

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 139

Query title	Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion Analysis – Jamaica
Authors	Karen Andrae & Faraz Hassan
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Query	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the positive benefits of prioritising gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) on poverty reduction, trade and economic development, peace and stability, and addressing climate change and disasters in Jamaica? 2. What are the key GEDSI trends in Jamaica in the following areas? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Legislation and civic space o Women’s political participation o Health, education, employment, and social protection o Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and more inclusion o Gender-Based Violence o Other areas such as climate change, trade, and security (including masculinities and gangs). 3. What are the key ‘low-cost’ opportunities and entry points for GEDSI engagement in Jamaica, in respect of the areas outlined in Q2?
Enquirer	British High Commission Kingston

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1. Methodology

This rapid GEDSI analysis takes an intersectional approach to understanding trends in key areas of interest for FCDO in Jamaica. It is based on a literature review of published resources, including learning reports, evidence reviews, policy documents, and other analyses. This literature review was supplemented with five key informant interviews (KIIs) including with the:

- 1) Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CAPRI)
- 2) UN Women Caribbean
- 3) Women's Resource & Outreach Centre (WROC) Jamaica
- 4) Jamaica Association on Intellectual Disabilities (JAID)
- 5) Institute for Gender and Development Studies, University of West Indies

Following standard Helpdesk practice, data was selected according to the following criteria:

Focus: National-level evidence on the state of GEDSI within Jamaica in line with the agreed research questions

Time period: 2015 – Present (with preference for 2020 onwards)

Language: English

Publication Status: Publicly available materials published online

Search engines used: Google

This GEDSI analysis, comprising of twelve combined days of researcher time and seven days of senior expert time, provides an overview of key GEDSI trends and issues but it is not a comprehensive GEDSI analysis.

2. Local context and systemic challenges for GEDSI in Jamaica

It is important to recognise upfront the characteristics of Jamaica's local context, especially the systemic and structural weaknesses that contribute to negative impacts on vulnerable groups, the disabled community, as well as broader gender equality and social inclusion outcomes. Many of these gaps do not only affect particular groups, but have wider implications for society as a whole. Acknowledging these dynamics is critical, so that recommendations for future action by the High Commission are practical, feasible, and anchored in Jamaica's realities.

2.1 Inequality, elite capture and disproportionate access

Jamaica's structural inequalities continue to shape access to economic opportunities, health, and education, leaving excluded groups particularly vulnerable to shocks. Poverty levels have fluctuated dramatically over time, with progress repeatedly undone by external crises. After reaching a historic low of 9.9% in 2007, poverty rose to 24.6% in 2013 following the global financial crisis, fell again to 11% in 2019, and then spiked back to 21% in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, before easing to 16.7% in 2021 (World Bank, 2025). Over a 20-year period, poverty has effectively stagnated, standing at almost the same level in 2021 as in 2001, highlighting the difficulty of achieving lasting poverty reduction (World Bank, 2024).

This volatility reflects both household vulnerability and the broader fragility of Jamaica's economy, which remains concentrated in low-productivity sectors such as tourism and agriculture. Real GDP grew at an annual average of only 0.8% between 1990 and 2019, far below the regional

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average of 2.7%, while per capita GDP growth was just 0.6% (World Bank, 2024). Heavy reliance on these sectors has created a cycle of low growth and low-quality jobs, where many new roles are insecure and lack job security. During the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment rose from 7.3% to 12.6% in just six months (World Bank, 2025). Labour market vulnerability is particularly harmful to youth, contributing to cycles of low income, poor aspirations, and diminished long-term opportunities (World Bank, 2024). Outmigration has further reduced the supply of skilled labour, as over one million Jamaicans now live in the diaspora, constraining the domestic labour market and slowing the development of higher-productivity sectors (World Bank, 2024).

Structural inequalities also undermine human capital accumulation. Malnutrition is three times more common in low-income households, reflecting the double burden of undernutrition and obesity, while poor households face longer waiting times and higher out-of-pocket costs for healthcare, with the poorest four times less likely to have health insurance (World Bank, 2024). In education, Jamaican children complete an average of 11.4 years of schooling by age 18, but this equates to just 7.1 years of learning, below the regional average (World Bank, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these gaps, leading to a further 1.5 years of learning loss and an estimated US\$5.5 billion in lifetime earnings losses across society (World Bank, 2024). These inequalities disproportionately affect students from poor households, who had less access to digital tools for remote learning, and among girls, teenage pregnancy continues to restrict educational attainment.

Elite capture and political dynamics reinforce these systemic inequalities. Interviews conducted for this study highlighted that progress on social policy is often tied to ministerial priorities and political expediency, leading to uneven progress across sectors. While advances have been achieved in some areas, others remain neglected. Combined with slow legislative responsiveness, this makes tackling entrenched structural inequalities a difficult and protracted process.

2.2 Societal norms and normalisation of violence

High levels of violence present a major challenge in Jamaica, shaped by legacies of inequality, political history, and structural exclusion. The country records one of the highest homicide rates globally, with 102.5 male homicides per 100,000 in 2017; nine times higher than the rate for women and nine in ten homicides linked to organised crime and gangs (World Bank, 2023; ELCPV, 2023; UNODC, 2019). Young men from poor or unstable households are disproportionately affected as both victims and perpetrators, reflecting limited educational and employment opportunities, family disruption, and masculinities that equate violence and gun ownership with status (World Bank, 2015; Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2017; WPS, 2023). In some low-income communities, mistrust of law enforcement and weak service provision mean gangs are perceived as more reliable providers of security and livelihoods (GI-TOC, 2020).

Within this broader context, gender-based violence (GBV) is pervasive but often treated as a separate or private issue rather than recognised as part of Jamaica's wider crisis of violence. One in four women (25.2%) has experienced physical violence from a male partner, while one in five reported sexual abuse in childhood (World Bank, 2023; Watson, 2018). Survivors face serious social, health, and economic consequences, yet institutional responses remain limited; only 7.8% of women who reported to police received assistance (Watson, 2018; World Bank, 2023). With political attention and resources largely focused on homicide and gang-related crime, securing high-level engagement and public support on GBV remains a significant challenge. These dynamics show how wider patterns of violence intersect with patriarchal norms to undermine progress on addressing GBV and achieving broader inclusion.

2.3 Social and religious influence and resistance to rights

Religious beliefs and conservative social norms play a powerful role in Jamaica, shaping political agendas and public attitudes in ways that constrain progress on gender and inclusion. This influence reinforces the persistence of colonial-era laws that continue to limit women's

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sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and lesbian, gay, transgender, queer, intersex and more (LGBTQI+) inclusion.

For women, abortion remains criminalised under the Offences Against the Person Act 1864, carrying penalties of life imprisonment (Reuters, 2022). Despite an estimated 22,000 abortions occurring annually, many women, particularly those from poorer households, are forced to rely on unsafe or informal procedures, with serious health risks. Attempts to reform the law, including a parliamentary motion and advocacy platforms such as “Abortion Jamaica,” have faced strong opposition from church groups, which mobilise petitions and campaigns against change (Reuters, 2022). The result is that women’s autonomy over their bodies remains highly restricted, with the poorest bearing the greatest costs.

For LGBTQI+ people, the same Act criminalises consensual same-sex relations, despite the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights finding in 2020 that Jamaica is in violation of its international obligations (UK House of Commons, 2022). Religious condemnation reinforces stigma: 51% of LGBTQI+ survey respondents cited fear of rejection, abuse, or religious judgement as reasons for not disclosing their identity, and one in four reported discrimination in places of worship (USAID & UNDP, 2022). Nearly three-quarters have not disclosed their orientation to religious leaders, despite strong personal faith affiliations, reflecting the extent to which social exclusion intersects with religious influence (USAID & UNDP, 2022).

These dynamics illustrate how entrenched religious and social conservatism intersect with colonial legacy laws to restrict the inclusion of multiple groups; from women denied reproductive rights to LGBTQI+ persons excluded from legal protection and social belonging. While some signs of change are emerging, such as annual Pride events and ongoing parliamentary debate on abortion reform, progress remains incremental within a context where religious influence continues to weigh heavily on political decision-making.

2.4 Structural constraints of a small island developing state (SIDS)

SIDS-specific capacity constraints shape what is realistic in Jamaica. Economically, small domestic markets and narrow export bases heighten import reliance and exposure to external shocks; institutionally, governments must meet the same functions as larger states with far smaller absolute bureaucracies, leading to thin service reach and high per-capita administrative burdens, intensified by complex climate-finance requirements (ODI, 2025). These conditions mean interventions must be designed with administrative load, absorption capacity, and long implementation timelines in mind (ODI, 2025).

Climate exposure compounds these constraints. Located in the Atlantic “hurricane alley” with populations and critical assets on narrow coastal plains, Jamaica’s ports and airports; lifelines for imports and tourism are highly vulnerable (UNCTAD, 2017). Cumulative disaster losses were estimated at ~US\$120bn (≈7% of GDP), with scenarios rising to 56% of GDP by 2025; tourism directly contributed 8.5% of GDP in 2015 (projected 11.6% by 2025), underscoring the stakes for resilient infrastructure (UNCTAD, 2017).

2. What are the benefits of prioritising GEDSI?

Poverty reduction, trade and economic development

Inclusive education is critical to fulfilling the right to education for all and improving outcomes for both learners with disabilities and their peers. In Jamaica, many children with disabilities remain excluded from school despite global evidence that inclusive education boosts academic performance, employment prospects, and social skills for all students (Miller, 2025). Gender disparities are also stark: boys face higher dropout rates and lower attainment, especially in low-income or rural areas, while girls, despite higher enrolment, are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics

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(STEM) fields and earn lower returns on education (World Bank, 2023). Teenage pregnancy continues to disrupt girls' education, with reintegration limited by care and financial barriers (Kennedy, 2017). Inclusive approaches are essential to overcoming these intersecting barriers and ensuring equal opportunity.

Expanding labour force participation is essential for economic resilience and growth in the Caribbean, where small populations and persistent emigration limit productive capacity. With fewer women than men in the workforce, female participation often as low as 40% compared to 80% for men, the region underutilises a large portion of its human capital (Mowla, 2024). In small island economies already constrained by external shocks and brain drain, this gender gap has an outsized impact on productivity and growth. Tapping into the full potential of the population, especially women, could significantly improve development outcomes, drive innovation, and build resilience to economic shocks (Mowla, 2024).

Addressing gender and disability-related barriers in Jamaica's labour market can unlock major economic and social gains. Persons with disabilities face a 66% inactivity rate compared to 45% for others, contributing to higher poverty rates and lost economic potential (World Bank, 2023). Women, though highly represented in management, remain underrepresented as entrepreneurs, owning just 38% of newly registered companies and receiving only 33% of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) loans (CAPRI, 2020). Women-led businesses also tend to be smaller and concentrated in lower-profit sectors (World Bank, 2023). Tackling these barriers through inclusive employment, targeted support for women entrepreneurs, and disability-inclusive training, can reduce poverty, improve innovation, and promote broad-based, inclusive growth (ILO, 2021; IDB, 2023; CAPRI, 2020).

Reducing the unequal burden of unpaid care on women in Jamaica could significantly boost labour force participation and economic growth. Unpaid care and domestic work in Jamaica is valued at up to J\$991 billion annually, equivalent to 45% of GDP, with 66% of this work done by women (CAPRI, 2022). This burden limits women's ability to engage in paid employment, affecting productivity and access to quality jobs (CAPRI, 2022). Rural women are particularly affected, performing a disproportionate share of unpaid work (CAPRI, 2022). Investments in care services and policies that reduce this burden have been linked to a 10 percentage point increase in women's labour force participation, making a strong case for action (CAPRI, 2022).

Inclusive approaches to GBV can reduce harm and unlock economic and social benefits for Jamaica. GBV is a human rights violation and a major economic burden, costing Jamaica over JMD 102 billion—6.49% of GDP—in 2018 alone, with a typical case costing 0.77% of GDP (UN Women, 2023). It is linked to poor health, lower productivity, and school dropout (World Bank, 2023). Addressing GBV through inclusive, gender-responsive policies not only improves wellbeing and safety but also reduces public spending and supports wider prosperity. Evidence from the Caribbean shows that GBV undermines citizen security, economic participation, and community wellbeing, and that inclusive prevention approaches can strengthen stability and development outcomes (UNDP, 2023). Jamaica's high male homicide rate; 102.5 per 100,000 men, nine times the rate for women, also reflects the cost of entrenched gender norms and social exclusion (World Bank, 2023; ELCPV, 2023). Tackling these issues through inclusive strategies can reduce violence, promote equity, and support economic growth. Crime and violence already cost the region 3.4% of GDP (IDB, 2024).

Addressing climate change and disasters

Inclusive climate action strengthens resilience by centring those most affected and best placed to lead response. In Jamaica, women and persons with disabilities face distinct vulnerabilities such as disrupted services, unpaid care burdens, and exclusion from disaster planning (World Bank, 2023b; Carby et al., 2018), yet are often at the forefront of adaptation and recovery. Their lived experience, local knowledge, and leadership; whether in sustainable land use, household resilience, or redesigning infrastructure can improve the accessibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness of climate action [UN, n.d.; IDA, 2021]. Consulting and engaging these groups makes policies more equitable and grounded in the realities

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of those most impacted.

Inclusive political participation, active citizenship and human rights

Boosting women's political representation in Jamaica can accelerate progress on gender equality and sustainable development by ensuring leadership reflects and responds to the needs of the whole population. Women's equal participation is a catalyst for achieving all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), yet underrepresentation limits Jamaica's ability to realise its full potential (UN Women Caribbean, 2023). Evidence suggests that women in leadership help integrate gender and inequality issues into policy agendas, acting as agents of change for development (UNDP, 2019). While women are well represented in Jamaica's judiciary, holding 68.2% of high court positions in 2018; this reflects sector-specific trends rather than broader political equality (Baker, 2002 in World Bank, 2023).

In Jamaica, citizen involvement in governance can strengthen accountability, improves service delivery, and build trust between the state and its people. When citizens actively participate in decision-making, they help ensure that policies reflect real community needs, public resources are allocated equitably, and governments remain transparent and responsive. This sense of ownership fosters cooperation and improves outcomes for all residents (GovPilot, n.d.). This is the case in Jamaica, where the government has committed to partnering with civil society through the Open Government Partnership to co-create a National Action Plan that promotes civic participation, access to information, and public accountability. As part of this process, a Multi-Stakeholder Forum with equal government and civil society representation has been established to oversee implementation. The initiative aims to increase transparency around public resource use, enhance the detection and prevention of corruption, and create more opportunities for citizens to help shape national priorities and monitor results (MoFPS, 2021).

Human rights are a cornerstone of development practice in Jamaica, shaping both policy commitments and constitutional protections. The Government of Jamaica has publicly reaffirmed its commitment to human rights, recognising them as inherent to human dignity and essential to building a just and inclusive society (Williams, 2024). The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, embedded in Jamaica's Constitution, guarantees a wide array of rights, from freedom of expression and religion to the right to vote, education, and protection from discrimination and inhumane treatment (Jamaicans for Justice, n.d.). These principles are vital in guiding development initiatives, especially in a context where credible reports of human rights abuses persist, including arbitrary killings, inhumane prison conditions, GBV, and corruption (US Department of State, 2022). Ensuring that development practice is grounded in a human rights-based approach is therefore critical to advancing justice, accountability, and inclusive progress in Jamaica.

3. Key GEDSI trends

Legislation and civic space

Jamaica has signed several international gender equality commitments and enacted related laws and policies domestically. The country is signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) since 1984, and of the Convention of Belem do Para since 1994. Jamaica is also part of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (World Bank, 2023). At the national level, Jamaica has a number of legislation and policies addressing gender equality. include the Employment Act (2014), which established flexible work arrangements and repealed legislation restricting women from working at night, as well as the Property Act (2004) and the Maintenance Act (2005). As a result, Jamaica obtained the maximum score in three of the eight dimensions in the WBL assessment. Vision 2030 Jamaica includes a commitment to eliminate gender discrimination by identifying and

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addressing constraints to women's empowerment (FAO, 2020 in World Bank, 2023). The National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE), launched in 2011 and currently under revision, aims to ensure the principle of equality between women and men and address systemic forms of discrimination (GoJ, 2011 in World Bank, 2023). Its implementation has resulted in the National Strategic Action Plan to combat GBV, partnerships for sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis, legislative advocacy, and the creation of the Gender Advisory Council as an accountability mechanism (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). A range of laws are being reviewed in line with the NPGE, including the Sexual Offences Act (2009), the Offences against the Person Act (1865, amended 2014), the Domestic Violence Act (1996), and the Child Care and Protection Act (2004). The Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act was approved and passed in 2021 to provide protection and redress against unwanted sexual advances.

Jamaica has taken legislative steps to promote disability inclusion, though key gaps remain in its legal framework. The country has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and passed the Disabilities Act in 2014, which came into force in 2022 (Coalwell, 2024). The Act defines disability broadly and outlines rights to education, employment, healthcare, housing, and accessible facilities. It also established the Jamaican Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD), which provides sensitivity training and has developed an accessibility checklist to support compliance with accessibility standards. New infrastructure projects by the Department of Education are now required to meet accessibility criteria (LoopNews, 2023 in Coalwell, 2024). However, the legal framework excludes persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities from voting or holding public office, and does not fully recognise their legal capacity or right to free and informed consent in healthcare (World Bank, 2023).

However, there are certain key gaps in the legislative framework. Jamaica does not have a quota system, although its National Gender Policy set a target of 30% women in decision-making positions (EU, 2020; UNDP, 2015 in World Bank, 2023). Despite continued calls from international and civil society organisations (CSOs), and a stated intention by the Government in 2016 to establish such a system, no mandated minimum share or quota for women in public institutions or electoral/party lists has been implemented. The 30% commitment made in 2011 was nearly met a decade later (World Bank, 2023). The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms prohibits gender-based discrimination in broad terms, covering employment, remuneration, and access to services. At the same time, the World Bank Women, Business and the Law 2024 (WBL) index highlights the absence of specific statutory provisions that explicitly guarantee equal remuneration for work of equal value, prohibit gender-based discrimination in hiring, or prohibit gender-based discrimination in access to credit. Jamaica's WBL 2024 score is 74.4 out of 100, below the regional average of 81.2, with particular weaknesses in the areas of workplace protections (75/100), pay (50/100), parenthood (20/100), and entrepreneurship (75/100) (WBL, 2024). This illustrates a gap between broad constitutional commitments and more detailed implementing laws, which affects enforceability and monitoring in practice. On family leave, maternity benefits are limited, and Jamaica scores low on WBL's parenthood indicator, reflecting the absence of statutory provision for paid paternity or shared parental leave (20/100). While the Government, as the largest employer, has recently introduced paid paternity leave under certain conditions, this is not yet a general statutory entitlement across the economy. Periods of absence from work due to childcare are also not fully accounted for when calculating pension benefits (WBL, 2024).

Jamaica's civic space is constitutionally protected and generally active, with some ongoing legal, financial, and structural constraints presenting specific challenges. Civil society is active and vibrant, particularly in education, health, and environmental sectors, though many organisations face financial challenges and difficulties in attracting volunteers (Civicus, 2023; Freedom House, 2024). Some NGOs face legal hurdles registering under the Charities Act, and reports of threats and harassment against human rights defenders have been documented (Civicus, 2023). Freedom of assembly is protected and

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generally respected, though subject to permission requirements under the Public Order Act, with arrests occurring during protests such as those against COVID-19 policies (Civicus, 2023; Freedom House, 2024). Freedom of expression is largely upheld, with diverse media ownership and decriminalised defamation, although journalists may face intimidation and powerful criminal groups may discourage open discussion in some areas (Civicus, 2023; Freedom House, 2024). Workers' rights are legally protected, and unions are politically influential, but restrictions apply to those in broadly defined "essential services" and concerns persist over anti-union practices and delays in dispute resolution (Civicus, 2023; Freedom House, 2024).

Enforcement of policies has also been noted to be weak. The Bureau of Gender Affairs, located within the Ministry of Culture, Entertainment, Gender and Sports, is the main entity responsible for promoting gender equality in Jamaica, but it is under-resourced and has limited capacity to influence policymaking (World Bank, 2023). Although various policies and plans recognise gender as a cross-cutting issue, effective mainstreaming across sectors and levels of government remains limited. Institutional coordination is lacking, and budgetary and human resource constraints persist across sectors. A results-based approach has not been adopted, and adequate targeting and monitoring mechanisms are absent (World Bank, 2020 in World Bank, 2023). There is a disconnect between policy commitments and implementation, indicating persistent enforcement challenges.⁷¹ The OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) also highlights ongoing constraints in areas such as political empowerment, and health and survival (World Bank, 2023).

Women's representation in Jamaica's judiciary is significantly higher than the regional average. As of 2018, women held 68.2% of positions in the supreme or highest court, more than double the average of 32.1% observed across Latin America and the Caribbean. According to one study from 2002 (Baker) which consulted civil society, academics, and government representatives, this trend may reflect women's strong presence in the legal profession, which is considered comparatively favourable for those with caregiving responsibilities due to its relatively high earnings and flexible re-entry opportunities (Baker, 2002 in World Bank, 2023).

Compared to other countries in the region, Jamaican women are relatively well represented in private sector decision-making. While 2010 data shows under-representation in business leadership, only 24.1% of firms were led by a female manager and 38.2% had women among their owners (Enterprise Survey, accessed August 2021)—Jamaica still performs above the Caribbean average. The country recorded the highest proportion of women managers globally at 59.3% (ILO, 2017⁵²), although women are more often found in junior or middle management roles than in senior leadership positions (Table 7). In 2012, women held 17.4% of board seats across the 53 companies listed on the Jamaica Stock Exchange, with ten companies having no female board members at all (ILO, 2015 in World Bank, 2023)

Efforts to shift corporate attitudes on LGBTQI+ issues have emerged, such as TransWave Jamaica's 2019 Workplace Conversation Series, which engaged four companies, all of whom expressed willingness to employ trans and gender-diverse people if qualified (UCTRANS, 2022)

Health, education and social protection

a) Health

Life expectancy in Jamaica has increased overall, with notable gender disparities in progress over time. Between 1990 and 2019, women's life expectancy rose from 74 to 76 years, while men's life expectancy remained relatively stable, increasing only marginally from 72.4 to 72.9 years. This limited change among men is partly attributed to their already high life expectancy in the 1990s, but also reflects slower improvements in male health outcomes compared to both Jamaican women and men in other

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countries. These trends, alongside declining fertility rates, from 2.58 births per woman in 2000 to 1.98 in 2018, position Jamaica among the so-called late dividend countries (World Bank, 2023).

Gendered health patterns in Jamaica show that men face higher risks of both non-communicable and communicable diseases, as well as external causes of death. Men are more likely than women to die from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory conditions, a pattern linked to lifestyle risk factors including poor diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use, and substance abuse. They are also disproportionately affected by communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and are more likely to engage in behaviours that increase health risks. In addition, homicide rates among young men are particularly high compared to other countries in the Caribbean (World Bank, 2023). This reinforces the broader backdrop of violence in Jamaica, where men are both primary victims and perpetrators, shaping overall health outcomes and creating challenges for policy prioritisation.

Maternal mortality in Jamaica remains high despite broad access to maternal health services. The maternal mortality rate has stagnated since 2000, recorded at 80 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2017; slightly above the Latin America and Caribbean average and higher than most regional peers and upper-middle-income countries (World Bank, 2023). This is despite near-universal service coverage, with 97.7% of women receiving prenatal care in 2011 and most births attended by skilled professionals by 2018. However, the quality of services remains a challenge, constrained by weak surveillance, shortages of midwives and nurses, and delays in care due to staffing, cost, or access issues (UNFPA, 2017⁹; World Bank, 2023). These challenges are linked to the overall systemic capacity constraints of a small island state, where limited human resources and fiscal space make sustained improvements uniquely challenging (ODI, 2025). Indirect causes, particularly obesity-related conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases, are an increasing factor in maternal deaths. A study found that 63% of women aged 15–49 were obese, with 6% diabetic, 19% hypertensive, and 3% experiencing both conditions (McGowan, 2018). One in ten maternal deaths involved women who were overweight or obese, many of whom developed complications such as hypertension and circulatory disorders. Obesity, however, is often not recognised as a contributing cause due to prevailing social perceptions (McGowan, 2018). Young adolescents also face elevated risks of pregnancy-related complications and death (McCaw-Binns et al., 2018; McGowan et al., 2018; Kanguru et al., 2017; World Bank, 2017⁸ in World Bank, 2023).

Jamaica is characterised by rapidly declining but still high rates of teenage pregnancy for its level of income. At 49.9 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19, Jamaica's adolescent fertility rate is below the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) average of 61.2 but significantly above the upper-middle-income (UMI) average of 29.5 (World Bank, 2023). While the rate has fallen more quickly than in many other LAC countries, early pregnancy remains a leading cause of school dropout among girls. Teenage pregnancy is more common among girls from low socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly in rural areas and inner-city communities where poverty and crime are widespread (Kennedy, 2017¹² in World Bank, 2023). Risk factors at the individual and household level include limited parental supervision, intergenerational cycles of teenage pregnancy, and experiences of sexual abuse (McFarlane et al., 2019). At the institutional level, drivers include poor access to sexual and reproductive health services, a lack of youth-friendly facilities, and inadequate sexual education (McFarlane et al., 2019; UNFPA, 2017¹³ in World Bank, 2023). Access remains uneven across the country, and restrictive abortion legislation further complicates young women's sexual and reproductive health and agency (Russell-Brown, 2016; UNICEF, 2017 in World Bank, 2023). Restrictive abortion legislation, influenced by societal norms and religious views, further undermines young women's agency and access to safe reproductive health care.

Water and sanitation challenges are highlighted in specific communities in Kingston, with gendered impacts on hygiene and daily life. One report finds that water and sanitation challenges in

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certain neighbourhoods in Kingston have gendered impacts on hygiene and daily life (Stewart, 2023). One project worked with communities in Richmond Park, where residents face water restrictions due to commercial prioritisation by the National Water Commission, especially during droughts, limiting access to clean water for households (Stewart, 2023). Scarcity forces families to reuse water or pay others to fetch it for basic needs such as flushing toilets (Stewart, 2023). Women and girls are particularly affected, struggling to manage menstrual hygiene without potable water, while safety concerns and financial hardship further limit access (Stewart, 2023). In some cases, communities pool money to buy water from trucks or borrow water from neighbours (Stewart, 2023). Period poverty is a noted outcome, raising concerns about gender justice in the context of water scarcity (Stewart, 2023). Such inequities are exacerbated by climate-related shocks and resource allocation pressures, which disproportionately affect poorer households and women in particular (World Bank, 2023b).

Access to healthcare for persons with disabilities in Jamaica is limited by health disparities, geographic inequities, and infrastructural barriers. A national survey found that 30% of persons with disabilities rated their health as poor or very poor, with most others reporting fair (38.9%) or good (32.6%) health (UNICEF, 2018). Research has shown that persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by limited access to education, employment, and essential services, with rural residents facing the greatest constraints due to the urban concentration of support services (UNICEF, 2018). Approximately 57% of persons with disabilities in Jamaica live in rural areas, where access to hospitals is hindered by poor road quality, flooding, and limited or unsafe transportation options (Coalwell, 2024). These barriers continue to undermine equitable access to healthcare for persons with disabilities, particularly those outside urban centres. This illustrates how geographic inequities and governance constraints intersect with disability, limiting equitable access to essential services.

Transgender and gender non-conforming people in Jamaica face significant barriers to accessing healthcare, rooted in systemic exclusion, discrimination, and lack of legal protections. Trans Jamaicans report low uptake of public health services due to stigma, unaffordable private care, and a lack of trans-competent providers, with many avoiding healthcare altogether or altering their gender expression to receive treatment (UCTRANS, 2022; TransWave Jamaica, 2023). A 2020 needs assessment found that one-third of respondents were living with HIV, nearly one-third had a disability, and many faced housing instability, unemployment, and mental health distress, yet lacked access to adequate support services (TransWave Jamaica, 2023). In response, the Trans and Gender Non-Conforming National Health Strategy was developed—Jamaica's first rights-based plan to address these structural gaps through improved healthcare, legal reform, and inclusive service design (UNAIDS, 2021). Despite Jamaica's commitments under international human rights treaties and existing health policies like Vision 2030, the absence of legal frameworks protecting gender-diverse individuals continues to undermine universal health coverage and equitable healthcare access (TransWave Jamaica, 2023).

b) Education

Gender disparities in education in Jamaica reveal consistent underperformance among boys and unequal outcomes at higher levels. Jamaica exhibits a reverse gender gap in education, with boys experiencing lower enrolment, higher dropout rates, and poorer attainment compared to girls (World Bank, 2023). Female enrolment is significantly higher than that of males at the secondary and especially tertiary levels, and literacy rates are also higher among women (World Bank, 2023). Among the younger workforce (ages 25–34), women show higher educational attainment, with 25% of women completing tertiary education compared to 15% of men (World Bank, 2023). Despite these gains, women remain underrepresented in key fields such as STEM and Information Communication Technologies (ICT) at the tertiary level, where the ratio of men to women is approximately 3:1 (World Bank, 2023). Furthermore,

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although tertiary education benefits both genders, women experience lower returns to education in the labour market across various skill levels (World Bank, 2023).

Social and gender norms contribute to educational disparities, particularly affecting boys' motivation and girls' continued participation. Boys from low-income or rural backgrounds are more likely to leave school early, often due to financial pressures or limited belief in the value of education given poor employment prospects (World Bank, 2023). Factors such as the availability of informal income through unregulated industries further incentivise dropout among boys (World Bank, 2023). This reflects the wider context of high levels of violence and informal economies, where many young men see greater value in immediate income or gang involvement than in pursuing education. Classroom methods and the predominance of female teachers may also discourage boys, reinforcing harmful gender norms that equate academic achievement with femininity (World Bank, 2023). In contrast, girls face challenges linked to teenage pregnancy, which remains above global averages, although reintegration policies have enabled many to return to school after childbirth (Kennedy, 2017). However, reintegration efforts are hampered by issues such as financial hardship, lack of childcare, and limited counselling or monitoring support (Kennedy, 2017). Restrictive abortion laws, influenced by social and religious norms, further reduce options for girls facing early pregnancy, reinforcing cycles of school disruption and exclusion (Reuters, 2022).

Children with disabilities in Jamaica face significant barriers to education, with lower enrolment, poorer outcomes, and inadequate school infrastructure. In 2011, 53% of children with disabilities lacked access to education, compared to just 3% of non-disabled children, with children with disabilities also far less likely to reach secondary or tertiary education (UNESCO, 2020). Girls with disabilities were more likely than male counterparts to attend school regularly, mirroring national patterns in which education is more highly valued for girls (UNESCO, 2020). Major barriers include insufficient physical infrastructure; only 23.8% of surveyed schools had ramps and just 10.7% had accessible bathrooms, as well as limited assistive technologies and specialised teacher training (UNICEF, 2018). Although policies such as the Disability Act (2014) and Vision 2030 support inclusive education, gaps remain in implementation and access (World Bank, 2023). Educational disparities among children with disabilities contribute to lower employment rates and poorer life outcomes in adulthood, with fewer than 6% progressing to tertiary education and many failing to acquire marketable skills by school-leaving age (UNESCO, 2020).

c). Social Protection

Jamaica's current youth bulge presents both an opportunity and a challenge in the context of future population ageing and social protection needs. While the country stands to benefit from a large youth population, demographic trends indicate a shift toward rapid population ageing in the coming decades (World Bank, 2016). This has important implications for understanding current and future social issues, particularly those affecting both youth and the elderly. To realise the potential benefits of the youth bulge, investments in human capital, especially those that do not disadvantage women, alongside policies that encourage women's labour force participation, will be essential (World Bank, 2023). At the same time, welfare systems must be adapted to address the emerging needs of an ageing population, particularly older women who face heightened poverty risks due to existing gender gaps in formal employment, social protection, and life expectancy (World Bank, 2023). These demographic pressures intersect with wider structural realities, including persistent gender gaps in labour force participation and the emigration of skilled workers, which limit Jamaica's capacity to harness its youth potential and meet the needs of an ageing population.

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Jamaica's Social Protection Strategy adopts a life-cycle approach aimed at reducing poverty and vulnerability, yet gaps remain in access, particularly for persons with disabilities. The strategy defines social protection as a combination of public and private initiatives guided by state policy to ensure income security and maintain adequate living standards through social, economic, and labour market policies (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2014, as cited in UNICEF, 2018). It includes objectives such as promoting child development, supporting parents, and targeting the most vulnerable households (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2014, as cited in UNICEF, 2018). However, no single government ministry is responsible for coordinating services for children with disabilities, with responsibilities instead spread across various ministries (UNICEF, 2018). This reflects wider structural and capacity challenges noted in interviews with civil society for this paper, where progress was seen to depend heavily on ministerial priorities, with areas such as disability inclusion often neglected and lacking adequate support. While some initiatives exist, such as the reservation of 5% of public sector jobs for persons with disabilities and small grants for income-generating projects; access remains limited, with only 60 individuals in one study reporting support from the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (UNICEF, 2018).

Despite various welfare programmes, persons with disabilities face low access rates, limiting the protective potential of Jamaica's social support systems. The Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) is the main social welfare initiative, yet only 36.6% of persons with disabilities surveyed in 2015 had received benefits, while half reported receiving none (UNICEF, 2018). Access to other support programmes was even lower, with just 64 respondents receiving Poor Relief and fewer than 50 benefitting from several other schemes including pensions and health grants (UNICEF, 2018). This widespread underutilisation suggests potential barriers to access and indicates a need for further investigation (UNICEF, 2018). While social protection is recognised as a tool to reduce vulnerability and promote economic resilience, long-term sustainability remains a concern due to heavy reliance on funding (Sabates-Wheeler & Devereux, 2013, as cited in UNICEF, 2018). To be effective, programmes should aim for “sustainable graduation,” enabling recipients to move out of poverty and into economically productive roles over time, though rates of progress may vary, particularly for persons with disabilities (Sabates-Wheeler & Devereux, 2013, as cited in UNICEF, 2018).

Inclusive economic development and trade

Labour force participation in Jamaica remains gendered, with women consistently participating at lower rates than men despite higher educational attainment. As of 2024, 61% of working-age women participated in the labour market, compared to 72.4% of men, resulting in a gender gap of approximately 11 percentage points (World Bank, 2025). Data from 2023 also indicates that Jamaican women are 11% less likely to have equal economic participation and opportunity compared to men, reflected in a gender gap score of 0.89 (Jones, 2023). Women in Jamaica also face lower employment rates (58% versus 71% for men) (World Bank, 2025), higher rates of being not in employment, education or training (NEET), and earn around 83% of what their male counterparts earn (World Bank, 2024; Mowla, 2024). These disparities reflect broader structural inequalities in the Jamaican economy, where barriers to employment, employment conditions, and fluctuations in growth limit how far educational attainment translates into equitable labour market outcomes (World Bank, 2024). Notably, when employed, women are more likely to hold higher-skilled jobs and are less likely to be in vulnerable employment compared to men (World Bank, 2024).

Gender disparities in labour force participation vary across age groups and are influenced by unpaid care work and social expectations. For youth aged 15–24, labour force participation is low

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overall and the gender gap is narrower, with 34.3% of young women and 40.8% of young men participating in 2023 (World Bank, 2025). In contrast, among older adults aged 55 and above, the gender gap is significantly wider at around 27.9 percentage points, partly due to historical differences in retirement ages between men and women (World Bank, 2023). Women's labour force participation is further constrained by unpaid care responsibilities, which limit opportunities for many and disproportionately affect lower-income women who cannot afford support services (Mowla, 2024). Despite high levels of educational attainment among Jamaican women, these achievements do not consistently translate into equitable labour market outcomes (Mowla, 2024). As women's labour force participation is further constrained by unpaid care responsibilities (Mowla, 2024), this challenge is particularly significant in a context where institutional capacity constraints limit the provision of accessible public services (ODI, 2025; UNESCAP, 2024).

Unemployment in Jamaica has historically been higher among women than men, but recent data indicates a narrowing of the gender gap. In 2025, the unemployment rate for working-age women was 6.3%, compared to 4.2% for men; a gap of just over 2 percentage points (UN Women, 2025). This reflects progress compared to previous years: in 2019, women's unemployment exceeded men's by 4.64 percentage points, with even wider disparities among youth (World Bank, 2023). Historical data from 2011 to 2017 showed that female unemployment averaged 17.9%, compared to 10% for men, with women's unemployment rates between 61% and 99% higher than men's during that period (ILO, 2018). While structural challenges such as occupational segregation, economic conditions, and the lack of legislation preventing gender-based job discrimination continue to shape labour market outcomes, the latest figures suggest women are now benefiting more evenly from employment opportunities and economic recovery than in the past.

Unemployment intersects with household vulnerability, particularly in relation to the sex of the household head. While households with unemployed heads generally experience increased poverty, variations exist based on family structure and gender. For example, male single caregivers showed a lower incidence of poverty with unemployment, though this may reflect the atypical nature and small sample size of such households in Jamaica (World Bank, 2023). These findings suggest that gendered dynamics within household composition and caregiving responsibilities influence the impact of unemployment on vulnerability (World Bank, 2023).

Patterns of informal and vulnerable employment in Jamaica reveal a reverse gender gap, with men more likely than women to be engaged in such work. According to the World Bank (2025), as of 2023, 29% of women were in vulnerable employment, compared to a higher rate for men (36%) and below the regional average of 33.8% (World Bank, 2023). Similarly, men are more likely to be informal workers, with 54% of employed men in informal work compared to 43% of women (World Bank, 2023). However, among employers in the informal sector, women make up a slightly higher share than men; 69% versus 65% (World Bank, 2023). In terms of self-employment, 41.6% of men and 32.1% of women were self-employed workers in 2023 (World Bank 2025). Women also tend to work fewer hours on average; 39 per week versus 43 for men, with the gender gap in hours worked more pronounced among individuals without tertiary education (World Bank, 2023).

Women's employment in Jamaica remains highly concentrated in a narrow set of industries, reflecting persistent occupational segregation. In 2024, five industries accounted for 72% of women's total employment, with wholesale and retail trade (22%), education, health, and social work (15%), and accommodation and food services (11%) being the most prominent sectors (ILO, 2025). These sectors, often linked to traditional caregiving and service roles, include the care economy, where women represent

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80% of the workforce. At the occupational level, women are relatively well represented in managerial and professional roles but remain overrepresented in clerical and service positions, while being underrepresented in technical, craft, and machine operator roles (ILO, 2025). This distribution underscores the persistence of gendered patterns in Jamaica's labour market. Men are also overrepresented in agriculture and fishery (75%), manufacturing (67%), and construction (97%) (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). In contrast, women dominate the growing service sector, which has long been the country's major source of employment and is seen as more vulnerable during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022; ILO, 2018). This occupational segregation reinforces the gendered impacts of Jamaica's economic structure, where women's concentration in less productive sectors intersects with the broader vulnerabilities of Jamaica's economy to shocks.

Despite occupational segregation, Jamaica shows relatively high representation of women in management, although wage gaps persist. As of January 2020, there were significantly more women than men employed in the services sector—379,900 versus 274,600 (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). Women are also overrepresented in sales, clerical roles, and middle management, and Jamaica holds one of the highest shares globally of women in management positions, with 59% (World Bank, 2023). However, this visibility in leadership roles has not closed wage gaps. In 2016, the female-to-male estimated earned income ratio was 0.61, with women earning \$6,729 compared to \$11,044 for men, and a wage equality ratio of 0.63 for similar work, placing Jamaica 82nd out of 144 countries on that indicator (ILO, 2018). These disparities persist despite women's consistently higher educational attainment, highlighting a disconnect between qualifications and earnings (ILO, 2018). Such gaps illustrate how systemic barriers ranging from discriminatory norms to limited policy enforcement, continue to undermine women's economic inclusion despite high educational achievement.

Jamaica continues to face a persistent gender pay gap, with women earning less than men across most sectors and occupational levels, despite high female representation in education and leadership. On average, Jamaican women earn 19% less annually than men, with disparities widening at higher education levels; women with tertiary education earn just 75% of male counterparts' salaries, compared to 83% among those with no education (World Bank, 2023). Sectorally, women earn only 68% of men's income in services and two-thirds among technicians and associate professionals, though in hotels and restaurants, women earn slightly more, likely due to their overrepresentation in these roles (World Bank, 2023). The gender wage gap is most severe in agriculture, where women earn 61% less than men (Jones, 2023).

Jamaica continues to face a persistent gender wage gap, with estimates ranging between 61% and 88% depending on the measure used. The most widely cited indicator, the Global Gender Gap Index, found that in 2022 Jamaican women earned just 61 cents for every dollar earned by men (CAPRI, 2023). The government's own frameworks, including Vision 2030 and the National Policy on Gender Equality (2011), explicitly acknowledge these disparities, attributing them in part to the "glass ceiling" and "glass escalator" phenomena. Primary survey data gathered for CAPRI's 2023 study reinforces this picture: more than a quarter of respondents, 88% of them women reported believing they had been paid less than a member of the opposite sex for similar work, while nearly 40% knew of others who had faced such disparities. In almost 90% of these cases, it was women who were paid less. Notably, most respondents who recognised wage disparities did not act on them, suggesting that the pay gap is both experienced and normalised in the workplace. Educational attainment does not eliminate the disparity: while women in Jamaica are more highly educated than men overall, men report significantly higher returns on tertiary education. For example, 64% of men with tertiary degrees stated their education helped secure a good job

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and salary, compared to only 50% of women, while 65% of men judged their degree to be good value for money compared to 46% of women. This indicates that despite high female representation in education and professional roles, women continue to earn less than men for similar work, with pay gaps particularly pronounced among lower-income groups.

Persons with disabilities in Jamaica face significant barriers to labour market inclusion, resulting in low employment rates, limited job quality, and heightened poverty risk. According to the 2014 Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions, only 15.3% of persons with disabilities were employed, with employment rates 25 percentage points below the national average for those with physical disabilities, and outcomes even worse for individuals with mental disabilities (World Bank, 2024; UNICEF, 2018). The situation is further compounded in rural areas, where employers express reluctance to hire disabled youth due to stigma, and where most unemployed persons with disabilities reside (World Bank, 2023; Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2015). Discrimination, inadequate transportation, and poor infrastructure severely limit access to education and employment (World Bank, 2016). Although the public sector has a 5% disability employment quota, there is no available data on compliance, and policies promoting workforce inclusion have yielded mixed results (World Bank, 2023). This reflects broader SIDS capacity constraints, where limited institutional resources and fragmented governance make it difficult to enforce quotas or sustain inclusive labour market reforms (ODI, 2025).

Inactivity, underemployment, and structural inequality contribute to the economic exclusion of persons with disabilities, reinforcing a cycle of poverty. In the 2015 socio-economic study of persons with disabilities, most were unemployed and earned significantly less than persons without disabilities (UNICEF, 2018). Inactivity, rather than unemployment alone, is a primary driver of exclusion, with a 66% inactivity rate among persons with disabilities compared to 45% for those without (World Bank, 2023). Even when employed, persons with disabilities often occupy low-skill positions with insecure conditions and limited benefits, reinforcing their vulnerability (UNESCO, 2020). Having a household member with a disability increases the likelihood of being poor by 13.4% for multidimensional poverty, 9.7% for consumption poverty, and 6.3% for both, underscoring the urgent need to improve access to education, training, and equitable employment opportunities (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2020).

Women's entrepreneurship in Jamaica is growing but remains constrained by sectoral concentration, business size, and resource access. While women own approximately 35.2% of businesses in Jamaica, their entrepreneurial activity is lower than that of men overall (World Bank, 2023). Women-led businesses tend to be smaller, with fewer employees (13.2 on average compared to 16.9 in male-led enterprises), and are more commonly found in lower-profit sectors such as wholesale, retail (73.9%), and agriculture (19%) (World Bank, 2023). These enterprises also tend to be opportunity-driven rather than necessity-driven and hire more women—71.5% of employees in woman-led businesses are female, compared to 46.5% in man-led firms (World Bank, 2023). The Government of Jamaica has taken steps to promote women's entrepreneurship through initiatives like the Women's Entrepreneurship Support (WES) Project and integration of gender considerations in MSME policy, with the goal of increasing women's economic participation and contributing to broader development outcomes (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022).

Despite policy commitments, Jamaican women entrepreneurs continue to face gender-specific barriers related to finance, networks, caregiving responsibilities, and policy representation. While both male and female entrepreneurs cite market demand and access to finance as key challenges, women face additional constraints linked to traditional gender roles, limited access to productive assets such as land, and unequal access to information, networks, and decision-making spaces (World Bank, 2023; ILO,

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2021). Women are less likely to access business support services and mainstream financing due to lack of collateral, gender-insensitive financial products, and limited time for networking due to family responsibilities (ILO, 2021). For example, although women represent a significant share of farmers, they control only 11% of cultivated land, restricting their ability to secure loans or improve productivity (FAO, 2020; World Bank, 2023). Business associations and policy dialogue platforms remain male-dominated, while women's entrepreneurship networks tend to be fragmented and under-resourced (ILO, 2021). These barriers illustrate how social norms and structural inequalities intersect with limited institutional support, restricting women's ability to leverage entrepreneurship for empowerment. Addressing these barriers requires integrating gender into financial and business development services, expanding access to ICTs and procurement opportunities, and ensuring women's meaningful participation in economic policymaking (ILO, 2021).

Unpaid care and domestic responsibilities in Jamaica are disproportionately carried by women, limiting their time for paid work and contributing to gender gaps in labour market participation.

According to time-use data, women spend an average of 294 minutes (approximately five hours) per day on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 172 minutes for men (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). This unequal distribution means that only 45.2% of women report paid work as their main activity, versus 62.7% of men, while twice as many women as men report staying at home (World Bank, 2023). Social norms that associate women with "reproductive" roles such as childcare, cooking, and cleaning, underpin this imbalance and reduce women's availability for paid employment (ILO, 2018). The effect is particularly evident during peak caregiving years; in the 35–44 age group, women are more than twice as likely as men to be outside the labour force (ILO, 2018).

Family structure and limited supportive policies exacerbate the care burden on women and hinder their economic participation. Women in multigenerational households face the highest unemployment rates (9.6%), and single female caregivers are at heightened risk of poverty, particularly when unemployed (World Bank, 2023). Though maternity leave exists, only eight of the twelve weeks are paid, and there is no legal entitlement to paternity leave, placing the burden of early childcare primarily on women (World Bank, 2023). This lack of shared parental support further entrenches gender inequalities in the labour market. While Jamaica has taken steps to ratify international labour standards, such as ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, domestic workers, many of whom are women, remain vulnerable, especially in informal employment settings where job losses during the COVID-19 pandemic were significant (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). Flexible work policies introduced in recent years offer some promise, but broader investment in public care services and the promotion of shared household responsibilities remain key to alleviating this structural constraint on women's economic empowerment (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). Social norms around masculinity and gender roles also reinforce these imbalances, limiting progress toward shared caregiving responsibilities.

GBV

GBV in Jamaica is pervasive, affecting women across all demographics, though some groups remain more at risk than others. One in four Jamaican women (25.2%) has experienced physical violence from a male partner, and nearly half (47.3%) of ever-partnered women have experienced controlling behaviours (World Bank, 2023; Watson, 2018). Lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence stands at 27.8%, with 7.7% of women reporting sexual abuse by a male partner (Watson, 2018). Certain groups remain especially vulnerable: women who began cohabiting as minors, those with lower education levels, those who have been pregnant, and those who are economically insecure report higher rates of violence. However, data also show that higher education correlates with reduced risk, suggesting progress is possible through empowerment and access to opportunities (World

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Bank, 2023; Watson, 2018). However, these patterns occur within a broader context of high societal violence, where men are disproportionately both victims and perpetrators of homicide, making targeted engagement on GBV particularly challenging.

GBV is often treated in isolation, limiting its integration with broader policy efforts. There are no clear policy links between GBV and related areas such as poverty, health, or general crime, which has reinforced the view of violence against women and girls as a private issue. As a result, national security initiatives like the Zones of Special Operation (ZOSO) have not included GBV, despite significant public investment in crime prevention (PIOJ, 2021 in World Bank, 2023). This separation reinforces the perception that GBV is a “private” issue rather than part of Jamaica’s wider violence and security challenges, limiting integration into mainstream policy responses. CSOs also face challenges in mainstreaming gender and GBV principles due to limited resources, weak institutional infrastructure, and persistent harmful norms (World Bank, 2020 in World Bank, 2023).

Sexual violence and abuse frequently begin in childhood and are often perpetrated by people known to the victim. One in five Jamaican women reported being sexually abused as children, and 14% reported their first sexual experience occurred before age 15—32.8% of whom said it was forced (World Bank, 2023). Between 2014 and 2017, 20% of all child visits to public hospitals were due to sexual assault, with around 40% of female child visits related to this form of violence (World Bank, 2023). Most perpetrators were friends, acquaintances, or family members other than parents or siblings (Watson, 2018). These patterns highlight the urgent need for child protection interventions, though recent national strategies have recognised and begun to address these risks (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022).

Harmful gender norms remain deeply rooted in Jamaican society, though shifts in attitudes are also emerging. Around 70% of women agreed that men are the natural heads of the household, and over 30% believed that wives are obligated to have sex with their husbands (World Bank, 2023). Traditional views were more common among women from rural areas and those with lower levels of education. However, women with tertiary education were significantly less likely to endorse such views, and nearly all respondents agreed that men and women should share authority in the home and that women should control their own earnings (World Bank, 2023). These patterns suggest a gradual rejection of more overtly oppressive gender roles, despite the persistence of patriarchal norms.

The health, social, and economic impacts of GBV are severe and long-lasting. Over one-third (35.5%) of survivors report poor general health, and 12.2% have had suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide—more than double the rate among non-survivors (World Bank, 2023). Survivors are also more likely to use alcohol or drugs and report work-related difficulties, with nearly one in five unable to concentrate at work and 15% having their work disrupted by their partner (World Bank, 2023). Children of survivors are four times more likely to drop out of school. While no national estimate exists, global evidence suggests GBV costs countries 1.2–3.7% of GDP, underlining the significant burden on Jamaican society (World Bank, 2023). Given Jamaica’s already high levels of violence and the costs associated with it, the additional social and economic burden of GBV further underscores the need to address it as part of national security and development strategies.

Although survivors frequently disclose abuse to personal networks, formal institutional support remains limited and inconsistent. While 80% of women tell someone about their experience, 63% do not seek institutional help (Watson, 2018; World Bank, 2023). Of those who seek help, only 7.8% of women who contacted the police received assistance, and 39.1% of all help-seekers reported receiving no support (World Bank, 2023). Most women rely on friends and family members, particularly fathers, mothers, and

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siblings, for support. Despite this, some progress has been noted in public awareness and survivor responses, with most women rejecting silence and choosing to speak up, even if formal systems are not accessed (Watson, 2018).

The Jamaican government has taken important steps to improve the policy and institutional response to GBV, but implementation challenges remain. The National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate GBV 2017–2027 lays out five strategic pillars: prevention, protection, intervention, legal processes, and data systems (World Bank, 2023; Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). Since 2018, the government has established emergency shelters that provide counselling, psychosocial support, and skills training, supported by a National Shelter Strategy (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). Public education and community outreach campaigns have been introduced to shift attitudes and build collective responsibility for preventing GBV. Men’s engagement programmes now recognise the role of masculinity and male mental health in driving violence (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). These initiatives represent notable progress, although enforcement, data gaps, and uneven service delivery continue to limit impact (World Bank, 2023). Capacity limitations, characteristic of small island states, also constrain the consistency of service delivery and enforcement across institutions.

Addressing early and forced unions has also gained policy attention as a risk factor for GBV. In 2011, 7.9% of women aged 20–24 had been married or in a union before age 18, and 1.4% before age 15 (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022). Girls who entered into relationships with older men were more likely to experience violence. In response, a suite of child protection agencies and plans, including the Child Protection and Family Services Agency and the National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence, have been established to address early marriage and broader violence against children (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022).

While progress has been made in legal frameworks and public awareness, achieving sustained change will require continued investment in systems, prevention, and cultural transformation. Most women continue to face significant barriers to accessing justice, with delays in courts, lack of resources, uneven law enforcement, and limited knowledge of rights all contributing to under-reporting and poor survivor outcomes (World Bank, 2023). Encouragingly, government recognition of these systemic gaps and the multi-sectoral strategy introduced under the NSAP-GBV mark a critical turning point. However, data deficiencies and entrenched patriarchal beliefs continue to constrain the national response. A comprehensive and intersectional approach remains necessary to protect women and girls from violence and ensure their full participation in Jamaican society (World Bank, 2023).

LGBTQI+ rights

LGBTQI+ people in Jamaica continue to face widespread discrimination, legal exclusion, and threats to their safety, despite modest signs of dialogue and advocacy. Public attitudes remain overwhelmingly hostile: 88% of respondents believe male homosexuality is immoral, 84% say the same of female homosexuality, and over 75% oppose repealing the “buggery” law that criminalises same-sex relations between men (Human Rights First, 2022). These views reflect the strong influence of religious and cultural norms in Jamaica, which continue to shape both public opinion and political decision-making on rights and inclusion. In 2021, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ruled that Jamaica’s laws violate the fundamental rights of LGBTQI+ individuals and urged their repeal—the first such ruling from the Commission (Civicus Lens, 2021). This slow and resistant legislative environment mirrors broader governance patterns, where ministerial priorities determine progress, leaving some rights issues consistently neglected. However, the Jamaican Government has since shown no willingness to comply

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with the IACHR's recommendations and instead invoked a constitutional savings clause to block domestic legal challenges to these laws in 2023 (Civicus Lens, 2021). While 37% of Jamaicans believe the government is not doing enough to protect LGBTQI+ people from violence and discrimination (Human Rights First, 2022), some political figures have called for tolerance, such as the Minister of Justice's statement following the 2013 murder of Dwayne Jones, affirming the need for respect for all persons (Human Rights First, 2022). Nonetheless, legal protections remain absent, and advocacy continues in a context of entrenched stigma, state inaction, and structural resistance, illustrating how social and political forces intersect to slow progress on inclusion.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

Climate change in Jamaica has gendered impacts, with men more likely to die during disasters and women more likely to experience adverse long-term effects. Contrary to global trends, sex-disaggregated data show that 64% of disaster-related deaths in Jamaica are male, although further research is needed to understand why (World Bank, 2023). However, women disproportionately bear the social and economic consequences of natural disasters. These include heightened caregiving burdens, reduced access to health and reproductive services, increased exposure to gender-based violence, disruption to livelihoods and education, and greater risk of asset loss, particularly for female-headed households (World Bank, 2023b). Women's existing roles, such as fetching water, managing household recovery, and sustaining food production, intensify under climate stress, while gendered norms, income disparities, and limited asset control compound their vulnerability during and after disasters. These gendered impacts are further shaped by Jamaica's broader structural inequalities, where poverty, informal work, and limited access to assets reduce the resilience of excluded groups.

Climate change and disasters affect multiple domains of life in Jamaica, deepening gender inequalities and intersecting with other vulnerabilities.

- **Health:** Women face heightened risks to maternal and reproductive health due to disrupted healthcare access, shortages of food and water, and reliance on improvised clinics, while pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to complications. There is also a lack of facilities for menstruating women and those with breast or cervical cancer. Meanwhile, men may experience psychological stress that manifests as alcoholism or anger (World Bank, 2023b).
- **Education:** Boys, especially in rural and marginalised communities, are more likely to drop out of school after disasters to help with household recovery or agricultural work. Nearly one-third of schools in Jamaica were damaged during Hurricane Ivan, affecting about one-third of all public-school students and disrupting access to education (World Bank, 2023b). These disruptions are especially damaging in a context where education is already undermined by poverty, gender norms, and structural inequality, amplifying risks of long-term exclusion.
- **Care work:** Women perform more than twice the amount of unpaid domestic and care work compared to men, a disparity that intensifies during disasters. Damage to childcare facilities and water infrastructure, as seen during Hurricane Dean, increases women's workload, particularly in rural communities where they are responsible for preparing, cleaning up after disasters, and securing water (World Bank, 2023b).
- **Livelihoods:** Women are more likely to be employed in low-paying, informal work and have limited access to the labour market, making them particularly vulnerable to income loss. Disasters have disrupted women's livelihoods by damaging backyard gardens, small shops, and informal businesses such as food preparation or hairdressing. Women's economic insecurity is compounded by existing

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gender pay gaps (World Bank, 2023b). These risks are heightened by Jamaica's narrow economic base and dependence on low-productivity sectors (World Bank, 2024), leaving women particularly exposed to climate and economic shocks.

- **Assets:** Although legal frameworks grant equal property rights, women's access to and control over assets remains limited. Only about 30% of agricultural landowners are women. Female-headed households reported disproportionately high levels of damage to housing during Hurricane Ivan, and women also suffered losses to small-scale agricultural produce and home-based businesses (World Bank, 2023b).
- **GBV:** More than one in four women in Jamaica has experienced physical or sexual violence. While national data on GBV during disasters is limited, anecdotal reports from past hurricanes point to increased risks of sexual harassment in shelters and incidents of rape and incest following major storms (World Bank, 2023b).

Resilience to disasters in Jamaica is shaped by gender, socioeconomic inequality, and access to resources, with women and other vulnerable groups facing specific barriers to recovery. Women, particularly those heading households, are more likely to rely on informal coping mechanisms such as remittances, loans, or gifts from family during emergencies. A national survey found that 75% of remittance recipients were women, the majority of whom were single (World Bank, 2023). However, persistent gender gaps in access to decision-making, finance, infrastructure, and information constrain women's ability to recover effectively. While women are actively engaged in community-level preparedness and response, structural inequalities continue to shape differential recovery outcomes for women and men.

- **Shelters:** Shelter access and management raise gender-specific challenges. Women face heightened risks in shelters, including poor sanitation, exposure to disease, and lack of services for menstruation, pregnancy, breastfeeding, or cancer-related needs. Risks of sexual harassment and unwanted pregnancies are also reported. Men, meanwhile, face psychological stress and difficulties adapting to shelter life. These issues prompted the Bureau of Women's Affairs to develop an "Agenda for Action to Mainstream Gender in Disaster Risk Management," including shelter-related recommendations (World Bank, 2023b).
- **Information and early warning systems:** While radio remains an important information source, social media and internet-based alerts are growing in relevance. However, gendered barriers persist—fewer men in Jamaica own mobile phones or use the internet, while women are reportedly less aware of climate change risks overall. These differences influence risk perception and preparedness, highlighting the need for tailored outreach and awareness campaigns to close gender gaps (World Bank, 2023b).
- **Access to finance and social protection:** Fewer women have financial accounts (71%) compared to men (75%), and women are more likely to seek micro-loans but less likely to access business loans. While legal discrimination does not prevent access to pensions, caregiving-related career breaks are not accounted for in pension benefits, affecting mothers' financial security. Female-headed households also depend more on remittances, limiting their financial independence. Insurance coverage is extremely low: after Hurricane Sandy in 2012, only 0.26% of applicants for emergency relief reported having insurance on household items or property (World Bank, 2023b).

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- **Livelihoods:** Gendered patterns of employment affect post-disaster recovery. Women's greater involvement in the informal economy and lower-paid sectors places them at high risk of income loss. Men also face vulnerabilities; around 40% are engaged in insecure forms of work such as own-account or contributing family labour. Disasters disrupt transport infrastructure, forcing people to walk long distances, which can pose safety risks for women and deter access to employment opportunities beyond their immediate communities (World Bank, 2023b).

Persons with disabilities in Jamaica continue to face systemic exclusion from disaster risk management planning, preparedness, and response. Although the Disaster Risk Management Act provides for their inclusion, a 2018 study found that most national and local government entities do not fully integrate persons with disabilities into planning processes. Of the entities surveyed, only 53% reported that their disaster risk management plans included provisions for persons with disabilities, and just 39% had any programmes specifically targeting them (Carby et al., 2018). Inclusion in planning committees remains low; none of the responding government ministries reported involvement of persons with disabilities, and only 33% of parish councils had done so. Communication barriers also persist, with many digital resources failing to meet accessibility standards, despite the growing availability of mobile and internet-based platforms. While some measures are in place, such as designated warning systems, transport for evacuation, and assistance with emergency supplies, implementation varies. At the local level, 75% of parish councils reported providing such support, compared to 60% of government ministries (Carby et al., 2018). Low employment of persons with disabilities within government agencies and limited physical accessibility further reflect their marginalisation. These gaps between legal provisions and practice hinder the ability of persons with disabilities to prepare for and recover from disasters on equal footing.

Security (including masculinities and gangs)

a) Masculinities and gangs

Jamaica has one of the world's highest male homicide rates, driven by gang violence, entrenched masculinities, and long-standing structural inequalities. In 2017, Jamaica recorded 102.5 homicides per 100,000 men; the second highest in Latin America after El Salvador and nine times higher than the rate for women (World Bank, 2023; ELCPV, 2023). Although the rate declined from 109.6 in 2005 to 76 in 2015, it has since increased again, with 9 in 10 homicides linked to organised or gang-related crime (UNDOC, 2019; World Bank, 2015). Gangs have deep roots in Jamaica's political history, but their modern form is tied to drug trafficking, community control, and the delivery of informal services, which contributes to their social legitimacy in some areas (WPS, 2023; GI-TOC, 2020). Young men, especially those from low-income or unstable households, face high risks of recruitment due to poverty, lack of educational opportunities, paternal absence, and a culture that equates violence and gun ownership with successful masculinity (World Bank, 2015; Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2017; WPS, 2023). These dynamics are reinforced by Jamaica's wider structural inequalities and limited economic diversification, which restrict legitimate opportunities for young men and increase vulnerability to recruitment. Research suggests that incarcerated men are more likely to be younger, less educated, and from marginalised groups, including those with disabilities who are 3.3 times more likely to be incarcerated than men without disabilities (WPS, 2023). Despite some evidence of disapproval of violence against women among men, gaps persist between attitudes and behaviours, pointing to a need for more nuanced prevention work (WPS, 2023).

Youth exposure to violence in Jamaica follows gendered patterns and has lasting impacts on boys' and girls' safety, wellbeing, and social mobility. Gang violence disproportionately affects adolescent boys as both victims and perpetrators, especially in urban inner-city areas where children are regularly

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exposed to traumatic violence, leading to long-term behavioural and psychological effects (World Bank, 2015). While boys are more likely to be recruited into gangs, girls also face significant risks, particularly related to sexual violence, which often goes unreported due to fear, stigma, or lack of recognition that abuse has occurred (World Bank, 2015). High-school girls in some areas cite violence as a major concern, which can limit their aspirations and sense of safety. Youth marginalisation is reinforced by high levels of "unattached" young people—NEET. Unemployment affects 23.9% of male and 37.9% of female youth, compared to a national average of 15%, and NEET rates are highest in parishes such as Kingston, Hanover, and Clarendon—areas that also report the highest murder rates (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2017; World Bank, 2023). For many disaffected youths, gang involvement offers material incentives and peer-group belonging that legitimate pathways cannot match, especially when gang culture is normalised in popular media (GI-TOC, 2020).

Institutional responses to violence and gang crime in Jamaica have historically focused on repression rather than prevention, with mixed outcomes. The government has committed greater resources to strategies such as Plan Secure Jamaica (2016–2023), which aims to strengthen national security and the justice system while enhancing youth and community development (ELCPV, 2023). However, the legitimacy of law enforcement remains contested, especially in low-income communities where police interventions are perceived as militarised and where residents may view gangs as more reliable providers of protection and services (GI-TOC, 2020). Resistance to policing is exacerbated by human rights concerns and limited access to basic public goods (GI-TOC, 2020). In response, the state has implemented social programmes such as the Citizens' Security and Justice Programme and the Community Empowerment and Transformation Project, offering conflict resolution, skills training, and psycho-social support in vulnerable areas (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2018). Gender-specific initiatives include the re-establishment of the Male Desk within the Bureau of Gender Affairs in 2016, providing education and outreach on issues affecting men and boys—such as health, parenting, and positive masculinities—with an explicit focus on reducing violence against women and improving male social outcomes (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2018).

b) Migration & human trafficking

Jamaica experiences high levels of outmigration, with women playing a critical role in labour migration and transnational care despite systemic vulnerabilities. Although outmigration has declined in recent years, Jamaica has long been characterised by large flows of emigrants, particularly to the UK, USA, and Canada, with women accounting for 49.2% of the total migrant stock as of 2019—a proportion that has remained stable over two decades (IOM, 2018; World Bank, 2023). Between 2006 and 2015, women comprised the majority of emigrants to the USA and Canada (IOM, 2018). Migration contributes significantly to Jamaica's development, with the diaspora accounting for 28% of national output through remittances and other channels (Caribbean Policy Research Institute, 2017). Migration's effects on gender roles are complex: while the female employment rate remains consistently lower than that of men, women are migrating as often—if not more often—than men for economic reasons, and they remain active in caregiving by sending remittances home to support children (IOM, 2018). Migration can also be a strategy to escape gendered relations and sexual violence, and some returning migrants report improved professional progress due to their overseas experiences (IOM, 2018). Despite facing hardship abroad, studies suggest migrants generally view their migration experiences positively (IOM, 2018).

Human trafficking remains a critical gendered issue in Jamaica, disproportionately affecting women and children in the context of migration and displacement. Over 90% of trafficked persons in Jamaica are women, highlighting the gendered nature of the crime and the heightened vulnerability faced

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by female migrants, especially those who are undocumented, who are more likely to experience exploitation, stigma, and discrimination (World Bank, 2023). Human trafficking is closely linked to broader migration patterns, including large outflows of Jamaican women, which can result in the formation of "motherless households" and "barrel children," a phenomenon with mixed impacts on the care and wellbeing of children and elderly relatives left behind (IOM, 2018; World Bank, 2023). Gender is also a key factor in understanding the dynamics of environmental migration and disaster displacement, adding further layers of risk for women and girls in these contexts (World Bank, 2023).

4. What are the (low-cost) opportunities and entry points for GEDSI in the Caribbean?

With increasing commitment to international frameworks and legislation around disability and gender, the foundation for gender equality and social inclusion is improving. However, there are persisting gaps in legislation and policy. Implementation and data collection and monitoring are lacking in many areas and need consistent collaborative efforts. Given the current financial climate in the development and humanitarian sector, strategic decisions on focusing funds are called for, including low-cost opportunities that contribute to furthering gender equality and social inclusion.

Low-cost opportunities for GEDSI are likely to be effective when they provide: a) support to CSO and community-based organisations (CBO) and their existing structures and/or capacities and b) technical assistance (TA) to government and institutional structures. The CBO/CSO approach builds on the commitment and experience of these organisations while facilitating the conditions in which they have the space and skills to further GEDSI and can best act. Investment in TA to government and institutions may promote the understanding and know-how for a coordinated GEDSI approach building on collaborative commitment that itself supports and engages with civil society's initiatives.

Based on the literature review and KIs, several general recommendations and some broad suggestions on key opportunities and entry points at different levels emerged:

General recommendations

- 1. The framing of gender and inclusion is more important than ever to get right.** There needs to be on-going engagement at different levels. That means, there is a case to be made for GEDSI as essential to economic growth, national stability, good governance through, among other things, knowledge and empowerment. Therefore, issues such as accessibility, unpaid care, youth (with and without disabilities) employment, and violence in all contexts should be addressed as part of social cohesion and economic reform efforts. Work on harmful social and gender norms, including discourse around masculinities and men and boys being 'left behind' that are not positioned in opposition to the progress of women and girls, need to be prioritised as these underlie multiple development challenges including GBV, labour market inequalities, and weakening social cohesion.
- 2. Avoid 'projectisation' of inclusion so that inclusion does not become or remain an add-on or isolated component that risks ending with the completion of each project.** This means supporting core entities that lead sustained humanitarian and development responses, as well as staying engaged with movements and dialogue with local voices on social norms and social cohesion.
- 3. Priorities should be in emerging sectors with an intersectional approach** that reflect the interconnected nature of global challenges such as climate change, artificial intelligence and technology whilst understanding and addressing the impacts on diverse groups of people.
- 4. Strengthening data systems and evidence is key to better identifying and understanding intersecting inequalities** and subsequently serving populations more effectively and equitably. This includes funding studies, including economic cost data (for example of the inaction on violence

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against women: 2.25% of Jamaica's GDP), disaggregating data and using inclusive and participatory methodologies.

Mainstreaming GEDSI: What Good Practice Looks Like

The following are examples of how posts can mainstream GEDSI in practical and feasible ways, aligning with existing priorities and systems rather than creating resource-intensive new initiatives.

- > **Consistent framing:** position GEDSI as integral to economic growth, governance, stability, and resilience, not an add-on.
- > **Systematic data use:** require disaggregated data (sex, disability, age) at all stages of programme design and review.
- > **Inclusive consultation:** ensure marginalised groups and representative organisations (e.g. OPDs, women's groups, LGBTQI+ advocates) are part of planning, implementation and MERL.
- > **Accountability mechanisms:** integrate GEDSI indicators into monitoring frameworks and budget allocations, not just narrative reporting.
- > **Capacity-building:** invest in training for staff across government and donor posts so GEDSI is embedded in core roles rather than concentrated in specialists.

Key opportunities

Working with Government

- > **A coordinated government response** is a crucial component in achieving systemic change. Potential entry points are:
 - Investing in political will and supporting change agents within government who are committed to GEDSI.
 - Strengthen institutions and departments mandated to deliver on GEDSI whilst encouraging an inter-ministerial approach and advocating for stronger accountability across sectors:
 - Building public sector capacity through training
 - GEDSI-responsive budgeting as a pathway for Jamaica to embed GEDSI into national planning and budgeting processes
 - Allocating sufficient resources to strengthen monitoring frameworks, and engage institutions like JEPP for transparency and accountability
 - Using budget support modalities where appropriate: budget support aligned with national priorities can strengthen state ownership and integrate gender into broader development frameworks, provided implementation is monitored
 - Lending technical support to improve and availability and use of disaggregated data (gender, disability, age) and collect indicators on poverty, education, healthcare access and food security

While collaboration with government remains important, donors should be mindful of power dynamics and institutional limitations in implementation.

Leveraging civil society expertise

CSOs and CBOs are at the core of working for change and often fill gaps with minimal resources and maximum commitment. Many are long-standing organisations with years of experience built on trust and consistent engagement in their communities, making them critical for reaching excluded groups and implementing localised, responsive programming. At the same time, stakeholders noted that

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these organisations face real challenges, including limited capacity to meet donor financial and governance requirements, fragile funding, and sustainability concerns. Despite these constraints, interviewees emphasised that community-based inclusive development approaches can deliver important gains; for example, through structures such as the Social Development Commission (SDC) and Community Development Committees (CDCs), orienting government staff on disability inclusion, improving public education, strengthening participatory data systems, and embedding gender-sensitive approaches. To maximise impact, key informants strongly advised listening and aligning with local priorities rather than arriving with fixed agendas. Listening must go beyond consultation; it must shape action. Donor support to leadership development, core capacity, and change agents within CSOs and CBOs, alongside direct investment in their infrastructure and staff, remains essential to give these organisations the space and stability to sustain their initiatives and strengthen local and national initiatives. There are a wide range of such initiatives and related needs that could provide entry points:

- > **Investing in early childhood and older people's care infrastructure**, both of which would increase school attendance and women's labour participation by reducing unpaid care burdens (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2017).
- > **Investing in educational outcomes and transitions**. Actions include eliminating legal barriers for girls' return to school, providing second-chance education and strengthening financial incentives like PATH (World Bank, 2023); implementing and monitor the Disability Code of Practice, establish a national inclusive education commission, and ensure universal design in school infrastructure (UNESCO, 2020).
- > **Supporting CSOs that encourage healthy masculinity and male identity**, programmes include gun control (SALIENT), youth clubs (Charge Up), and parenting support (e.g. Affirming Fatherhood and Parents on a Mission) (WPS, 2023; Spotlight Initiative, 2022), and long-term mentorship programmes that combine community campaigns with life skills training, peer-led engagement, and sustained support to shift harmful gender norms (WPS, 2023).
- > **Investing in early childhood and school programmes** to provide important and long-term opportunities to challenge social gender norms and other biases, e.g. related to disability, skin colour, sexual orientation early on.
- > **Building on and supporting a dual approach combining community-based policing and inclusive development strategies to interrupt cycles of crime and exclusion** (GI-TOC, 2020)
- > **Investing in inclusive community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate action and disability inclusive disaster planning** that intentionally trains both volunteers including women, older persons, and persons with disabilities for participation in DRR and climate adaptation and humanitarian actors and staff on medical, psychosocial, and functional needs
- > **Investing in accessible infrastructure** so that women, men and young persons with disabilities can access education and participate in economic and social opportunities. Government Interventions such as specialised transport services for persons with disabilities with custom buses, designated seating and infrastructure upgrades (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2018) also offer entry points for investment, involving organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and older persons' associations (OPAs) through audits and potentially as service providers. Anecdotal evidence points to private initiatives for accessibility by community businesses, for example pharmacists who take on themselves to learn sign language to better communicate with and more safely advise customers with hearing impairments.

In the civil society and community-based space, there are many organisations that work in niche areas and communities and have real connections. It is highly recommended to **undertake a mapping of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), CSOs and CBOs** to have a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of opportunities for collaboration and investment.

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