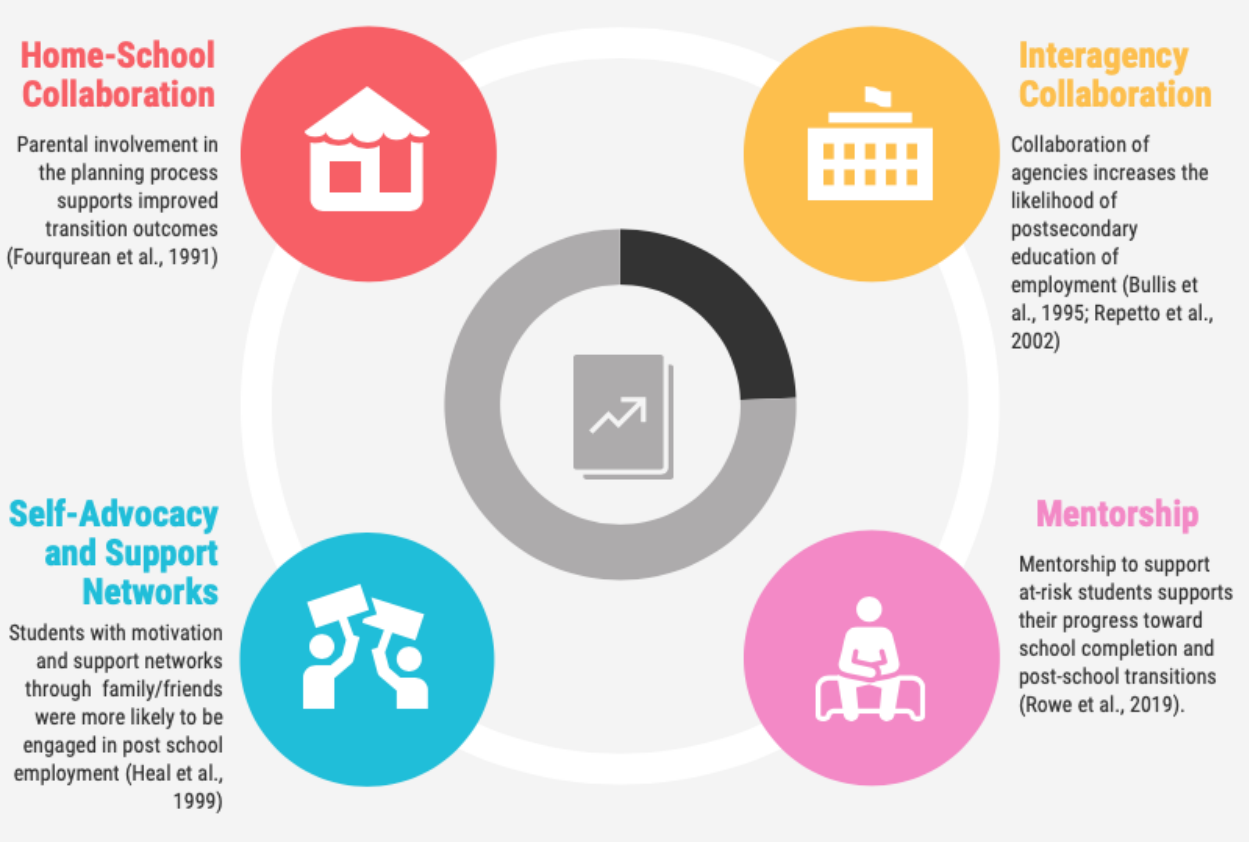
Effective transition planning for students with disabilities is characterized by the consistent involvement and participation of relevant stakeholders, including students and their families, general and special education personnel, guidance counsellors, and others from agencies or services outside the school. It is absolutely essential to engage parents and caregivers in the process of planning with their child during the transition from school to adult life. It is also important to identify the community supports that students need from community agencies and institutions, employers, and community members to successfully make the transition to further education, employment and community living. In the Jamaican context, there are sometimes few available resources outside of the student's teachers, guidance counsellors, and family members. Organizational collaborators such as Human Employment and Resource Training Trust/National Service Training Agency ("HEART Trust"), local universities and technical and vocational training (TVET) institutions, employment agencies, and other post-secondary services should be recruited to the maximum extent possible in supporting transition planning for students with disabilities.

The number and type of stakeholders involved in a student's transition depends on a variety of factors, including the type of school the student attends, the programmes available at the school, or the geographic location of the school. As we seek to improve transition practices, it is important to explore both evidence and context. The following sections provide an overview of the existing evidence-based practices for stakeholder engagement, and the reported successes and challenges that emerged during consultations with Jamaican stakeholders themselves.

4.1 Evidence for Stakeholder Engagement

A variety approaches for stakeholder engagement in STWT should be taken into consideration, which are supported by both an international evidence base and Jamaican stakeholder perspectives (see Exhibit 2). These approaches include home-school collaboration, interagency collaboration, self-advocacy and support networks, and mentorship.

Exhibit 2: Stakeholder Engagement in STWT



Home-school collaboration: Including parental involvement in the planning process improves transition outcomes (Fourqurean et al., 1991). One key theme that in research is the importance of home–school collaboration, including empowering an active role in parents and caregivers in supporting the student's transition process (Strnadová & Cumming, 2014). In addition, parent training supports parents' knowledge and support of transition services (Rowe et al., 2019). Parent training can include instruction that occurs between educators or service providers and parents that teaches parents how to work with their child to discover career interests, develop self-determination skills (e.g., making decision about daily activities at home, problem solving when challenges occur), and discuss goals their child seeks to achieve following school completion.

Interagency collaboration: These agencies are vital to successful STWT (Bullis et al 1995; Repetto et al 2002). They include community-based agencies, councils, business advisory boards, parent networks, disability-specific associations, job training, rehabilitation services, case management, family services, or guidance services and increase the likelihood of postsecondary education or employment**.** Although many such services are not widely available in Jamaica, those that are available have the potential to support improved transition outcomes, and the expansion of more services in future would confer benefits to youth with disabilities.

Student advocacy and support networks: Students who have motivation and support networks through family and friends are linked with increased likelihood of postschool employment, education, and independent living (Doren & Benz, 1998; Halpern et al., 1995). Such support can be self-asserted, provided by a family or friend, school network, or important individuals in the student's life. Such supports can increase the young person's

skillsets in the areas of self-sufficiency, community living, financial skills, and interpersonal skills (Heal et al, 1999).

Mentorship: Mentorship to support at-risk students increases their progress toward school completion and post-school transitions (Rowe et al., 2019). Check & Connect is one such evidence-based intervention that uses data to identify students at risk of dropping out and pairs the students with a school or community mentor to address each student's individual needs and help them progress toward school completion.

4.2 Situation of Stakeholder Engagement in Jamaica

In Jamaica, a wide variety of stakeholders support students with disabilities to plan for and achieve post-secondary transitions. Exhibit 3 depicts core stakeholders who may be involved in a student's transition.

Exhibit 3: Common STWT Stakeholders for Jamaican Students

School Stakeholders	Community Stakeholders	Post-Secondary Institutions
• *Student* • Principal • Classroom teacher • TVET instructor • Transition officer • Guidance counselor • APSE Coach	• *Parents, caregivers* • Employers or businesses offering work experience, apprenticeship, or volunteer experience • Disability-focused NGOs or DPOs • Community supports e.g., churches, town leaders	• HEART / NTA • Universities • Abilities Foundation • Employment agencies • Direct employers

Overall, stakeholders across the spectrum – from schools, community organizations, private sector partners, and government – described a widespread commitment to advocating for the rights and needs of persons with disabilities in Jamaica. Those involved in promoting STWT are generally passionate, well-aware of the capabilities and contributions of Jamaicans with disabilities to society and the workforce, and deeply committed to further advocacy. Additional findings, related to the areas of stakeholder engagement outlined in best practices are described below.

Home-school collaboration

- **Parent-to-Parent mentoring.** Some schools identified the use of highly active and engaged parents as a beneficial vehicle for promoting parent involvement in transition planning. This was described by some highly engaged parents themselves, who have worked to support other parents of students with disabilities in their school to access resources or learn about engaging their children. One organization has even provided training to parent mentors to further equip them for support to others. Formalizing parent-to-parent mentoring networks has the potential to better equip caregivers of students with disabilities to support their transition.

  Sharing examples of students' success with caregivers. Some schools have described documenting through photo or video examples of students' successful skill development or achievement in school, and sharing this evidence with caregivers. By sharing these success stories with parents, educators have described building

parents' awareness of their children's potential and recognition of their skills. As one educator explained, "when parents believe in the child's capacity, it makes all the difference."

- **Parental engagement challenges.** Some schools reported parents who are uninvolved in their student's educational experience and unwilling or unable to support transition planning. School stakeholders attributed such challenges to various factors, including a perceived protectiveness by parents of their children with disabilities in preparing to access community-based activities, fearfulness among parents of being judged by educators for disclosing their child's support needs, or limited availability by working parents with competing demands on time.

Interagency collaboration

- **Annual transition seminars.** One organization described holding transition seminars in June each year, to offer parents, teachers, and employers opportunities to talk about the transition process and better prepare for life after school. It would be beneficial to expand the concept of transition seminars to all schools as a structured opportunity to exchange knowledge and disseminate information. Such seminars could be held at least once per year in each school, with considerations for timing that enable further planning during the course of the schoolyear.

- **Showcasing successful employment stories with employers.** One strategy to combat ignorance or discrimination among employers is to share with them examples of successful employment of persons with disabilities. A variety of advocacy and community service organizations in Jamaica have and continue to undertake such advocacy work through conferences, webinars, and direct outreach. One example of these efforts was the Virtual Town Hall on Employment of Persons with Intellectual Disability in September 2021, where a panel of labour law, education, NGO, and government advocates came together to identify core priorities and practices supportive of post-secondary transitions. To expand this impact, the Jamaica Employers' Federation (JEF), Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ), and the Jamaica Business Development Corporation (JBDC) could serve as vehicles for sharing such awareness-raising materials with a wider variety of businesses yet to be reached.

- **Knowledge and skills of educators.** While some teachers and guidance counselors have been provided with specialized training on disability-inclusive education generally and transition planning specifically, this is not the case in all schools, and more variability exists in mainstream schools. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that only 27% of Jamaican primary and secondary schools sampled had any teachers trained to teach children with disabilities (Morris, 2021), and a 2013 statistic that only 1% of Jamaican general education teachers at that time were trained in special education (Jamaican Ministry of Education, 2013 as cited in Morris, 2021)[2]. There are also no known mandated training courses on disability-inclusive education provided to TVET instructors. As a result, the preparedness of school-based professionals to support students' transition is inconsistent between schools. Many stakeholders, including those representing schools, students and

[2] It is possible that these figures have grown substantially since this statistic was published in 2013.

caregivers, and various departments in the MoEYI described the importance of providing educators with further resources and training on supporting students' transition needs.

- **Barriers with employer engagement.** A common theme across both special and mainstream schools is the extreme difficulty in identifying willing employers to provide students with work experience, internships, volunteer work, or paid employment after graduation. Such difficulties are widely linked to a lack of awareness of the value persons with disabilities can contribute to a workplace, fear of liability or cost required, or ignorance around the required accommodations needed to enable persons with disabilities to succeed. While some schools have achieved inroads by developing long-term, trusting partnerships with select employers, there is still general consensus that such partnerships are too few to match the need among students with disabilities to access workplace experiences. Such challenges can be discouraging to educators, who commented that their best efforts may still be insufficient if employers are not more willing to provide opportunities to persons with disabilities.

Student advocacy and support networks and mentorship

- **Highly variable student engagement.** While some interviewees focused on the role of person-centered planning and allowing students themselves to guide every aspect of planning for their own future, such feedback was not widespread, and many respondents omitted mention of students themselves when describing the core priorities in transition planning. One respondent described the example of a child with a disability who was funneled into the profession of sewing due to the family's longstanding expertise in this area, despite the fact that the student herself was interested in food and nutrition. Placing the student at the center of the planning process is an essential and fairly simple practice, yet it is sometimes overlooked.

- **No mention of mentorship.** While APSE serves as a de-facto remedial education programme for students who struggle to learn for a variety of reasons in mainstream schools, no stakeholders described any explicit mentorship programme used to support STWT planning[3]. Pairing students who are at-risk with school or community-based mentors is supported by international evidence, but does not appear to be widely explored in Jamaica.

4.3 Recommendations

The findings in this section indicate that while work is currently being done to coordinate stakeholder engagement, more can be done to scale emerging practices and directly address barriers that exist.

[3] Mentorship was not a focal area of inquiry in this study, so it is possible that more is taking place that was not identified.

Recommendations for STWT Stakeholder Engagement

Home-School Collaboration

- Schools should provide caregivers with training on how to work with their child with a disability on discovering career interests, practicing self-determination skills, and helping their child to set post-school goals for transition.
- Expanding and formalizing parent-to-parent mentoring networks, and providing parent networks with training, can help to build stakeholder buy-in and engagement in disability-inclusive STWT planning.

Interagency Collaboration

- Government, community-based, private sector, and educational institutions should continue their robust advocacy and awareness-raising activities while endeavoring to expand, where possible, those who are reached and sensitized through their efforts.
- Publicize and support 'centres of excellence' or model institutions that demonstrate inclusivity in training or employing individuals with disabilities in certain occupations. From there, these model institutions can demonstrate to other institutions what is possible in including young people with disabilities.
- Increase government employment of case managers, transition officers, job coaches, etc. whose responsibility is to ensure STWT for youth with disabilities.

Student Advocacy and Support Networks

- Include as a part of transition planning the identification of student support networks and resources, and how the student will utilize these networks to achieve personal goals.
- Connect students with self-advocacy networks, leadership opportunities in clubs and societies, and promote the formation of student advocacy groups for consultation when developing programmes.

Mentorship

- Identify, train, and involve school and community-based mentors, tutors, or coaches who can support students' progress toward successful school completion.
- Link students with disabilities to professionals whose career aligns with students' own interests and aspirations, and facilitate virtual or face-to-face mentoring sessions, question and answer activities, and workplace visits.

5. Competencies and Skills to Prepare Students for STWT

There are a variety of competencies and skills all secondary-aged learners should master in order to prepare for independent living, work, or study after secondary school. What is common across all frameworks is that a comprehensive approach to STWT for students with and without disabilities needs to encompass development of foundational competencies and skills including literacy, numeracy, and self-care activities; cognitive, social, and emotional skills; and career preparation and work experience.

International organizations such as UNICEF, ILO, World Bank and others have also identified several key components of school-based STWT programmes that are occurring in countries across the globe. UNICEF's (2019b) report—Transitions from School to Work—presents a framework and identifies essential skills needed by youth for success in work and citizenship which encompass both the preparation for and actualization of STWT. These essential skills for securing, retaining, and thriving in work support young people who to develop a mix of foundational, transferable, career preparation and vocational skills, and digital skills that are increasingly being demanded by employers.

UNICEF's Categorization of STWT (2019b) includes:

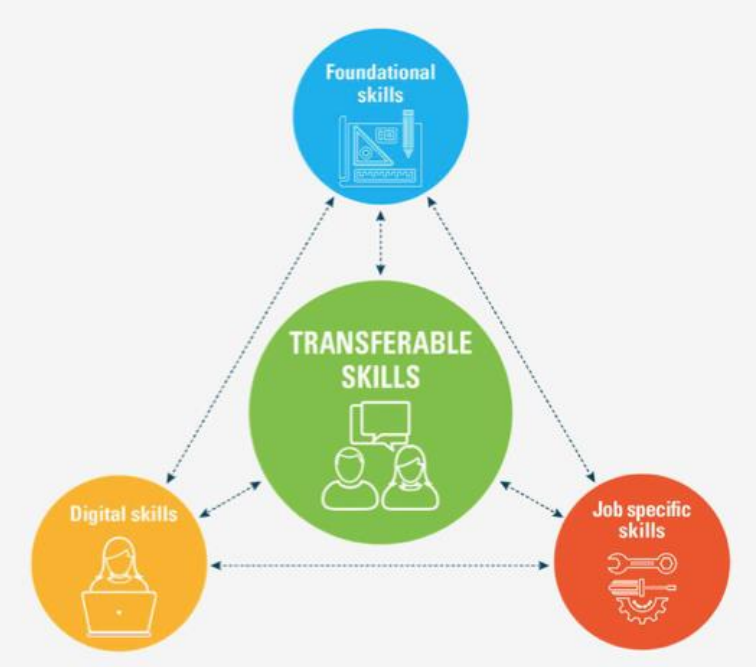
- The process of **preparing young people for transition** whereby young people have access to and can develop the skills (i.e., knowledge, competencies, attitudes and qualifications) required by the labour market to secure, retain and thrive in productive and decent employment, and adapt to the evolving economy.
- The process of **making the actual transition** whereby young people are able to smoothly access productive and decent work opportunities that make effective use of their skills.

The following sections briefly present a recommended competency framework for STWT, identify how this recommended framework links into existing curricula in Jamaica, and describe stakeholder feedback on desired competencies to be featured in STWT programmes.

5.1 Competency Frameworks for STWT

There are a variety of competency frameworks that can be used to measure the extent to which students are meeting desired goals in preparing students with disabilities for STWT. In Jamaica, there is no known consistent competency framework utilized in schools for this purpose, yet stakeholder consultations indicated an interest among educators to access such a framework. UNICEF outlines the foundational, transferable, and technical and vocational skills necessary for success in life and work (2019b) as a good framework for conceptualizing STWT (see Exhibit 4). However, it is important to note that this is not a framework specific to the supports required by persons with disabilities.

Exhibit 4: UNICEF's framework for skills necessary for STWT



Another framework that has been designed and tested for use among students with various disabilities is the Life Centered Education (LCE) curriculum matrix (Exhibit 5). This framework offers great import to the Jamaican context because the desired skills are both robust and generally transferrable between contexts. Although some sub-competencies may not apply to some individuals, or may require accommodations and support to achieve, the skills described in this matrix help to generate a useful list for secondary educators to support. This matrix is also widely used in international STWT programming, including in various regions of the United States and aligns well with the competencies outlined in Jamaica's National School Leaving (NSLC).

Exhibit 5: LCE Curriculum Matrix

Life Centered Education (LCE) Curriculum Matrix

Domain: DAILY LIVING SKILLS	
Competencies ▼	**Sub-competencies** ▼
Managing Personal Finances	• Count money and make correct change • Make responsible expenditures • Keep financial records • Calculate & pay taxes • Use credit responsibly • Use banking services
Selecting & Managing a Household	• Select adequate housing • Set up a household • Maintain home exterior and interior • Use appliances and tools
Caring for Personal Needs	• Obtain, interpret and understand health information • Demonstrate knowledge of physical fitness, nutrition, and weight • Exhibit proper grooming and hygiene • Dress appropriately • Demonstrate knowledge of common illness, prevention and treatment • Practice personal safety
Demonstrating Relationship Responsibilities	• Understand relationship roles and changes with friends and others • Understand relationship roles and changes with family • Demonstrate care of children
Buying, Preparing, and Consuming Food	• Plan and eat balanced meals • Purchase food • Store food • Clean food preparation areas • Preparing meals and cleaning up after dining • Demonstrate appropriate eating habits
Buying and Caring for Clothing	• Wash & clean clothing • Purchase clothing • Iron, mend, and store clothing
Exhibiting Responsible Citizenship	• Demonstrate knowledge of civil rights and responsibilities • Know nature of local, state, and federal governments • Demonstrate knowledge of the law and ability to follow the law • Demonstrate knowledge of citizen rights and responsibilities
Utilizing Recreational Facilities and Engaging in Leisure	• Demonstrate knowledge of available community resources • Choose and plan recreational activities • Demonstrate knowledge of the value of recreation • Engage in group and individual activities • Plan recreation and leisure activities
Choosing and Accessing Transportation	• Demonstrate knowledge of traffic rules and safety • Demonstrate knowledge and use of various means of transportation • Getting around the community • Drive a car

Domain: SELF DETERMINATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	
Competencies ▼	**Sub-competencies** ▼
Understanding Self-Determination	• Understand personal responsibility • Identify and understand motivation • Anticipate consequences to choices • Communicate needs
Being Self-Aware	• Understand personal characteristics and roles • Identify Needs: physical, emotional, social, and educational • Identify Preferences: physical, emotional, social, and educational • Describe other's perception of self • Demonstrate awareness of how one's behavior affects others
Developing Interpersonal Skills	• Demonstrating listening and responding skills •Establish and maintain close relationships • Make and maintain friendships • Develop and demonstrate appropriate behavior • Accept and give praise and criticism
Communicating With Others	• Communicate with understanding • Know subtleties of communication • Assertive and effective communication • Recognize and respond to emergency situations
Good Decision Making	• Problem-Solving • Identify and set goals • Develop plans and attain goals • Self-evaluation and feedback • Develop and evaluate alternatives
Developing Social Awareness	• Develop respect for the rights and properties of others • Recognize authority and follow instructions • Demonstrate appropriate behavior in public settings • Understand the motivations of others
Understanding Disability Rights and Responsibilities	• Identify and understand disability rights and responsibilities • Identify and appropriately access needed services and supports

Domain: EMPLOYMENT SKILLS	
Competencies ▼	**Sub-competencies** ▼
Knowing and Exploring Employment Possibilities	• Identify personal values met through work • Identify societal values met through work • Identify remunerative aspects of work • Locate sources of employment and training information • Classify jobs into employment categories • Investigate local employment and training opportunities
Exploring Employment Choices	• Identify major employment interests • Identify employment aptitudes • Investigate realistic employment Identify requirements of desired and available employment • Identify major employment needs
Seeking, Securing, and Maintaining Employment	• Search for a job • Apply for a job • Interview for a job • Solve job related problems • Functions of meeting and exceeding job standards • Maintain and advance in employment
Exhibiting Appropriate Employment Skills	• Follow directions and observe regulations • Recognize importance of attendance and punctuality • Recognize importance of supervision • Demonstrate knowledge of work place safety • Work with others • Meet demands for quality work • Work at expected levels of productivity

The LCE website includes many free lesson plans and resources that can help educators to support the development of the above competencies.

5.2 Linkages to the Jamaican Curriculum

The education system in Jamaica has been working to revise its national curriculum since 2009 with a final rollout of National Standards Curriculum (NSC) implemented for Grades 1-9 in 2016. These changes include the addition of new subjects, teaching and learning approaches, and new pathways to education, such as Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education (APSE) with special education supports. These pathways continue to embed the curricular proficiencies outlined in the NSC throughout student academic careers. Most notably, these changes include a shift to universal competencies to equip students with the tools necessary for success into adulthood that are well aligned with the scope of this project in the promotion of STWT. Furthermore, current and planned rollout of the National School Leaving Certificate (NSLC) across Jamaica is designed to ensure that students leaving secondary school are evaluated in a competency-based approach guided by their unique individual strengths and abilities. With appropriate training and guidance, the NSLC has the potential to be implicitly inclusive of students with disabilities by limiting the reliance on standardized, inflexible assessments and increasing focus on students' expression of knowledge in various forms.

This study reviewed the NSC and NSLC, along with the Curriculum for Students with Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (CSID, 2017), Self-Determination Curriculum (JAID, 2016), and HEART resources to assess linkages and alignment with STWT in general and the LCE Curriculum recommended for use in Jamaica. Each of these existing curricula are aligned with different LCE Curriculum domains in the areas of daily living skills, self-determination and interpersonal skills, and employment skills. In other words, the proposed embedding of the LCE as a framework for STWT skills development is completely compatible with existing curricula and guidance in use for students with disabilities in Jamaica. Examples of this alignment are provided below.

NSC and LCE

The LCE Curriculum was chosen for its flexibility for adaptation in local contexts. The curriculum can be infused into existing curricula or developed into self-standing coursework. For example, LCE lessons on personal finance could easily be incorporated into the NSC curricular units in Mathematics and the competencies related social awareness and understanding civil rights and responsibilities align well with attainment targets outlined in the NSC Social Studies Curriculum. In addition, the NSC has outlined alternative pathways to secondary education that cater to the multiple intelligences and individualized support needs for students with diverse needs. This enables educators to provide a functional academic approach at the secondary level that allows all students to develop the "knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes which will have them ready for the work of work" (see NSC Curriculum, APSE).

NSLC and LCE

The NSLC is designed for use among students with and without disabilities nationally. This certificate allows schools to document a student's personal growth and achievement across their high school career, and is comprised of 13 competencies combining knowledge, skills, and attitudes that aim to prepare students for the workplace, further education, community participation, and personal development. These competencies are developed within content subject areas and include items relevant to the LCE in the areas of collaboration and

cooperative teamwork, entrepreneurial skills, and self-management. The element of community service within the NSLC is also an ideal opportunity for students with disabilities to strengthen and demonstrate their competencies related to STWT.

CSID and LCE

In 2017, the MoEYI alongside UNICEF published the CSID, geared toward "academic and social adjustment" and the "acquisition of life skills" (p.16). The CSID is well-aligned with the attainment targets addressed by the NSC, which is in line with international good practice that continues to hold a high academic bar for all children to reach their maximum potential. The vision of this curriculum is closely linked to the LCE Curriculum domain of Daily Living Skills in the areas of supporting independence, practical skills for self-sufficiency, interpersonal skills, and self-advocacy skills.

Self-Determination and LCE

One of LCE curriculum's three core domains is "Self-Determination and Interpersonal Skills," which includes understanding the concept of self-determination, being self-aware, developing the communication and interpersonal skills to both understand and communicate personal needs, decision-making, social awareness, and an understanding of disability rights. These measures are necessary for navigating workplace environments successfully and asserting agency. Each of these domains is addressed in detail through the self-determination curriculum currently in use across many institutions supporting persons with intellectual disability, which includes lesson plans, games, and strategies to support students with disabilities to develop these important skills.

HEART Trust / NSTA and LCE

As the leading provider of vocational training in Jamaica, the objective of HEART's training programmes links clearly with the LCE Curriculum's domain "Employment Skills." The four sub-domains of the LCE "Employment Skills" are: knowing and exploring employment possibilities; exploring employment choices; seeking, securing, and maintaining employment; and exhibiting appropriate employment skills. These are all skills that HEART programming at the secondary and post-secondary level directly aims to support. As will be discussed in other sections of this report, however, there may exist further opportunities to ensure that HEART's approach to building these skills among youth with disabilities is further informed by best practice approaches for disability-inclusive education.

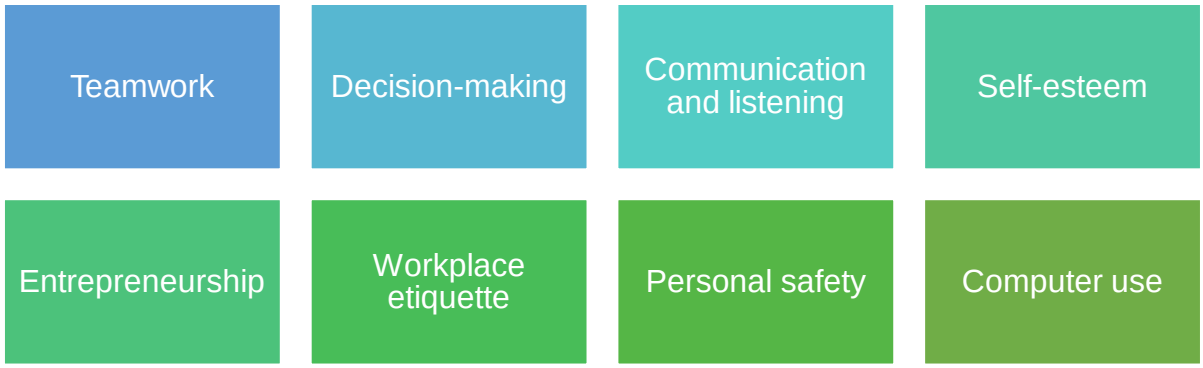
5.3 Feedback on Competencies from Jamaican Stakeholders

Interviewees in Jamaica were asked to identify the core competencies or skills needed to support students with disabilities to prepare for post-secondary transitions. Among respondents, the most common suggestions pertained to the importance of "soft skills" or social-emotional skills, including teamwork and collaboration, understanding others' emotions, and resiliency in the face of challenge. These were all mentioned with greater frequency than technical or academic skills given the role they play in so many workplaces. Related skills included mention of decision-making and developing self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. Other personal development skills mentioned include independent living skills and listening skills.

Competencies and skills more directly linked to employment included entrepreneurship skills, computer skills, money management, workplace etiquette and behavior, rights and responsibilities of workers, and personal safety in the workplace. Finally, one respondent drew attention to the importance of teaching young people professionalism in social media

use, noting that many youth may be unaware that employers can view students' social media presence when evaluating job applications. Examples of these recommended skills are depicted in Exhibit 6 below.

Exhibit 6: Core Skills Recommended by Jamaican Stakeholders



5.4 Recommendations for Competencies and Skills

The following recommendations can help to guide the standardization of a competency-based framework for STWT, and linkages to the existing NSLC assessment processes.

Recommendations for Competencies and Skills

- Training to educators and guidance counselors on disability-inclusive STWT should linked to a competency framework, such as the LCE Curriculum Matrix, which is compatible with existing curriculum and assessment frameworks in Jamaica.
- All youth should receive support to develop foundational, functional daily living, and digital knowledge and skills; cognitive, social, and emotional skills; and career and work readiness skills.
- The NSLC guidance may benefit from an explanation of Universal Design for Assessment (UDA), a framework that supports students with and without disabilities to express their understanding during assessments in ways that complement their strengths and support needs.

6. Individual plan development for post-secondary transition

Student-focused individualized planning for transition is the foundation for supporting students with disabilities and families in setting future goals for further education, employment, community living, and citizenship beyond secondary school. Currently in Jamaica, Individual Intervention Plans (IIPs) are recommended for use for all students with a special educational need. These plans help to set out students' goals, strengths, weaknesses, instructional objectives, and required accommodations or modifications. However, these plans are not designed to be specific to transition. They are intended to be developed in collaboration between teachers, principals, parents, and special needs coordinators.

Person-Centered Plans (PCPs) are another way to identify a student's individual goals and to help students, families, and professionals craft plans that will support students as they strive to achieve their dreams. Most importantly, the student is always at the center of a PCP and is involved from start to finish in the development of the plan. The development of a PCP is guided by a facilitator, who needs to be a good listener, work creatively to shape the dreams of the individual, discover the capacities within the individual and within the community, and be a community builder (Wells & Sheehey, 2012).

While much academic research on person-centered planning is grounded in institutions of the global North, there are many countries in the global South that are implementing such practices on smaller scales. For example, Personal Futures Planning is a website sponsored by Perkins International which offers resources on person-centered STWT for stakeholders across Asia. The website includes case studies, resources, and example transition plans for people with vision disabilities across ten Asian nations.

6.1 Evidence Base for Individualized Planning

Irrespective of the specific model or approach used to support student planning, research has shown students' individualized planning should be (Exhibit 7):

- **Person-centered:** Plans should be driven by an individual's interests, preferences, strengths, and needs. They should focus on deeply discussing a student's academic, career, and personal goals; learning and personality styles; and linking students with plans or resources that help them to achieve their goals (Rowe et al., 2019; NACAC, 2015). Identifying employment interests is another key step in avoiding future misemployment of a student in a field that doesn't match their talents or interests (Turner et al., 2011).

- **Self-Determined:** Students who develop self-advocacy and self-determination skills are linked to increased likelihood of transitioning to post-secondary education or employment (Shogren et al., 2007; Wehmeyer et al., 2007). Individualized plans should outline the ways in which students may develop these skills, linking to curriculum and competency frameworks. Specifically, students should be able to develop problem-solving skills, identify meaningful learning goals, make progress towards these goals, achieve positive school outcomes, and through these tasks become more self-determined. The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) is one approach designed to provide a model of instruction to enable educators to teach students to self-direct the instructional

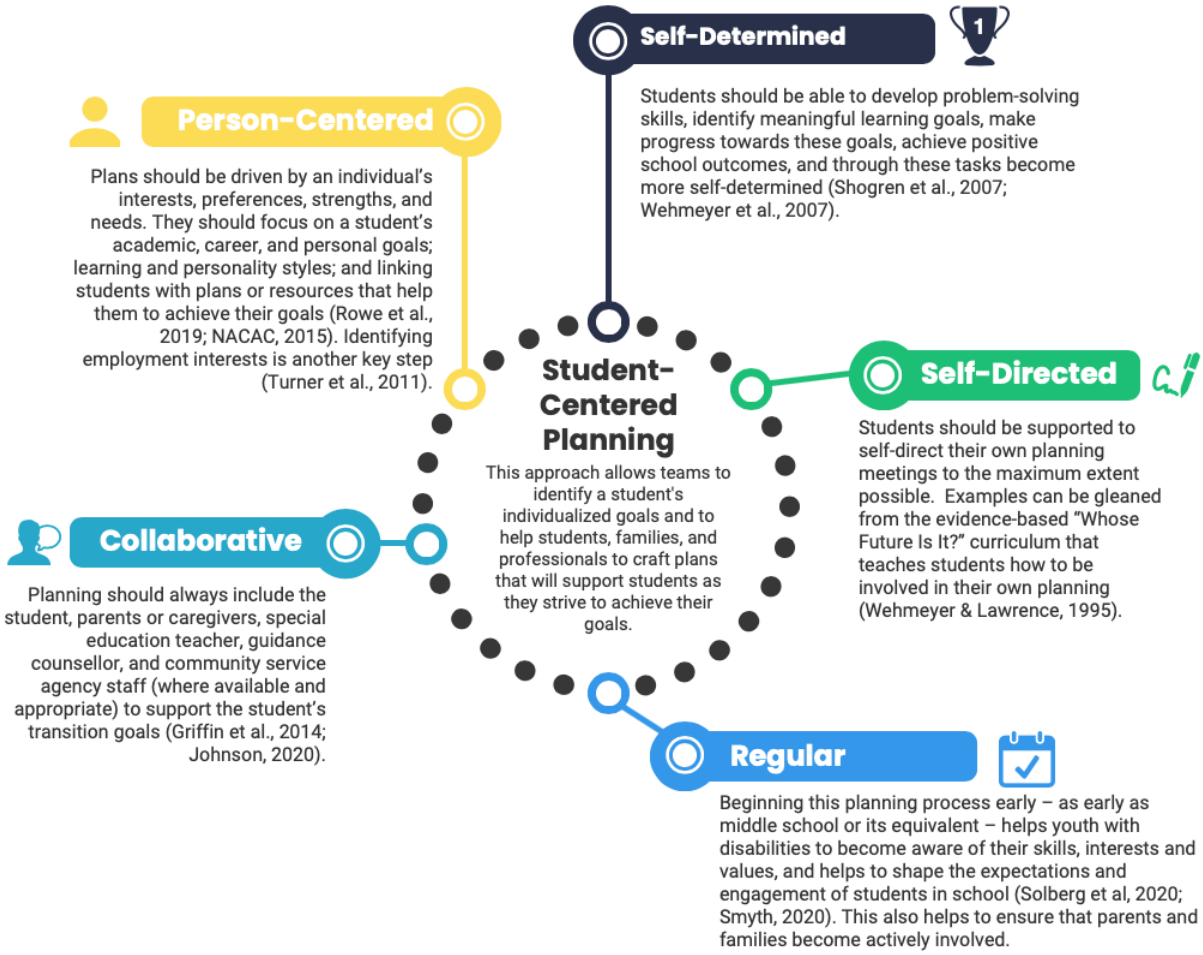
process to achieve educationally relevant goals, enhance self-determination, and support students in planning for transition (Shogren et al., 2019).

- **Self-Directed:** Students should be supported to self-direct their own planning meetings to the maximum extent possible. Examples can be gleaned from the evidence-based "Whose Future Is It?" curriculum that teaches students how to be involved in their own planning (Wehmeyer & Lawrence, 1995). This curriculum includes four instructional units that focus on teaching students with disabilities to lead a meeting, report interests, report skills, and report options (Rowe et al., 2019). In addition, the self-directed individualized education plan (IEP) (Martin et al., 2006) is a tested model of IEP planning that teaches student skills essential in leading and guiding their own IEP transition planning meetings.

- **Regular:** Planning meetings should take place annually and begin early in a student's secondary education. Beginning this planning process early – as early as middle school or its equivalent – helps youth with disabilities to become aware of their skills, interests and values, and helps to shape the expectations and engagement of students in school (Solberg et al, 2020; Smyth, 2020). This also helps to ensure that parents and families become actively involved at an early stage.

- **Collaborative:** Planning should always be a collaborative effort. Planning should always include the student, parents or caregivers, special education teacher, guidance counsellor, and community service agency staff (where available and appropriate) to support the student's transition goals (Griffin et al., 2014; Johnson, 2020).

Exhibit 7: Dimensions of Person-Centered Planning



6.2 Situation of STWT Planning for Students with Disabilities in Jamaica

Stakeholders in Jamaica were generally forthcoming about what planning efforts they do undertake for students with disabilities, but also where their current efforts have gaps and needs for further support. Only one interviewee was able to describe the importance of person-centered planning, others appeared to understand the concept but were unaware of the name, and others still were unaware of either the name or the concept. The following strategies were reported to positively impact STWT planning for students with disabilities in Jamaica:

- **Some special schools have robust STWT planning efforts.** Schools supporting students with intellectual disability generally have access to a written transition programme which helps to guide the planning process for secondary-aged students, with a focus on person-centered planning. This written guidance has been refined over decades of practical learning from those affiliated with JAID. Other schools supporting students with hearing or vision disabilities also have transition curricula in place, but it was not possible to review these materials for this study. Overall, educators from segregated schools with this background or expertise in transition planning have great potential to serve as advisors or mentors to other school professionals in Jamaica–including those in mainstream schools—who have not yet had this exposure.

- **Pre-service training prepares new special education graduates.** Two teacher training colleges preparing future special educators were interviewed for this study, and both indicated that special educators have access to a STWT course as part of their curriculum[4]. The inclusion of such a course in the teachers' pre-service training is an invaluable asset to the future teacher workforce in Jamaica and is critical in paving the way for a future generation of teachers to effectively support STWT planning for students with disabilities. One respondent indicated that an important need is for school principals to be aware that recent graduates possess this training, as they may be unaware such skills are included in the training programme.

The following challenges were reported around stakeholder engagement in Jamaica:

- **No formalized planning system for students with disabilities.** Some special schools have long-standing histories of conducting person-centered transition plans, yet such schools are the minority. Diverse stakeholders including government, school, and student representatives expressed an interest in more resources and structure in the STWT planning process at the secondary level, including the provision of a Transition Planning Template. This includes guidance counselors in mainstream schools, who currently lack a standardized system for supporting their students to plan for post-secondary transitions, and often lack any specialized training on disability-inclusive education more broadly.

- **Limited or no training on disability-inclusive STWT in mainstream schools.** When surveyed on what training teachers or guidance counselors receive to provide students with STWT support, special school respondents were more likely to reference access to training than mainstream school respondents. Some respondents referenced workshops and seminars facilitated by JAID, the MoEYI's Special Education and Guidance and Counselling Units, or Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), yet others had no such access. While many teachers and guidance counselors in mainstream schools are passionately committed to supporting their students' transition planning, they lack training on disability inclusion issues and desire further resources to support their students.

- **Inconsistent involvement among parents and caregivers in planning.** In a small focus group consultation with highly active parents of students with disabilities attending special schools, most were unable to speak to the transition planning activities that take place with their child at school. Other school-level respondents describe the situation of some parents that are disengaged in their children's education, or do not believe in their children's capabilities. This suggests that there is scope for further involvement of parents in structured transition planning meetings.

- **Other vulnerable populations left behind.** A small number of respondents drew attention to the challenges faced by other vulnerable Jamaican youth. This includes those living in state care homes with or without identified disabilities, along with those in mainstream schools who struggle to learn and may have unidentified special educational needs. Other educators identified the unique challenges that they face in supporting the transition process for students who board at school and may need additional help learning to live in a home environment while pursuing further study or work. Stakeholders identified that such individuals are likely to face significant challenges transitioning into the

[4] Special thanks to one pre-service college that graciously sent the full package of syllabi for every single course in the special education programme.

workforce and gaining employment without further guidance. These respondents flagged that any STWT planning processes should be sure to engage vulnerable populations of youth in addition to those identified with specific disabilities.

- **Limited human resourcing for planning supports.** While most schools have staff responsible for supporting STWT for students with and without disabilities, many school respondents flagged that the human resourcing they have available to support their students is insufficient to meet the need. One special school representative said that producing fully functioning IIPs is "next to impossible" given the need for guidance counsellors to support across entire schools with large numbers of students. Another respondent familiar with the APSE programme described the risk of the resources invested in this programme "going to waste" because there are insufficient monetary resources for paraprofessionals and other support staff that would help students with difficulty learning to succeed in mainstream schools. Such limitations in available human resourcing present challenges in adding further transition planning responsibilities to school staff, and link to the importance of identifying transition teams in schools to ensure that no one individual is left responsible for all students' transition planning.

6.3 Recommendations for Individualized Planning

The following recommendations may help to standardize and improve the quality of person-centered transition planning for students with disabilities in Jamaica.

Recommendations for STWT Planning in Jamaica

- A standardized Transition Planning Template should be provided and mandated for use in all secondary schools supporting students with disabilities, led by a team approach to reduce the pressure for any one individual to lead schoolwide transition planning. Once finalized, this Template should also be shared with all pre-service training institutions for inclusion in their existing STWT coursework.
- Guidance counselors and teachers should have access to a transition manual which guides their support to person-centered transition planning with students with disabilities, and all guidance counselors in mainstream schools should have access to training on supporting students with disabilities in all aspects of their role.
- The STWT guidance produced for supporting students with disabilities should be made widely available to any secondary-aged student who is "struggling" for any reason, including those from state care homes or with undiagnosed special educational needs. It should also include additional recommendations on support to students transitioning from boarding schools.
- Staff from special schools should be utilized as a resource for sharing their lessons learned in transition planning for students with disabilities, including with staff in mainstream schools who have comparably less experience.

7. School-Based Curricula

Curriculum is composed of a set of learning activities designed to accomplish specific objectives. Curriculum is also defined as a series of learning outcomes that include student competencies essential in reaching desired postschool outcomes. The development of an ideal transition programme will address both the planning and preparation students with disabilities need to receive in order to acquire important skills they need to become functional in further education, employment, independent living, and everyday life. Exhibit 8 displays the skills that should be covered in any curriculum framework. Unsurprisingly, many of these *skills* that students should develop in school are linked to the *planning components* described above.

Exhibit 8: Core Skillsets of School-based Curricula

In this situational study of Jamaica, existing curricula used nationally already embed many of these skillsets into ongoing work across a variety of subject areas and grade levels (discussed previously). For example, the Self-Determination Curriculum supports self-awareness skills, self-determination skills, and goal setting and planning, while most TVET and HEART curricula focus on experiential learning opportunities. Beyond what is described in national curricula, other curriculum resources and strategies are used to support students' preparedness for post-secondary transitions. The following sections outline the evidence base for these skills, their current use in Jamaican schools, and recommendations for future curriculum considerations.

7.1 International Evidence for STWT School-based Curricula

When considering the development of school-based curricula to support the objective of STWT for all students generally and students with disabilities specifically, it is important to define core skillsets and the evidence for their development. These core skillsets include self-awareness, self-determination, goal setting and plan development, and experiential learning opportunities.

Self-awareness Skills

As students think about their future beyond secondary school, they must know and understand themselves before they can tell others what they want or need. Understanding their interests, preferences, and strengths is a first step toward planning for the future. A wide range of formal and informal tools are available to help students think and about and identify future interests, preferences, and strengths. This includes age-appropriate transition assessments, career quizzes, and interest assessments. Many curricular options exist that include interactive quizzes, activities, and resources to develop self-awareness skills.

Self-determination Skills

Youth who are self-determined are able to apply problem-solving and decision-making skills to achieve their goals. This includes understanding individual interests, strengths, and areas of support need. People who are self-determined are able to empower themselves to take charge of their lives and future. Secondary school educators can support youths' self-determination skills development through self-regulating and self-managing day-to-day actions (e.g., getting up for school, gathering all of the materials needed for the day), creating plans to achieve goals (e.g., making a schedule of due dates for assignments), and demonstrating self-advocacy and leadership (e.g., asking questions about an assignment they may not understand or volunteer to help in the school).

Goal Setting and Planning Skills

Working with students to identify future goals for further education and training, employment, and independent living is a key part of developing a STWT plan. Planning skills can and should be embedded through a child's academic journey through the use of the principles of person-centered planning, which is designed to engage teachers, family members, friends, and others in the student network to support the development of the person-centered plan and the inclusion of students as active participants in their planning meetings. Curriculum in this area often overlap with self-determination skillsets and educators should look for a curriculum that addresses skillset objectives in a comprehensive manner.

Experiential Learning Opportunities

Research shows that students who experience education and career development can have positive post-secondary outcomes. "Work experiences, preferably connected to curriculum content; student-centered individualized education programmes that drive instruction; family involvement in and support of education and career development activities; and linkages to individually determined support services have all been proven, by both practice and research, to lead to the education and employment success of all youth, including youth with disabilities" (NCWD/Youth, 2019). As described previously, these experiences should begin as early as possible in a student's education.

7.2 Existing STWT School-based Curricula in Jamaica

The four major categories of skills described above are currently applied in some STWT programmes supporting students with disabilities in Jamaica, but not universally across schools. The following section describes the way school-based STWT curricula are currently delivered in schools.

- **Self-awareness Skills in Jamaica**

  Guidance counselors in various special schools supporting students with different disabilities described the use of interest surveys, personality tests, and career tests with students, generally beginning at ages 15-16. In the electronic survey completed by special and mainstream school representatives, no respondents made reference to such tools. One respondent with links to guidance counseling indicated that such tools are in use by some guidance counselors nationally, but there are no standardized resources provided, and many guidance counselors must seek out resources and sometimes purchase them out-of-pocket. As such, there is significant room for expansion on instruction of self-awareness skills in Jamaican STWT programmes.

- **Self-determination Skills in Jamaica**

A self-determination curriculum is in use for students with intellectual disability in Jamaica. This curriculum was developed through JAID's leadership and used in school settings where students with intellectual disability are enrolled. The curriculum includes modules on autonomy (self-awareness, choice-making, decision-making, problem-solving), self-regulation (goal-setting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation), and self-realization (locus of control, positive attributions, independence). Lesson plans include the use of videos, games, dialogue, simulation, and the use of posters and charts. These skillsets are grounded in an international evidence base of best practice related to skill development for youth with disabilities, and have the potential to benefit other students with disabilities in Jamaica beyond those currently supported.

- **Goal Setting and Planning Skills in Jamaica**
  Few interview respondents described the strategies they use to support students with disabilities to set individual goals and make personal plans. Former special school students and parents of students with disabilities described teachers and support staff who regularly helped them to identify personal goals and provided support to develop skills to achieve those goals. The self-determination curriculum referenced above also has content which supports goal setting and planning. Beyond the special schools, it was challenging to determine the extent to which goal setting and planning skills are currently embedded in mainstream school curricula or guidance programmes.

- **Experiential Learning Opportunities in Jamaica**
  There are a variety of experiential learning opportunities taking place, but it is challenging to ascertain the scale at which they occur across all schools serving students with disabilities, especially mainstream schools. One special school respondent described conducting annual field visits with students in Grade 11 to 5-6 tertiary institutions in Jamaica. A government respondent suggested the use of virtual visits to post-secondary institutions, although this practice was not described by any school respondents. In addition, a special school representative described providing students with access to annual career fairs in Kingston, a useful resource for those students whose schools are located in close proximity to such events. National Careers Week, run annually across the nation, is another forum that helps provide employment resources and information to secondary-aged students in Jamaica.

  One stakeholder supporting students with intellectual disability described the importance of finding opportunities for students to develop and exhibit leadership skills during their secondary education. This respondent explained that it may be time-consuming to help students with disabilities to act as leaders of their own clubs and societies, but such efforts are worthwhile in the gains students demonstrate. For example, students can be provided with step-by-step notes for leading a school club meeting and be empowered to serve as leaders or presidents of various societies.

  Lastly, various special school respondents and former students spoke of teachers' and guidance counselors' support to students in developing resumes, choosing colleges, applying to jobs, and filling out relevant documentation. Some schools also described the use of mock interviews as a strategy to help students build confidence and skills in interviewing prior to leaving school. It was not possible to ascertain in the electronic survey the extent to which mainstream educators are supporting students with disabilities in these activities, although they generally fall under the remit of guidance counselors who are present in each school.

Additional Activities

In addition to the core skillsets listed above, common skills development areas among students with disabilities include task analysis strategies, orientation and mobility for students with vision impairment (foundational skills), and computer literacy skills (digital skills). These are described below.

- **Task analysis.** Some special educators, parents, and students described the use of task analysis strategies to help break up skill development activities into component parts. This is a practice most widely described among teachers supporting students with intellectual disability. Additionally, interviewees representing pre-service teacher training institutions indicated that mandatory introductory special education coursework is required of all pre-service educators nationally, and not just those whose major is special education, and that this coursework includes task analysis, differentiation, and explicit/direct instruction. This is a strength in that it helps to prepare all teachers to consider step-by-step strategies that may support transition-related skills development. Task analysis should feature in the skill development activities of all Jamaican secondary students as a strategy to inclusively prepare young people for the skills they need for work and independent life.

- **Orientation and mobility.** The main educational institution supporting secondary-aged students who have vision impairments has been widely credited as providing students with strong workplace readiness skills for graduation. One such skill for students who are blind or have low vision is orientation and mobility training, and respondents indicated this skill is successfully taught to enrolled students. Orientation and mobility is an essential prerequisite for independent life after secondary school, including access to work or further education according to student goals.

- **Computer literacy needs.** Although technology skills are essential to a 21st century economy and many workplaces, respondents representing students, teachers, and government described the importance of improving instruction to secondary-aged learners in computer skills. While some schools are reported to have access to computers for learners, they may not have instructors with adequate skills or expertise. Another respondent identified the importance of linking students in their job hunts with new and emerging careers, noting that technology is a core area, and teachers of students with disabilities may wish to strengthen students' use of assistive technology in preparation for such work.

It is clear from interviews with stakeholders that improvements can be made to both standardize and scale curricular efforts to support students' skill development as they transition. The study authors note a strength in the area of offering experiential learning opportunities for students and recommend these practices be scaled to all schools. Beyond those skills that are learned on the school campus, there are other essential workplace skills gleaned through TVET, work experience, and volunteer work, which are discussed further in the next chapter.

7.3 Recommendations for School-Based Curricula

The following recommendations may guide the content and delivery of school-based curricula in Jamaica that prepare students with disabilities for STWT.

Recommendations for School-Based Curricula

- All students with disabilities should receive support in their studies to develop self-awareness and self-advocacy skills, setting individual goals, and demonstrating leadership. The self-determination curriculum in Jamaica is one resource that hones these skills. Jamaican educators can also make use of a plethora of ready-developed, free online resources, customizing to individual needs as appropriate.
- Teachers and guidance counselors nationally should have access to the tools and resources they need to support every student to identify strengths, career plans, and apply for jobs or continuing education. Some segregated special schools have resources developed over time that can benefit students with disabilities in mainstream schools.
- Schools should plan annually to provide students with opportunities to access career fairs, university visits, or other virtual or in-person events that promote readiness for transition.
- Teachers and guidance counsellors must identify opportunities and provide the necessary supports for students with disabilities to develop and showcase leadership skills, including in school-based clubs and societies.
- Teachers and guidance counselors in segregated and mainstream schools should use task analysis strategies to support skill development among struggling learners. They may consider expanding this strategy to include video modeling for multistep tasks, a practice supported by international research (Rowe et al., 2019), where such resources are available.
- The MoEYI should develop or share (if existing) its plan to help all secondary schools provide students with training in the use of computers and information technology as a core employment skill.

8. TVET, Work Experience, and Volunteerism

In addition to the school-based curricula discussed in the previous section, work-related experience is particularly essential to STWT planning given the robust evidence base that increased exposure to work and community-based skill development leads to increased prospects of post-secondary employment (NCWD/Youth, 2019). In Jamaica, most secondary schools offer students a variety of opportunities to be exposed to school-based TVET and community-based work experience before graduation. However, there is a need to increase the breadth and depth of experiences offered to students with disabilities. The following sections outline the situation of practical experiences for students with disabilities as it pertains to TVET, work experience, and community volunteerism in Jamaica (see Exhibit 9).

8.1 International Evidence for Employment Skills

The following international research articulates some core contributors to students' successful post-secondary access to employment and education, as it pertains to TVET, work experience, and volunteerism during secondary school.

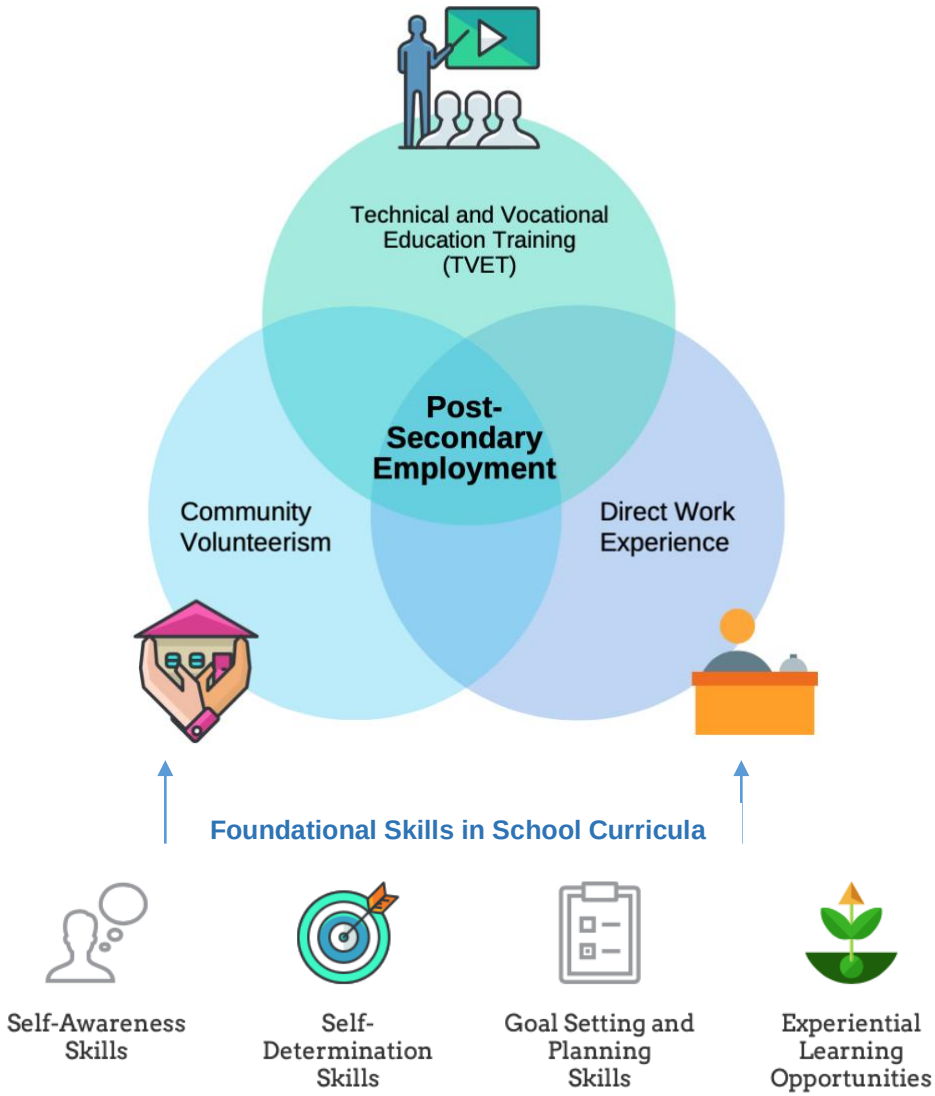
- **Importance of inclusive education.** While many students with disabilities in Jamaica are likely to transition to work from segregated secondary schools, there is robust international evidence that students transitioning from general education settings are five times more likely to participate in postsecondary education, employment, or independent living than students transitioning from segregated settings (Heal et al 1997; Leonard et al 1999; Baer et al 2003; Halpern et al 1995). Yet, a major challenge in the Jamaican context is the overwhelming lack of enrollment among students with identified disabilities in inclusive educational settings, with as few as 4,000 out of 40,000 children with disabilities enrolled in regular schools (Gilchrist, 2015 as cited in Floyd, 2021).

- **Formal vocational training.** There is a robust and lengthy evidence base that access to vocational training, work study, and study of occupational courses is significantly linked with increased likelihood of students with disabilities to access education or employment after secondary school (Halpern et al 1995; Heal & Rusch, 1994; Baer et al 2003; Harvey 2002; Leonard et al 1999). One such evidence-based example in the United States is the Bridges from School to Work program, which connects youth with disabilities aged 17-24 in 12 cities to vocational training, coaching, and job mentorship services.

- **Early work experiences.** Work experience while students are still in secondary school has been found to be the **single strongest predictor of gaining open employment** among youth with disabilities, including intellectual disability, and should be viewed as a critical component of STWT programmes. These experiences help students to not only develop job-specific technical knowledge, but also to develop transferrable skills. While unpaid experience supports increased likelihood of employment, paid employment or work experience in high school is linked to significant improvements in education, employment, and independent living post-school (Benz et al 2000; 1997; Bullis et al, 1995). In one study, students who had held a job By the time they left high school were five times likelier to be engaged in postschool employment than those who did not have job experiences (Rabren et al, 2002).

- **Community-based learning.** In one research study, students with disabilities who accessed community experiences (community-based training in non-school, natural environments focused on development of social skills, domestic skills, accessing public transport, or on-the-job training) were more likely to be engaged in postschool employment than their peers without access to these experiences (White & Weiner, 2004)

Exhibit 9: Practical experiences to promote post-secondary employment



8.2 Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) in Jamaica

The primary institutions responsible for preparing young Jamaicans with vocational skills and training are within the MoEYI's TVET Unit and the HEART Trust / NSTA ("HEART"). The TVET Unit is responsible for supporting school-based TVET programmes in the areas of business, home economics, agriculture, visual arts, and industrial education. There are a total of 16 members of the TVET Unit, based both in Kingston and regionally. The TVET Unit is guided by the 2014 National TVET Policy Strategy, which includes as a goal to "develop and implement standards to guide TVET providers in making provisions for persons with disabilities to access the training opportunities offered" (p. 21). Representatives of the TVET Unit were clear in identifying that their work is inclusive of students with disabilities nationally.

Alongside the MoEYI's TVET Unit, HEART is the chief national institution supporting vocational training for students aged 17 years and older. HEART has over 2,000 employees, and its operations are funded through a 3% legally mandated industry employer tax. HEART employs Career Services Officers in each of the six regional offices, and Career Development Officers in each of its 28 TVET Institutes (previously called Vocational Training Centres). It delivers a wide variety of services across the areas of training services, social support and

mentoring, competence assessment, certification, job placement, and more. Like the TVET Unit, HEART interviewees were emphatic in their personal and professional commitment to making a difference in the lives of young people with disabilities; however, there is no known policy framework or guidance on the way in which HEART accommodates the needs of persons with disabilities.

The Empowerment Programme (administered by the National Youth Service) is one of the signature activities HEART offers to students with disabilities. The Empowerment Programme supports 300-400 persons with disabilities ages 17-34 annually to help them transition to work. The six-month programme employs job coaches who help guide students in exposure to different skill and employment areas. There is a residential 'bootcamp' component alongside a workplace placement component. Students receive a stipend while participating in the program, and employers are recruited to offer placements with the incentive of free trainee labour. Many stakeholders in the disability community praised the existence of this programme as a core outlet for offering work preparation to students with disabilities, but most were also quick to flag that this programme alone is insufficient to support the number of students with disabilities who need training nationally, and insufficient in duration to facilitate long-term skill development required by some students with disabilities.

Representatives of the TVET Unit and HEART were quick to agree that more can be done to support students with disabilities in Jamaica, noting that their individual determination to support such students cannot guide institutional change alone. Such a sentiment was widely echoed by interviewees for this study, who flagged some of the following core concerns:

- **Training needs among TVET instructors.** While TVET instructors are generally qualified with a minimum of a university degree, there are no requirements that instructors have any background or training in disability inclusive education. Furthermore, while intermittent workshops and seminars are offered to some, there is no standardized disability training for all TVET instructors in Jamaica. This has the potential to translate into a cadre of instructors who are skilled in their technical specialty areas but lack the preparation needed to translate this content to their student audience. In mainstream schools, there are also many other students without identified disabilities who may benefit from more inclusive instructional practices. As one stakeholder articulated, "there is a perception out there that only students who are 'slow' should be placed in TVET… It could be that the child has a disability…Sometimes we label children as 'troubled children,' but probably we are not catering to the children's needs."

- **Mandatory minimum class sizes.** Some special school stakeholders described encountering resistance from government counterparts in offering certain TVET courses with fewer than 15 students enrolled. Special school stakeholders identified this as an area of concern as the schools generally aim for smaller student-teacher ratios as consistent with international best practice for students with significant support needs, including psychosocial development needs. When this feedback was raised to HEART and TVET representatives, they stated that 15:1 ratios are targets but not minimum quotas, and classes can run with fewer students enrolled. This may be an area that requires further clarification to ensure TVET providers and recipients have a shared understanding around class sizes.

- **Matriculation and examination challenges.** Representatives of various stakeholder groups consistently flagged that the matriculation and examination requirements among TVET providers must be re-examined and improved to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities. Respondents representing both teachers and government identified that students with disabilities are sometimes unable to pass the entrance examinations required for TVET courses, and there is no systematic approach to providing testing accommodations or modifications consistent with disability inclusion. While Jamaica's Disabilities Act (Government of Jamaica, 2014) does allow for 'reasonable arrangements,' it is unclear how this policy translates into practice for TVET institutions.

- **Limited intra-school collaboration.** There is limited transition-related collaboration between segregated special schools and general education schools located in geographic proximity to one another, despite the fact that special schools generally have access to fewer career training programmes given the number of students enrolled. Historically, there are examples where such efforts have been undertaken, but they are not widespread. However, when raised by the study authors, government respondents were receptive to the suggestion that such relationships can be increased. In fact, one government department identified that Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) can be developed between schools to formalize these relationships. Recent and ongoing material support from Digicel Foundation and the MoEYI have helped to retrofit the TVET facilities at several segregated special schools, efforts that the study authors note could be less focal in future if inter-school partnerships with mainstream schools are strengthened.

Recommendations for TVET Sector

- HEART should increase its focus on inclusion by ensuring a Disability Inclusion Policy and Implementation Plan is in place and accessible to all employees.
- HEART should hire officers within the organization whose core responsibility is promoting access and inclusion to TVET programming among Jamaicans with disabilities. Alternatively, Inclusion Focal Points could be nominated within each department and region, so long as they are allotted sufficient time in their schedule to focus on these responsibilities.
- The MoEYI's TVET Unit and HEART should ensure all employees and direct training professionals have access to mandatory disability inclusion awareness training. To maximise cost efficiency and scalability, this could take place in a pre-recorded or web-based format to enable the course to be taken at any time by newly hired individuals. The content may benefit from an approach grounded in Universal Design for Learning pedagogies to support struggling learners with and without identified disabilities, as well as differentiated instruction and task analysis approaches that specifically support learners with specific support needs.
- The TVET Unit and HEART should collaborate with representatives of special education and disability organizations to ensure matriculation and examination requirements are inclusive of persons with disabilities and aligned with the Disabilities Act. Expertise related to accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities already exists among special education experts nationally, and further expertise may be beneficial as it pertains to Universal Design for Assessment (UDA) approaches that implicitly support struggling learners without identified disabilities.
- The MoEYI's TVET Unit should promote and formalize MOUs between neighboring schools or school clusters to expand the option of vocational training programmes available to students with disabilities.
- The MoEYI's TVET and Special Education Units may also consider collaborating to create virtual or face-to-face communities of practice where school clusters can share success stories and troubleshoot challenges related to finding work experience and training options for struggling students or students with disabilities. This would allow for sharing resources developed by some schools with other schools, increasing collaboration and coordination, and reducing duplication of efforts.

8.3 Work Experience

Approximately two-thirds of special and mainstream school representatives surveyed for this study indicated their school offers some work experience to their students, or as one former student with a disability phrased it, experiences that taught him how to "hustle." The duration and type of experience differs slightly between schools, in part due to the systems in place at each school, and in part due to the access to work experiences according to each region and its nearby businesses. For example, in the electronic survey to school stakeholders, two special schools described the Empowerment Programme as the only form of work experience offered, another special school described simulated work experience on the school campus starting at ages 15-16 followed by two-week community-based placements in the following schoolyear, and other mainstream schools described two or three-week placements based on students' vocational areas of study. An additional special school representative described in a focus group discussion that their school offers three-weeks of work experience in each

of Grades 10 and 11. Unfortunately, some schools are still unable to offer any work experience to their students whatsoever, as shown below. The delineation between schools able or unable to offer work experience does not appear to be linked to rural or urban location, although the sample size is not nationally representative.

Exhibit 10: Schools offering work experience

School type	Offer work experience	Do not offer work experience
Mainstream school (total n=10)	60% (n=6)	40% (n=4)
Segregated school (total n=6)	67% (n=4)	33% (n=2)

Beyond the fact that some Jamaican schools serving students with disabilities are unable to offer work experience, even those schools that do offer work experience may not be able to guarantee this access to all students. For example, one representative of a special school that does offer work experience explained that "a minority of students can be placed anywhere at all." In other words, despite the evidence that work experience is one of the core predictors of post-secondary employment, many schools are unable to provide these opportunities to the extent they desire.

There are a wide variety of barriers that inhibit schools from being able to offer more work experience for students with disabilities, and these are discussed further in the subsequent section on post-secondary employment. However, in brief, those schools supporting students with disabilities that do offer work experience have cultivated relationships with businesses over long periods of time, often requiring extensive sensitization and awareness-raising. Some schools affiliated with JAID have historically been able to offer work experience through income-generating activities linked to the school, such as a former greenhouse café, yet such innovations are neither widespread nor easily sustained.

Many respondents suggested the greatest tool for increasing schools' ability to offer work experience is promoting more accountability on employers' side for hiring or training people with disabilities (discussed further in Section 9). One stakeholder offered a creative suggestion that teachers and guidance counselors should practice an "elevator pitch" to prospective employers as a way of demonstrating how the engagement of students with disabilities in work experience can positively impact their "bottom line."

Recommendations for Work Experience

- Work experience should feature as an opportunity for all secondary-aged students with disabilities, and requires both the initiative of educators and the receptiveness of employers.
- Teachers, guidance counselors, and school principals should outreach annually to nearby businesses to request partnerships that support their students. They should be prepared to offer an 'elevator pitch' to businesses to explain the benefits to businesses in offering this collaboration.
- Private and public sector employers have access to further information about the benefits of offering work experience to persons with disabilities and strategies to provide effective support.
- HEART could serve as a core actor in engaging businesses to offer work experience for students with disabilities throughout its programmes, beyond the Empowerment Programme alone.

8.4 Volunteerism

Community-based service and volunteerism are widely incorporated into secondary schools' transition and student development programmes for students with and without disabilities. The following table demonstrates the breakdown of schools embedding volunteer work into their curricula.

Exhibit 11: Schools with community volunteer programmes

School type	Has volunteer program	No volunteer program
Mainstream school (total n=10)	70% (n=7)	30% (n=3)
Segregated school (total n=6)	67% (n=4)	33% (n=2)

Interestingly, of the five schools that *do not* offer volunteer programmes, four of them *do* offer work experience. In other words, with the exception of one rural mainstream school that offers neither work experience nor volunteering, 15 out of 16 schools surveyed offer *either* work experience or volunteering, but not necessarily both. Among the schools that do offer community volunteer activities, many described these as falling within the realm of a mandatory 40-60 hour community service requirement for graduation. Examples of volunteer activities include assisting primary school students, libraries, police stations, or other government institutions; beach clean-ups and plastic bottle drives; or participation in clubs and societies with volunteer components. School stakeholders also described reaching out to parents to encourage them to engage their wards in completing mandatory volunteer hours. Respondents described the benefit of volunteering as giving back to society, building valuable job skills, gaining the trust and respect of businesses and the community, and developing community inclusion and awareness. One interviewee described the concern that many young people in Jamaica "leave school feeling that the world owes them everything," and that exposing students to unpaid activities also helps them to learn that they can provide service to others without needing something in return.

The NSLC is a major systemic reform that is anticipated to be rolled out to all secondary schools (including special schools) nationally in the upcoming schoolyear. Currently, there are 42 pilot schools, including two special schools[5], participating in the NSLC pilot. One component of the programme is a mandatory community service programme consisting of 60 hours performed between grades 7-11 and an additional 30 hours in grades 12 and 13, for a total of 90 hours of community service performed between grades 7-13. The detailed NSLC manual describes the types of service-learning that qualify, examples of clubs and organizations that can serve as volunteer outlets, and the completion of a community service timecard log. The completion of a Validated Community Service Statement across various grade levels serves as a form of evidence in certifying competencies for award of a NSLC.

Recommendations for Volunteerism

- The NSLC programme, which is inclusive of mandatory volunteering, should continue its national expansion to ensure consistent exposure to community service among all young Jamaicans, including Jamaicans with disabilities.
- The NSLC team and other MoEYI Units should make provisions to monitor the efficacy of volunteer experiences for students with disabilities, to ensure they are provided access to these opportunities equally with other students, and to mitigate any barriers as they arise.

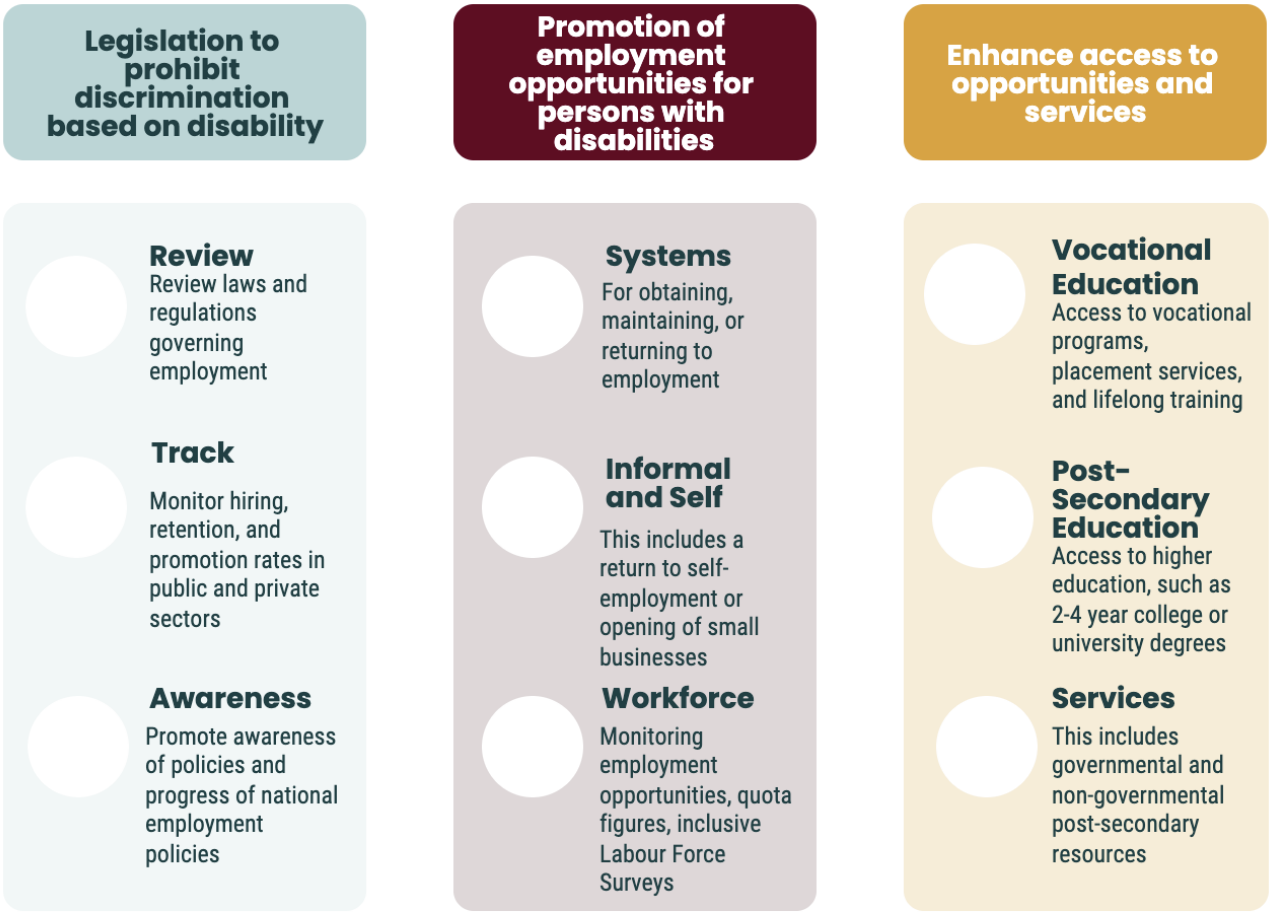
9. Post-Secondary Transition

Following the process of preparing young people for transition, the other major component of the STWT process is making the actual transition, whereby young people are able to smoothly access productive and decent work opportunities that make effective use of their skills (UNICEF, 2019b). Globally, unemployment and labour market inactivity of persons with disabilities due to barriers in education, training, and accessible transportation contributes to an “economic loss for countries worth up to 7 per cent of GDP” (ILO, 2015, p.1). In Jamaica, as well as the rest of the world, persons with disabilities struggle with transition, and are disproportionately represented among the poorest, least employed, low waged, and those with lowest health status and lower levels of educational achievement (UNICEF Jamaica, 2018).

Jamaica’s Disabilities Act (Government of Jamaica, 2014) provides a comprehensive framework for the prevention of workplace discrimination and the provision of accessible environments (Part IV). Yet we know that policy needs enforcement, along with robust programmes and provisions, in order for successful STWT to take place for persons with disabilities (Exhibit 12). The Jamaican Persons with Disabilities Draft Sector Plan 2009—2030 emphasizes the importance of government-mandated disability hiring quotas in creating an enabling environment for post-secondary employment, yet the Plan also notes that factors prohibiting workforce inclusion include poor educational achievement, discrimination, inaccessible workplaces, and low levels of experience among young people with disabilities. As one stakeholder described it, STWT for students with disabilities is not yet a “front burner” issue in Jamaica, but it must become one.

[5] Thanks to one special school representative for sharing their community service programme document.

Exhibit 12: Three-fold strategy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market



(adapted from ILO, 2015)

The following sections document stakeholder feedback on the experiences for persons with disabilities after they finish secondary school in Jamaica. While the focus of this situational study is on STWT in secondary schools, it is widely recognized by all stakeholders interviewed that the task of finding meaningful post-secondary transitions does not stop at this stage. The post-secondary climate students enter into is just as vital. Yet, there is a plethora of additional challenges and needs that students with disabilities confront once they leave secondary school. The goal of this section is to paint a broader picture of these strengths and areas of need, as it might contribute to mapping out future priorities in the STWT sector for students with and without disabilities.

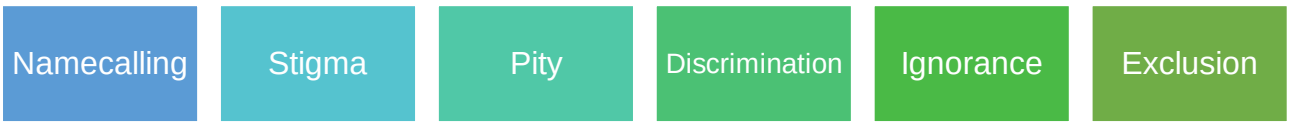
9.1 Barriers observed in post-secondary transition

One widespread concern leveled by numerous stakeholders is that despite efforts to support student preparedness for transition at the school level, the Jamaican society into which young people with disabilities enter is widely unprepared for their inclusion and sometimes uninterested to accommodate their individual support needs. As one respondent described it: “there’s a culture where we feel that ‘this person is broken,’ we are not expecting too much of them or from them, and because of that even though they might be able to perform and to manage, they are always overlooked.” This sentiment was echoed among other respondents

who explained that students sometimes possess low confidence of their own abilities, and feelings of unworthiness, which may be linked to the way in which members of broader society have treated them. Stakeholders stressed the need for more sensitization and awareness-raising efforts among employers to combat widespread stigma and discrimination.

Employers and businesses in Jamaica are generally reported to lack an appreciation of the value that young people with disabilities can offer to their workforce, and have an overwhelming tendency for these people to be relegated to low-skilled jobs such as supermarket baggers, if they are hired at all. Many stakeholders interviewed for this study reported employers who fail to provide basic disability accommodations mandated by local and international law, such as an example of employers asking employees who are deaf if they will be providing their own interpreters. Other workplace barriers include lack of physical access to elevators, ramps, or assistive technologies. Local stakeholders spoke of employers who implied having to "dumb things down" for people with disabilities, or viewing people with disabilities as a "safety risk" or liability for insurance purposes. Illustrative attitudinal barriers are depicted below.

Exhibit 13: Common attitudinal barriers in Jamaica



Although the MoEYI and diverse DPO and NGO stakeholders support a variety of sensitization efforts to combat disability discrimination, persons with disabilities in Jamaica still experience significant information barriers, limited to no access to support services, and limited to no access to essential employment and workforce integration services (UNICEF Jamaica, 2018). Many people with disabilities, especially but not limited to those with intellectual disability, are unsupported after leaving school, and their success may hinge on factors beyond their control, such as access to limited services, caregiver advocacy, or available resourcing in local communities (Thorburn, 2008). Other common systemic barriers relate to support with transportation, health care, or money management. Students who have boarded at residential secondary schools may face additional barriers in adjusting to community life in an environment not set up for their needs, in addition to adjustments among families welcoming back their children after years of living apart.

Furthermore, those who are deaf or hard of hearing lack widespread access to sign language interpretation services in employment, public services, community activities, and many other sectors of society. Suggestions among the deaf community include offering Jamaican Sign Language (JSL) as an official language of study across schools, offering tertiary-level qualifications and training for those interested in becoming interpreters, and further expanding access to interpreters for those who are deaf at post-secondary institutions[6] (McArthur, Ewen-Smith, & Scott, 2021).

Beyond these broad societal barriers, there are relatively few options available to persons with disabilities when they finish secondary school. As discussed in previous sections of this

[6] Many more salient recommendations have been shared in McArthur et al., with only mention of those directly linked to STWT or tertiary institutions included here.

report, stakeholders do not perceive post-secondary examinations such as those required for matriculation to HEART to be inclusive or accommodating of persons with disabilities. They generally feel that assessment systems more broadly are poorly equipped to recognize the capabilities of persons with disabilities. There is an overwhelming lack of human and material resources such as job coaches or employment agencies dedicated to inclusion, or other services that help to bridge the gap between school and employment for individuals with disabilities.

Stakeholders report that employers rarely give people with disabilities a chance to be hired, and just one example among many is of a highly qualified and skilled teacher with a Master's Degree in Education who was denied employment from a private school due to the principal's fears that parents wouldn't accept his disability. This anecdotal example is consistent with broader research showing that only 14% of sampled primary and secondary schools in Jamaica have *ever* employed a teacher with a disability (Morris, 2021). Further, those who feel they have been discriminated against currently have little legal recourse and can be intimidated by lack of access to costly lawyers to challenge such discrimination in court.[7]

One challenge also observed by the study authors is that many organizations and individuals are strongly invested in supporting young Jamaicans with a disability, but their communication and coordination is fragmented. There is also a global evidence base indicating the more agencies and organizations that work together to support STWT, the more likely students with disabilities are to successfully gain education or employment after secondary school (Bullis et al, 1995; Repetto et al, 2002). Yet in Jamaica, structures do not currently exist to maximize intersectoral coordination and collaboration. Small initiatives such as the Empowerment Programme, Abilities Foundation, or UWI's Centre for Disability Studies are touted as success stories, but they are led by a small cadre of highly committed individuals who offer their best efforts despite a lack of broader systemic resourcing and support. The limited number of fragmented, successful initiatives is likely a consequence of the fact that there is not a centralized institution whose responsibility is to oversee transition for youth with disabilities.

Recommendations for Intersectoral Collaboration to Support Transition

- Continue and expand awareness-raising campaigns showcasing success stories of employment for persons with disabilities "so people can see what is possible" and what these employees can contribute to their workforce.
- Enforce the Disabilities Act and provide legal aid for persons with disabilities who have faced discrimination in employment on the basis of disability.
- Formalize a community of practice for STWT among public and private sector actors, sharing information and resources and instituting accountability mechanisms to track progress towards shared goals.

9.2 Post-Secondary Education in Jamaica

While it was not possible to quantify how many students with disabilities transition to universities each year, stakeholder feedback suggested that this is a minority among the population of individuals with disabilities. Young Jamaicans with disabilities face a variety of challenges in their attempts to transition to university. Among these challenges are physical

[7] This barrier is projected to improve with the passage of the Disabilities Act.

accessibility of some university campuses, instructors lacking training or expertise to educate students with disabilities and limited or no access to assistive devices or reasonable accommodations (described as “reasonable arrangements” in national policies). One university respondent also spoke about students emerging from segregated special schools requiring support to adjust and integrate into a community where they are in the “minority” among their peers as having a disability. According to this respondent, this requires encouragement to students to “come out of their disability community” and identify common interests and connections with other students beyond their disability identities.

One institution widely touted as a model for success in disability inclusion is the University of West Indies (UWI), and specifically its Centre for Disability Studies headed by the Honorable Senator Floyd Morris, a disability self-advocate who is currently a UNCRPD committee member. Thanks to an enabling policy environment dating as far back as 1995 and ongoing advocacy and leadership, UWI is able to offer support, reasonable accommodations, funding, and other resources for students with disabilities. Furthermore, UWI Centre for Disability Studies (UWICDS) has taken a major leadership role in promoting disability inclusion across the Caribbean including hosting annual Regional Disability Studies Conferences since 2014. The focus of the 2020 conference was on inclusive education, which led to the publication of a 2021 monograph on inclusive education in the region (Morris, 2021). This monograph documents in detail the journey of UWICDS and the factors that have supported its growth, lessons which may support the development of similar programs in future at other Jamaican universities.

The UWICDS has four employees on the Mona Campus and a Centre for Disability Studies on the St. Augustine Campus. The focus of the Centres is to attract and support students with disabilities, and to serve as a hub for research. Among the approximately 50 students with disabilities enrolled across the school’s various disciplines, the most common support needs relate to vision disabilities, followed by hearing disabilities. Students receive support with accessibility, such as JAWS screen reading software for students with vision impairment or access to interpreters for students who are deaf. Yet, with the percentage of enrolled students with disabilities at UWI constituting only 0.3% of the total student population in 2019-2020, there is room for much growth, emanating from the need for further inclusion of such students at the secondary education level (Morris, 2021).

The University of Technology has also been identified as an institution which has helped to facilitate the inclusion of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. One student has stated, “the University of Technology is to be applauded for being the first university to cover the interpreting costs for the deaf to pursue undergraduate studies there” (student quoted by McArthur et al., 2021). A recent study estimated approximately 10 deaf or hard of hearing students currently attend either The University of the West Indies, University of Technology, or Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts, all of which are in Kingston (McArthur et al., 2021).

Other promising practices at the university level include one teachers’ college that recently trained 10-15 faculty members through an online Walden University Diploma in Special Education, increasing their awareness and knowledge on issues of disability inclusion. Another success is the presence of a mandatory Special Education course nationally among all future teachers irrespective of their focus or discipline. However, some school stakeholders suggest that special education topics must be better embedded throughout coursework beyond the standalone content.

Furthermore, the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL), in collaboration with SEU, has recently begun an Inclusive School Leadership Training Programme (ISLTP) to prepare primary and secondary school leaders to support the needs of students with disabilities and other exceptionalities. Its first cohort graduated 35 school leaders, among whom 6 represented secondary schools, and plans are in place to continue offering this programme annually.

Beyond these practices, it was challenging to identify which individuals or departments on university campuses are responsible for promoting the inclusion and support of enrolled students with disabilities. This poses a direct challenge to future inclusion of prospective students, who are likely to lack focal points with responsibility to ensure reasonable accommodations on par with peers without disabilities. One student with a disability currently attending university explained that lecturers do try to promote her inclusion, but success depends largely on her own self-motivation and initiative. While she can reach out to her school's Student Services offices, there are no standardized contacts, supports, or procedures to guarantee assistance to students like her.

Recommendations for Post-Secondary Education Institutions

- Every higher education institution in Jamaica must have an identified office or body responsible for ensuring reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. While larger universities should ensure an employee serves this function on a full-time basis where feasible, smaller institutions may nominate a Disability Inclusion Focal Point within their student services departments. Such individuals must have access to training, and can be linked with UWI for mentorship.
- All higher education institutions in Jamaica should have Disability Inclusion Policies in place that align with the Disabilities Act, including provisions for non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, and dedicated funds for disability inclusion supports and resources. The University Council of Jamaica could require such policies as a precondition for renewed university accreditation.
- In the absence of institution-wide training, all lecturers and instructors should have access to written guidance on their responsibilities in promoting inclusion in their classrooms. They may also benefit from an introduction to Universal Design for Learning to help make lesson content accessible and engaging for all students.
- To combat layered discrimination and marginalization, higher education institutions should provide scholarships for students with disabilities, or give priority among existing scholarship funds to individuals representing historically marginalized groups.

9.3 Non-Government Post-Secondary Supports and Resources

Most organizations supporting persons with disabilities, including DPOs, described providing support to young Jamaicans with disabilities in their transition to further education or employment. Many organizations are also closely involved in advocacy and awareness-raising activities related to STWT, including sensitization efforts among employers of the need to hire more people with disabilities. Many such efforts took place virtually during the study period, and featured guest speakers with disabilities, family members and advocates for people with disabilities, government stakeholders, donor partners including UNICEF, and

demonstrations of success stories where people with disabilities have been gainfully employed in professions of their choosing.

Additionally, the Abilities Foundation has been providing vocational training and support to persons with disabilities for nearly 30 years. It offers two-year vocational training courses in collaboration with HEART in a range of trades and professions, along with shorter vocational training courses, entrepreneurial training, job placement, coaching and mentoring, life skills, and remedial education, among other services. Stakeholders have praised the Abilities Foundation for providing important workplace skills and resource that no other organization provides for persons with disabilities in Jamaica. However, this organization supports a very small number of individuals proportional to the national need and is located only in Kingston. As one respondent described, “we need more places like Abilities Foundation.”

UNICEF Jamaica is another central actor that has been closely involved in support to children with disabilities broadly and STWT efforts specifically. A 2018 situational analysis on persons with disabilities in Jamaica shed critical light on accomplishments to date and further areas of need, including recognizing the priority for further support around STWT for Jamaicans with disabilities (Wilson-Scott, 2018). UNICEF also supported the developed of the CSID described previously, which is used with students with intellectual disabilities across schools in Jamaica. Furthermore, UNICEF Jamaica lists among its ongoing strategic priorities the support to STWT for students with disabilities in Jamaica, suggesting further attention to this key issue is likely to continue.

The Digicel Foundation has also helped to raise awareness of inclusive employment, and features support to people with special needs as a core area of its charitable giving. Thanks to close collaboration with other disability advocates nationally (including direct credit to JAID), Digicel staff have helped to raise awareness of important disability issues, and their community grants programme gives higher consideration to employers of people with disabilities in awarding grant funding. In 2014, a programme run by Development Options called the Power Internship Programme helped to place 17 young people with disabilities at Digicel to obtain valuable workplace skills and experience. Following the completion of the internship, six young people with disabilities were hired to stay on in working at Digicel. Thanks to this experience, Digicel has helped to raise awareness of the importance and value in hiring people with disabilities. Yet with only six employees with disabilities in a staff of more than 800, even model employer Digicel has more room to grow in expanding its workforce of employees with disabilities.

Recommendations for Non-Governmental Post-Secondary Services

- Highlight employers’ programmes that lead to the successful hiring of persons with disabilities and scale the provision of incentives to those who hire persons with disabilities.
- Provide resources for the expansion and scaling of the Abilities Foundation’s programming for persons with disabilities including collaboration with HEART.
- Expand private sector partnerships. One stakeholder suggested encouraging the Development Bank of Jamaica’s existing VTA programme to offer special grants for entrepreneurship initiatives that help to minimize exclusion of persons with disabilities. Additionally, Digicel and other charitable foundations could include scholarships for students with disabilities or grants for school-led entrepreneurship.

International Resources: Inclusive Futures

Inclusive Futures is a collection of 16 organizations working together with support from UK Aid to improve disability inclusion across the world. In addition to the Disability Confident Employers' Toolkit, the website includes written assessments on the situation of work for persons with disabilities in various nations such as Kenya, Uganda, Bangladesh, and Nigeria. These studies help to reinforce the reality that Jamaica is not alone in confronting substantial challenges in advancing the issue of disability-inclusive employment. For example, the labour market assessment in Uganda found (*excerpt from study):*

- Employment protection and promotion is generally ineffective in what is essentially an informal economy, with few opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- The future of work will be more technological, virtual and digital, driving an imperative to support job seekers with disabilities to acquire deeper digital and interpersonal skills.
- The majority of job seekers with disabilities felt that their employment aspirations centered on both waged and self-employment. However, there is an increased emphasis on entrepreneurship - of aspirations to be job creators for (and share wealth creation with) other people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, citing difficulties getting waged employment.
- Societal and employer attitudes continue to be discouraging because of low disability confidence, perceptions of low capabilities, and the perception of the cost of providing reasonable accommodation.
- Mobility for people with disabilities, including those who use personal assistants, continues to be a big challenge, worsened by COVID-19 lockdown. In addition, employers are not likely to be recruiting inclusively now because of the economic pressures from the pandemic.
- Study authors report seeing a link between CRPD compliance and the probability of employing (and retaining) people with disabilities, paying them reasonably well, and offering decent work. It follows, therefore, that such CRPD compliant companies have better job retention rates than those that do not.

9.4 Government Post-Secondary Resources

The Jamaican Council of Persons with Disabilities (JCPD) is a government department within the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, responsible for various policy, implementation, and advocacy issues pertaining to persons with disabilities. JCPD has as a national register for persons with disabilities, which allows it to serve as a centralized source for linkages to resources among those who are registered. It has historically helped to undertake job placement, but this is no longer a function of JCPD.

Following the ratification of the Disability Act in February 2022, the JCPD will nearly double its staffing to employ over 60 individuals. The new workforce at JCPD will include employees whose responsibility will be to respond to complaints regarding access for persons with disabilities, including action under the Disability Rights Tribunal. Others will focus on policy development related to transition, including sharing good practices. The JCPD also administers the Margaret Moody Scholarship Fund to provide scholarships annually to two individuals with disabilities to pursue tertiary-level education.

Beyond the JCPD, there is a government quota requiring a minimum of 5% of government employees with disabilities in government institutions. However, stakeholders provided feedback that this quota is not consistently met and is generally exclusionary to persons with intellectual disability in particular. In a global review of government-led disability employment quotas, Jamaica's quota is currently classified as being introduced by government decision or decree, which makes it less enforceable or binding than some nations' quotas which have levies or fines for non-compliance. While the Disability Act will help to reinforce that discrimination in employment is illegal, as one private sector respondent described, it is better to entice employers with a carrot than a stick. For example, the government should consider offering tax breaks to employers who hire a certain number or percentage of its workforce with disabilities. Industry conferences should also provide registration discounts for businesses that employ persons with disabilities. Even the JEF could provide reduced membership pricing for employers meeting disability quotas.

The HEART Trust / NSTA is the most significant post-secondary institution responsible for providing vocational training services to young adults with disabilities. Its programmes have been described in greater detail in the above section on TVET. Beyond the TVET services including the Empowerment Programme, HEART claims to be able to provide accommodations such as sign language or braille to those who need them, and identifies that its standard facility audit for all workplaces that provide training includes criteria examining accessibility. The newly established HEART Mobile Assessment Unit (a mobile bus equipped with WiFi and HEART staff) can provide assessment and certification support, especially to people in rural communities. The Mobile Assessment Unit has the potential to support access for those unable to reach other services, but there is no specific disability training provided to its staff. As described in the previous section, there are a variety of important actions HEART could undertake to improve provision of disability-inclusive vocational training services, to improve trust, and to strengthen perceptions among advocates of persons with disabilities.

In the business sector, a variety of grant opportunities already exist for starting a new business. For example, the Ministry of Labour, Development Bank of Jamaica, Jamaica Business Development Corporation, and HEART were all cited as offering financial resources to support young entrepreneurs. Many stakeholders suggested that such institutions could better expand the reach of these resources to persons with disabilities and educational institutions supporting students with disabilities.

Recommendations for Post-Secondary Government Services

- Centralize the government actors responsible for transition. The Jamaican Government, under leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and its Jamaican Council on Persons with Disabilities, should provide additional funding for the creation of Transition Officers whose sole responsibility is to engage directly with vulnerable youth to identify, apply for, and retain employment.
- Centralize data collection through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security on employment rates for persons with disabilities that tracks rates of hire, retention, promotion, and reasonable arrangements for both the public and private sector.
- Expand government involvement in making post-secondary options available to youth with disabilities. One stakeholder pointed to the importance of revitalizing the existing Apprenticeship Act to institutionalize an apprenticeship system that mandates employers to provide work experience to students with and without disabilities prior to entering the workforce. Others suggested that government can identify additional institutions capable of offering key work experience and training for youth with disabilities, such as residential care facilities for senior citizens, where persons with disabilities can serve as aides and companions.
- Centralize information and resources on both inclusive employers and eligible employees with disabilities. Many stakeholders recommended creating a list of disability-inclusive employers that schools could contact for work placement and transition opportunities. One stakeholder suggested government create a centralized vehicle for providing a pool of eligible employment applicants with disabilities who can help agencies and employers meet their mandatory disability employment quotas. Another suggested providing a repository of organizations that can be hired for public events and activities, such as the JAID band or the Deaf Can Coffee enterprise.
- Develop an accountability mechanism to ensure public sector employers are meeting legal obligations to engage persons with disabilities. Provide incentives and benefits for private sector employers who demonstrate inclusive employment practices. Consider including a condition of government-funded contracts and procurements that any awardee can prove they employ individuals with disabilities, even if they are in the private sector.
- Expand the funding and the reach of grant opportunities for starting a new business to include persons with disabilities and educational institutions supporting students with disabilities.

Major Global Resources for Disability-Inclusive Employment and TVET

While relatively few resources relate to school-led disability-inclusive STWT in the global South, a plethora of such resources exist as it pertains to TVET, apprenticeships, and employment.

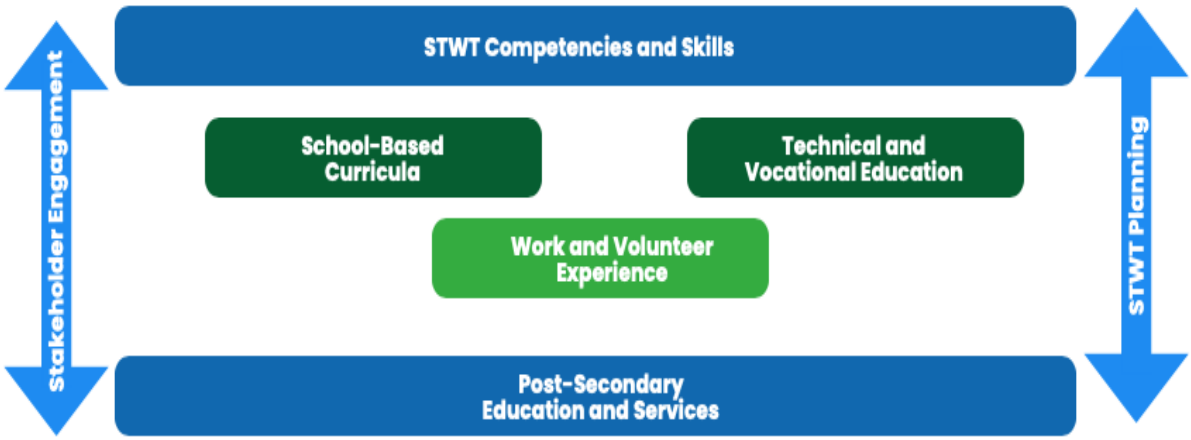
- Questions on Disability and Work: This 2020 ILO guidance addresses 50 core questions such as "what is the 'business case' for inclusion of persons with disabilities" or "how can attitudes be changed around disability and work?"
- Guideline on How to Mainstream Inclusion of Marginalized People in Vocational Education and Training. This 2020 GIZ document provides a comprehensive overview of strategies that can support TVET among marginalized persons including those with a disability.
- Disability-Confident Employers Toolkit. This 2020 document produced by Inclusive Futures includes a plethora of information to guide employers to make their workplaces more accessible and inclusive. This was designed for use in Bangladesh, Tanzania, Uganda, and Nigeria but offers utility globally.
- ILO Guidance on Disability-Inclusive Apprenticeships and related Policy Brief. These resources provide a virtual roadmap for making apprenticeships more inclusive globally, identifying core roles and strategies for governments, TVET institutions, employers and employers' associations, support institutions, and trade unions. It provides case studies of disability-inclusive apprenticeship and employment among countries such as Brazil, South Africa, and Ethiopia.
- Report on inclusion of people with disabilities in national employment policies. This 2015 ILO report provides step-by-step guidance on disability-inclusive employment policy reform, including case studies from Liberia, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka.

10. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Next Steps

This situational study has identified a multitude of individuals whose core personal or professional mission is to promote the education, and employment, and equity for persons with disabilities in Jamaica. The commitment of these individuals has helped to pave the way over decades of advocacy, awareness-raising, and direct programming. The recommendations gleaned from this report are intended to strengthen—not replace or diminish—these past and present efforts for the benefit of youth with disabilities in Jamaica.

Persons with disabilities and their advocates in Jamaica are well-aware that more must be done to improve their employment prospects and social inclusion. Some of these areas of need can be developed at the secondary-school level, which has been the focus of this study. Other major priorities require more cross-sectoral collaboration, including from government and employers themselves. Recommendations across the spectrum of need have been generated through this report and synthesized below, with a focus on those strategies that can be implemented in secondary schools.

Exhibit 14: Components contributing to successful STWT programmes



Recommendations for Competencies and Skills

- Training to educators and guidance counselors on disability inclusive STWT should linked to a competency framework, such as the LCE Curriculum Matrix, which is compatible with existing curriculum and assessment frameworks in Jamaica.
- All youth should receive support to develop foundational, functional daily living, and digital knowledge and skills; cognitive, social, and emotional skills; and career and work readiness skills.
- The NSLC guidance may benefit from an explanation of Universal Design for Assessment (UDA), a framework that supports students with and without disabilities to express their understanding during assessments in ways that complement their strengths and support needs.

Recommendations for STWT Stakeholder Engagement

Home-School Collaboration

- Schools should provide caregivers with training on how to work with their child on discovering career interests, practicing self-determination skills, and helping their child to set post-school goals for transition.
- Expanding and formalizing parent-to-parent mentoring networks, and providing parent networks with training, can help to build stakeholder buy-in and engagement in STWT planning.

Interagency Collaboration

- Government, community-based, private sector, and educational institutions should continue their robust advocacy and awareness-raising activities while endeavoring to expand, where possible, those who are reached and sensitized through their efforts.
- Publicize and support 'centres of excellence' or model institutions that demonstrate inclusivity in training or employing individuals in certain occupations. From there, these model institutions can demonstrate to other institutions what is possible in including young people with disabilities.
- Increase government employment of case managers, transition officers, job coaches, etc. whose responsibility is to ensure STWT for youth with disabilities.

Student Advocacy and Support Networks

- Include as a part of transition planning the identification of student support networks and resources, and how the student will utilize these networks to achieve personal goals.
- Connect students with self-advocacy networks, leadership opportunities in clubs and societies, and promote the formation of student advocacy groups for consultation when developing programmes.

Mentorship

- Identify, train, and involve school and community-based mentors, tutors, or coaches who can supports student' progress toward successful school completion.
- Link students with disabilities to professionals whose career aligns with students' own interests and aspirations, and facilitate virtual or face-to-face mentoring sessions, question and answer activities, and workplace visits.

Recommendations for STWT Planning in Jamaica

- A standardized Transition Planning Template should be provided and mandated for use in all secondary schools supporting students with disabilities, led by a team approach to reduce the pressure for any one individual to lead schoolwide transition planning. Once finalized, this Template should also be shared with all pre-service training institutions for inclusion in their existing STWT coursework.
- Guidance counselors and teachers should have access to a transition manual which guides their support to person-centered transition planning with students with disabilities, and all guidance counselors in mainstream schools should have access to training on supporting students with disabilities in all aspects of their role.
- The STWT guidance produced for supporting students with disabilities should be made widely available to any secondary-aged student who is "struggling" for any reason, including those from state care homes or with undiagnosed special educational needs. It should also include additional recommendations on support to students transitioning from boarding schools.

- Staff from special schools should be utilized as a resource for sharing their lessons learned in transition planning for students with disabilities, including with staff in mainstream schools who have comparably less experience.

Recommendations for School-Based Curricula

- All students should receive support in their studies to develop self-awareness and self-advocacy skills, setting individual goals, and demonstrating leadership. The self-determination curriculum in Jamaica is one resource that hones these skills. Jamaican educators can also make use of a plethora of ready-developed, free online resources, customizing to individual needs as appropriate.
- Teachers and guidance counselors nationally should have access to the tools and resources they need to support every student to identify strengths, career plans, and apply for jobs or continuing education. Some segregated special schools have resources developed over time that can benefit students with disabilities in mainstream schools.
- Schools should plan annually to provide students with opportunities to access career fairs, university visits, or other virtual or in-person events that promote readiness for transition.
- Teachers and guidance counsellors must identify opportunities and provide the necessary supports for students with disabilities to develop and showcase leadership skills, including in school-based clubs and societies.
- Teachers and guidance counselors in segregated and mainstream schools should use task analysis strategies to support skill development among struggling learners. They may consider expanding this strategy to include video modeling for multistep tasks, a practice supported by international research (Rowe et al., 2019), where such resources are available.
- The MoEYI should develop or share (if existing) its plan to help all secondary schools provide students with training in the use of computers and information technology as a core employment skill.

Recommendations for TVET Sector

- HEART should increase its focus on inclusion by ensuring a Disability Inclusion Policy and Implementation Plan is in place and accessible to all employees.
- HEART should hire officers within the organization whose core responsibility is promoting access and inclusion to TVET programming among Jamaicans with disabilities. Alternatively, Inclusion Focal Points could be nominated within each department and region, so long as they are allotted sufficient time in their schedule to focus on these responsibilities.
- The MoEYI's TVET Unit and HEART should ensure all employees and direct training professionals have access to mandatory disability inclusion awareness training. This could be in a pre-recorded or web-based format to enable the course to be taken at any time by newly hired individuals and to maximize cost efficiency. The content may benefit from an approach grounded in Universal Design for Learning pedagogies to support struggling learners with and without identified disabilities, as well as differentiated instruction and task analysis approaches that specifically support learners with specific support needs.
- The TVET Unit and HEART should collaborate with representatives of special education and disability organizations to ensure matriculation and examination requirements are inclusive of persons with disabilities and aligned with the Disabilities

Act. Expertise related to accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities already exists among special education experts nationally, and further expertise may be beneficial as it pertains to Universal Design for Assessment (UDA) approaches that implicitly support struggling learners without identified disabilities.

- The MoEYI's TVET Unit should promote and formalize MOUs between neighboring schools or school clusters to expand the option of vocational training programmes available to students with disabilities.
- The MoEYI's TVET and Special Education Units may also consider collaborating to create virtual or face-to-face communities of practice where school clusters can share success stories and troubleshoot challenges related to finding work experience and training options for struggling students or students with disabilities. This would allow for sharing resources developed by some schools with other schools, increasing collaboration and coordination, and reducing duplication of efforts.

Recommendations for Work Experience

- Work experience should feature as an opportunity for all secondary-aged students with disabilities, and requires both the initiative of educators and the receptiveness of employers.
- Teachers, guidance counselors, and school principals should outreach annually to nearby businesses to request partnerships that support their students. They should be prepared to offer an 'elevator pitch' to businesses to explain the benefits to businesses in offering this collaboration.
- Private and public sector employers have access to further information about the benefits of offering work experience to persons with disabilities and strategies to provide effective support.
- HEART could serve as a core actor in engaging businesses to offer work experience for students with disabilities throughout its programmes, beyond the Empowerment Programme alone.

Recommendations for Volunteerism

- The NSLC programme, which is inclusive of mandatory volunteering, should continue its national expansion to ensure consistent exposure to community service among all young Jamaicans, including Jamaicans with disabilities.
- The NSLC team and other MoEYI Units should make provisions to monitor the efficacy of volunteer experiences for students with disabilities, to ensure they are provided access to these opportunities equally with other students, and to mitigate any barriers as they arise.

Recommendations for Intersectoral Collaboration to Support Transition

- Continue and expand awareness-raising campaigns showcasing success stories of employment for persons with disabilities "so people can see what is possible" and what these employees can contribute to their workforce.
- Enforce the Disabilities Act and provide legal aid for persons with disabilities who have faced discrimination in employment on the basis of disability.
- Formalize a community of practice for STWT among public and private sector actors, sharing information and resources and instituting accountability mechanisms to track progress towards shared goals.

Recommendations for Post-Secondary Education Institutions

- Every higher education institution in Jamaica must have an identified office or body responsible for ensuring reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. While larger universities should ensure an employee serves this function on a full-time basis where feasible, smaller institutions may nominate a Disability Inclusion Focal Point within their student services departments. Such individuals must have access to training, and can be linked with UWI for mentorship.
- All higher education institutions in Jamaica should have Disability Inclusion Policies in place that align with the Disabilities Act, including provisions for non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, and dedicated funds for disability inclusion supports and resources. The University Council of Jamaica could require such policies as a precondition for renewed university accreditation.
- In the absence of institution-wide training, all lecturers and instructors should have access to written guidance on their responsibilities in promoting inclusion in their classrooms. They may also benefit from an introduction to Universal Design for Learning to help make lesson content accessible and engaging for all students.
- To combat layered discrimination and marginalization, higher education institutions should provide scholarships for students with disabilities, or give priority among existing scholarship funds to individuals representing historically marginalized groups.

Recommendations for Non-Governmental Post-Secondary Services

- Highlight employers' programmes that lead to the successful hiring of persons with disabilities and scale the provision of incentives to those who hire persons with disabilities.
- Provide resources for the expansion and scaling of the Abilities Foundation's programming for persons with disabilities including collaboration with HEART.
- Expand private sector partnerships. One stakeholder suggested encouraging the Development Bank of Jamaica's existing VTA programme to offer special grants for entrepreneurship initiatives that help to minimize exclusion of persons with disabilities. Additionally, Digicel and other charitable foundations could include scholarships for students with disabilities or grants for school-led entrepreneurship.

Recommendations for Post-Secondary Government Services

- Centralize the government actors responsible for transition. The Jamaican Government, under leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and its Jamaican Council on Persons with Disabilities, should provide additional funding for the creation of Transition Officers whose sole responsibility is to engage directly with vulnerable youth to identify, apply for, and retain employment.
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- Develop an accountability mechanism to ensure public sector employers are meeting legal obligations to engage persons with disabilities. Provide incentives and benefits for private sector employers who demonstrate inclusive employment practices. Consider including a condition of government-funded contracts and procurements that any awardee can prove they employ individuals with disabilities, even if they are in the private sector.
- Expand the funding and the reach of grant opportunities for starting a new business to include persons with disabilities and educational institutions supporting students with disabilities.

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