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Ministry of Education  
and the

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Every Child Can Learn  
Every Child Must Learn



# NATIONAL POLICY

*Reintegration of  
School-Age Mothers into the Formal  
School System*



# NATIONAL POLICY

## Reintegration of School-Age Mothers into the Formal School System

## *NOTES*

Ministry of Education  
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Caenwood Centre  
37 Arnold Road  
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Jamaica, West Indies

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- Bureau of Women's Affairs
- Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (CISOCA)
- Child Development Agency
- Jamaica Teachers' Association
- Guidance & Counselling Unit
- National Centre for Youth Development
- National Family Planning Board
- National Parent Teachers' Association of Jamaica
- National Parenting Support Commission
- Office of the Children's Advocate
- PEY & Associates
- United Nations Population Fund
- United Nations Children's Fund
- Victim Support Unit
- Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation
- Jamaica Association of Principals and Vice Principals
- Jamaica Association of Principals or Secondary School

We are grateful to our technical partner, UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund which provided technical assistance and financial support that helped to sustain the process from start to final output, and for having committed to support the implementation of the Policy.

Thanks and appreciation are also extended to all

## *LIST OF ACRONYMS*

<i>ASRH</i>	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
<i>CEDAW</i>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<i>CCPA</i>	Child Care and Protection Act
<i>GNAT</i>	Grade Nine Achievement Test
<i>GSAT</i>	Grade Six Achievement Test
<i>HFLE</i>	Health and Family Life Education
<i>ICPD</i>	International Conference on Population and Development
<i>MoE</i>	Ministry of Education
<i>NGO</i>	Non-Government Organisation
<i>PATH</i>	Programme for Advancement Through Health and Education
<i>PTA</i>	Parent Teachers' Association
<i>WCJF</i>	Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation

served in the Jamaican experience, whereby the lack of clear policy guidelines have unduly complicated the process of placing girls back into the formal school system. Mandatory reintegration and completion of secondary education have thus been seen as key additions to the WCJF model.

Girls are coached and provided with family planning advice and services, with a view to delaying a second pregnancy until education and career goals are achieved. A 1996 study estimated that WCJF students had a 98% chance of delaying a second pregnancy by at least five years. This, added to a higher rate of completing secondary level and tertiary education, gives WCJF students a higher level of employability and earning power than teen mothers who have not completed the programme.

These statistics have resulted in the programme's celebrated achievement of its mandate to educate teen mothers and facilitate their reintegration into the formal school system. However, as one researcher has pointed out, this mandate does not guarantee the future success of the WCJF graduate.

As at 1996, approximately 46% of returning students drop out of high school post-reintegration, based on the lack of support services available to these new mothers, their children and families. This represents an area of growth and development for the WCJF and the wider education system in Jamaica.

participants in the stakeholder consultations, that is, Pivpot Consulting Limited, which led the policy development process; the Policy Analysis Research and Statistics Unit OF THE Ministry of Education, for technical advice; staff of the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation and the Guidance and Counselling Unit for administrative support.



Foreword by  
Honourable Reverend  
Ronald Thwaites, MP, JP  
*MINISTER OF EDUCATION*

The National Policy for the Reintegration of School-age Mothers into the Formal School System will help all our people in understanding the rights and responsibilities of students who become pregnant and the prescribed procedures governing their reintegration into the school system.

Although the Education Regulations (1980) makes provision for readmission, there have been many cases in which students have been denied access based on the interpretation of some school administrators. This policy seeks to put an end to this practice by specifying regulations, mechanisms and procedures that are to be followed to ensure that the girls return to school in order to continue their education.

The policy development process involved high level participation by a wide cross section of stakeholders including state and non-state agencies, the private sector, communities, parents, students, faith-based organisations and professional associations such as the Jamaica Teachers' Association, Jamaica Association for Guidance Counsellors in Education, and Association of Principals and Vice-Principals. I commend their commitment and invaluable contribution to this extremely important process.

By producing this policy document, the Ministry of Education is being true to its mantra that 'Every Child Can Learn, Every Child Must Learn.' If this is to be

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### THE WOMEN'S CENTRE AS A MODEL

The Women's Centre first emerged as the Programme for Adolescent Mothers established by the Bureau of Women's Affairs in 1978. At the time, 30 of live births were to school-age mothers, who were often unable to complete schooling due to the absence of specialised interventions. The Centre was registered and gained Foundation status, in order to facilitate the management of donor funds, and to attract private sponsorship. It remains a state-operated entity, receiving annual subventions and reporting to the Minister with portfolio responsibilities for Gender Affairs.

The Centre's model combines academic and vocational training with a range of support services typically needed by school-age mothers to adjust to their new status and prepare for return to school. This includes counselling for school-age mothers, their children's fathers and their own parents or guardians. Parenting education, family planning and SRH training, time management and budgeting form part of a wider life skills development focus intended to motivate girls to maximise their potential.

This holistic approach that has attracted the attention of several Caribbean and African states seeking to adapt the WCJF model in improving their national responses to teen pregnancy.

In adapting the model, many countries fill the loophole ob-

KEY CONCERNS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Stigma and discrimination</i> are among the main concerns of school-age mothers returning to school.</li> <li>• <i>Parenting challenges</i> are typically faced by both school-age mothers and their parents. This may be linked to gaps in the level of family support available to the teen mother.</li> <li>• <i>Special needs/disabled school-age mothers</i> are at a greater disadvantage and are often underserved by public education and other interventions.</li> <li>• <i>In remote locations</i>, access to WCJF centres may be impractical.</li> <li>• <i>The legislative framework</i> for adolescent SRH issues contains inconsistencies and mandatory reporting of carnal abuse deters referrals to the WCJF.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Support systems</i> covering critical issues such as the cost of school attendance, nutrition of child and mother and child care, should be addressed through brokered partnerships with families, schools and community organisations</li> <li>• <i>Special outreach programmes</i> may be necessary for geographically remote or disabled school-age mothers.</li> <li>• <i>Prevention strategies</i> should be fully integrated into school-based SRH programmes, to reduce rates of teen pregnancy.</li> <li>• <i>An integrated monitoring and evaluation system</i> should be implemented to ensure that interventions are working and girls do not drop-out post-reintegration.</li> <li>• <i>A legal reform programme</i> should accompany implementation, to address the broader limitations of SRH laws and policies affecting women and children. This should include a revision to the Education Regulations 1980) to alter the requirement for girls to leave school during pregnancy.</li> </ul>

realised, we all must play our part in the implementation of this policy. “Education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights” (UNESCO, 2005). All our students should have the right to education regardless of their circumstances.

I offer special commendations to all members of the Reintegration Policy Development Committee as well as the United Nations Population Fund. Your efforts have resulted in the production of an instrument that we anticipate will increase the life chances of school-aged mothers and their offspring.

Honourable Reverend Ronald Thwaites, MP, JP  
Minister of Education





## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ministry of Education's vision of education for all is at risk for a particular cohort of Jamaican children: school-age girls who become pregnant. While the enactment of the Child Care and Protection Act gives statutory weight to parents' responsibility to ensure that all school-age children enjoy their right to education, discrimination, stigmatisation and the absence of sanctionable standards hinder the educational rights of school-age mothers.

Exclusion currently occurs as the Education Regulations, 1980 provides that a girl who becomes pregnant shall leave school during the period of her pregnancy. The Minister of Education has the discretion to facilitate the re-entry of such girls to educational institutions, but no policy framework previously existed for the exercise of this discretion. Instead, schools have at times misinterpreted the provision to treat girls' absence from school as permanent. In the absence of clear policy guidelines, student mothers face cultural and institutional resistance to their right to an education.

Pregnancy remains the highest risk factor for female drop-out rates, both before and after reintegration. This does not align with national policy goals outlined in the Vision 2030 document, and retards Jamaica's fulfilment of international treaties, commitments and policy guidelines.

This policy purports to address this deficit, and establishes a framework for inter-agency collaboration to address the wider issues that limit the reintegration of school-age mothers into the formal school system.

## SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER S' PRIORITIES

KEY CONCERNS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Financial constraints</i> are a main hindrance to school attendance for school-age mothers.</li> <li>• <i>Day care services</i> are often unaffordable, leaving school-age mothers with no alternative but to remain at home.</li> <li>• <i>Health needs</i> for both the new mother and child places added responsibilities on school-age mothers. Schools, families and school-age mothers should be prepared for special health issues, such as post-partum depression or stress or any developmental issues faced by the newborn.</li> <li>• <i>Psycho-social wellness</i> of school-age mothers is often as critical as physical health. Low self-esteem, poor coping skills, behavioural issues or the effects of victimisation may all have preceded or resulted from the circumstances leading to teen pregnancy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Any risk factors</i> that precipitated early pregnancy should be identified and addressed during the transitional programme. These include any abusive or exploitative experiences, as well as self-esteem and other psycho-social issues.</li> <li>• <i>A revised and expanded curriculum</i> should be developed for the WCJF, to ensure that school-age mothers do not veer from mainstream schools, and that remedial needs are addressed.</li> <li>• <i>Personal and family life development</i> interventions available through the WCJF should be reviewed to ensure that students are fully prepared for seamless reintegration. These include counselling, family planning, parenting training and stress management modules.</li> <li>• <i>Linkages</i> with social safety net, community or school-based support services should be forged prior to reintegration.</li> </ul>



cluded in the chart below.

The state machinery for providing transitional education for girls who leave school during pregnancy currently resides in the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF), a government-owned entity reporting to the Office of the Prime Minister. The programme currently serves approximately one-third of all teenaged mothers, and is globally recognised for its successes in reducing the recidivism rate among its students. The services offered by the organisation will be expanded and more fully aligned with the Ministry of Education's curriculum, as well as its guidance and counselling services.

The key elements of this policy are:

- Automatic referral of all pregnant girls to the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation.
- Reintegrating all school-age mothers into the formal school system, either in their original school or in another school, at the same level.
- Monitoring of adolescent mothers to ensure they complete their education.
- Increasing prevention messages to seek to reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

Girls who leave school during pregnancy are often assumed to have permanently forfeited their place in the formal school system. Thus, although many of these girls originally had earned a place in school<sup>1</sup>, the common cry of ‘no space available’ has been used by some schools to exclude them from post-pregnancy reintegration.

Cooperation from schools to reintegrate these girls has been dependent on the personal preferences of school administrators. Discrimination against school-age mothers can be either covert or blatantly acknowledged. It is reflected in attempts to exclude these girls from schools for fear of corrupting the school’s morality or marring the school’s image. These fears are expressed in some cases by the school administration, but in other cases by parents, teachers or fellow students. Such discrimination has been identified by past and present students of the WCJF as one of the main inhibitors to the completion of their education.

The Education Regulations (1980) provides the basis for Ministerial discretion to facilitate the re-entry of such girls to educational institutions, but no policy framework previously existed for the exercise of this discretion.

This policy purports to address this gap, and to set a framework for inter-agency collaboration to address the wider issues that limit the reintegration of school-age mothers into the formal school system. The right to education, for school-age mothers, is also threatened by the absence of a

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<sup>1</sup> For example, through GSAT, GNAT or other examinations

age mothers and the issues that would make reintegration difficult. They then made recommendations as to the levels of support they would need to complete their education.

- An Expert Group Consultation was then held, where representatives from key state and non-state entities were in attendance. This facilitated discussions on the wider policy and governance implications of mandatory reintegration.
- Six Regional Consultations were then held where representatives of schools and community groups participated. Participants included children, as well as past and present students of the WCJF. The institutional and social context was explored and the issue of reintegration discussed from different perspectives.
- A final consultation was held with the expert group to provide feedback on the integration of stakeholder comments and recommendations in the policy and its implementation framework.

In total, over 200 men, women and children were consulted on the scope and content of the policy. They included representatives from the education, health, gender and women’s rights, children’s rights, child protection, security and social work sectors, as well as persons from community-based, charitable and religious organisations. A summary of the stakeholder priorities emerging from these 8 sessions is in-

## STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCESS

Initial consultations were held in 2009 on the potential and scope for a policy addressing school-age mothers. These consultations were attended by a range of policy and decision-makers from the public sector, representatives of school communities and advocates in the women and children's sectors. The early consensus of these stakeholders was to promote mandatory reintegration of school-age mothers into the formal school system, as a means of ensuring the fulfilment of their right to an education.

A broad-based, multi-sectoral committee was then formed to explore the processes and policies required to support mandatory reintegration. The committee was co-chaired by the Ministry of Education (Guidance and Counselling Unit) and the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation. Membership was comprised of key stakeholders representing state agencies (particularly those in the women and children's sectors) representatives of school-based interest groups, including national associations of principals, student council leaders and Parent Teachers' Associations, the donor community and other policy and decision-makers. A full list of members is included at Appendix I.

Having developed a Concept Paper as a precursor to the Reintegration Policy, further consultations were held as follows:

- A Children's Consultation was held with current students at the WCJF to gain insights into their experiences. The meeting facilitated discussions on the factors that prompted girls to seek out the services of the WCJF. Girls discussed their experiences as school-

co-ordinated approach to providing psycho-social, economic and family-focused support for these girls and their children. The WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers currently provides limited services to an estimated thirty percent of school-age mothers. The WCJF's transitional programme provides interim education to school-age mothers and brokers their reintegration into the school system, as well as provides other family life training and support services. However, the programme's effectiveness requires a clear policy focus to guide all social institutions that bear responsibilities towards school-age parents.

The rationale for the policy can be explained from several perspectives:

### (a) *The Rights Perspective*

- All children have the right to an education. This is a commitment made by Jamaica under international human rights agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All-Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979).
- Excluding girls from school on the basis of pregnancy discriminates against girls.
- Many girls become pregnant when other rights are violated. They are often victims of incest, carnal abuse or rape. These girls are doubly victimized when they are denied access to an education.

### (b) *The Legal Perspective*

- The Education Act (1980) gives no basis for expelling students who become pregnant. The Regulations under the Act speaks only to the temporary exclusion of girls from school during the period of their pregnancy, and requires schools to facilitate such girls in taking their external examinations.
- The Child Care and Protection Act (2004) establishes the best interest principle as a guiding standard in the decision-making process that affects children. This shifts the focus within the education sector from placing undue weight on the interests of the school, as opposed to being guided by what is in the best interest of the child.
- Parents are required by law to ensure that children up to age 16 years are attending school. This requirement is not waived for girls under age 16 years, who become pregnant.

(c) *The National Planning Perspective*

- National goals and international goals promote the completion of secondary level education by all students. This is reflected in the Ministry's vision of education for all, and its aim of increasing the age of compulsory school age to 18 years.
- Pregnancy is the most common reason for girls

-age mother's rights to dignity and privacy, and to reduce stigma and eradicate discrimination against such students.

8. Schools shall use their best efforts to support the roll-out of this Reintegration Policy, including participation in public education and communication activities organised through the WCJF in partnership with the MoE's Guidance and Counselling Unit.
9. Schools shall give full support to prevention strategies designed to reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy, including supporting the implementation of adolescent sexual and reproductive health programmes and parenting interventions organised and implemented by Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation and other agencies.
10. The stipulations in this policy are significant to the achievement of national policy goals and the fulfilment of the Ministry's vision of education for all. The deliberate non-compliance with the duties and requirements that are specified in this policy statement shall be considered an act of neglect of duty. Such neglect shall be subject to disciplinary action as provided in Regulation 55 of the Education Regulations (1980) and shall give rise to the penalties stipulated in Section 38 of the Education Act, 1965.

#### APPENDIX 4

to complete her education will be identified and addressed to the extent of available resources.

7. School administrations shall use their best efforts to ensure the reintegration of returning students, and that such students are supported in every way possible in order to ensure they complete their education. Specifically, and to the extent of available resources, schools shall:

- A. Facilitate the monitoring of such students through partnerships between the Guidance Counsellors and the WCJF;
- B. Assess students at the point of re-entry, through a review of their WCJF academic records and facilitate the provision of academic support to reintegrated students;
- C. Identify and use all available resources to address any issue that threatens to inhibit returning students from completing their education;
- D. Provide student mothers with time off as necessary to attend to maternal and child health issues, including attendance at post-natal or immunisation clinics or paediatric appointments; and
- E. Take all necessary steps to maintain the school

dropping out of school. This suggests that targeted interventions for pregnant girls and/or school-age mother will significantly impact the achievement of social goals and policies.

- Without support, the majority of school-age mothers will not complete high school. This suggests that a range of services, including child guidance, social welfare and parenting education, should be extended to school-age mother.

### **3.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 THE INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT**

The Government of Jamaica has committed to several international agreements which explicitly promote the right of children to access education in a way that does not discriminate, based on gender or other social factors. By signing these agreements, the Government has consented to the promotion of these rights and to ensuring that they are translated into national legislation, policies and programmes. Among

some of these key agreements signed by the Government of Jamaica are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (199) and the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (and girls) (CEDAW) (1979).

Other international policies and programmes also provide for and support the rights of children to health and education services. The Millennium Development Goals emphasise the right of children in general and the girl child, in particular, to education and health. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) indicates that countries should protect and promote the rights of adolescents to reproductive health education, information and care. This should greatly reduce the number of adolescent pregnancies.<sup>2</sup>

Based on these commitments and expectations, the Government of Jamaica, as a key duty-bearer, has responsibility to ensure the fulfilment of these rights.

Different models are used by different countries to fulfil the rights of school-age mothers to complete their education. The model of transitional programming for pregnant teens that is utilised by the WCJF has been studied by several Caribbean and African countries<sup>3</sup> as a model for reducing recidivism and ensuring a smooth continuation of the education of such students. The model has been seen to provide a holistic, rights-centric environment to preparing a school-age mother, together with her family and *baby-father*, for the equally important tasks of completing her education and raising her child.

4. Referral to the WCJF is intended to provide the MoE with a centralised process for both identifying and serving the educational, psycho-social, health and welfare needs of student mothers. This does not preclude pregnant students and their families from making alternative arrangements for their education during the period of pregnancy. Parents of pregnant teens who are not attending the WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers will be reminded of their duty to ensure that their child is attending school, and of the necessity for counselling and other psycho-social support to be provided to school-age mothers.
5. Schools shall reserve places temporarily vacated by pregnant students who leave school to attend the WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers. This will facilitate the post-natal reintegration of such students. Places shall be reserved directly for girls who have left a given school. Alternative placement can be negotiated in special circumstances.
6. Upon reintegration into the formal school system, every school-age mother (including those who did not attend the WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers) will be included in a post-integration monitoring system. Through this system, school-age mothers will be provided with counselling, family planning, parenting and other available support services through the WCJF and Guidance Counsellors. Risks that may lead to additional pregnancies and/or compromise the ability of a school-age mother



plementation framework will be established to ensure compliance and reduce the discrimination and stigmatisation that currently inhibit school-age mothers from enjoying their right to an education.

It shall therefore be the policy of the Ministry of Education that:

1. Through its inter-agency partnership with the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation and in collaboration with a range of other state and non-state partners, the Ministry of Education supports the mandatory reintegration of all school-age mothers in the formal school system.
2. Principals shall ultimately be responsible for the full implementation of this policy and to ensure compliance with its terms, by members of staff and the wider school community.
3. Schools shall record the names, addresses and other contact information of students who become pregnant. This shall be done by the Guidance Counsellor, or in the absence of a Guidance Counsellor, the teacher responsible for Health and Family Life Education, or another senior teacher, so designated by the school's Principal.

This information shall be provided to the WCJF, through referral forms provided by the WCJF from time to time. All due regard shall be given to the right to dignity and privacy of pregnant students and their families, and the information contained in referral forms shall be kept confidential.

It involves complementing academic programmes with counselling, family planning, parenting education and other life skills development, as well as addressing welfare needs and providing day-care services.

In developing their own transitional programmes, several Caribbean countries have added the key element of securing the girls' right to mandatory reintegration in the formal school system. This can be achieved by establishing specialised schools for teen mothers or by automatically returning these girls to the regular school system.

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<sup>2</sup> Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo 5-13 September 1994

<sup>3</sup> Examples include Barbados, Grenada and South Africa



### 3.2 THE JAMAICAN CONTEXT

The percentage of live births to school-age mothers has decreased from thirty percent in the 1970s to 18.5 in 2008.<sup>4</sup> Despite this improvement, pregnancy remains the primary cause for the drop-out rate of female students. Some estimates suggest that as few as sixteen percent of school-age mothers return to school to complete their education.<sup>5</sup> Employability of such girls remains lower than their counterparts who complete school.<sup>6</sup> Many end up compromising their independence and life potential by entering into exploitative, transactional or domineering intimate relationships.<sup>7</sup> Children born to girls who do not complete their education are more likely to become school-age parents.<sup>8</sup>

Discrimination and stigmatisation are common responses faced by school-age mothers, before and after their reintegration into the formal school system. While many school-age mothers are victims of carnal abuse, sexual exploitation, incest or lax parenting, their pregnancy can attract negativity and condemnation from families and members of the community. Exclusion from the formal school system results in the re-victimisation of such girls and compounds the impact of poverty on their families. The problem is exacerbated where these girls come from particularly marginalised groups or communities and if they are diagnosed with HIV or AIDS.

In addition to restricted economic opportunities, girls who dropout of school due to pregnancy are more likely to have multiple pregnancies before attaining the age of majority.<sup>9</sup> In 2006, data from the Registrar General's Department revealed

### APPENDIX 3:

#### IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

##### Policy Guidelines for Reintegrating School-aged Mothers in the formal school system

The Ministry of Education desires to ensure that all school-age mothers are able to complete their education, through post-natal reintegration into the formal school system. In order to achieve this the current provision of transitional education programmes, counselling, reintegration services and social support will be expanded and integrated with the MoE's operational and monitoring framework. The primary state entity that currently provides these services is the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation, a limited liability company reporting to the Minister with portfolio responsibilities for Gender and Women's Affairs. The success of this initiative will require the coordinated support of the MoE, the WCJF and several state and non-state entities that provide support to school-age mothers and their families. Schools will be required to facilitate the return of school-age mothers to the classroom, by reserving places made vacant by girls who have temporarily left school to give birth.

Mandatory mechanisms will be established to facilitate the monitoring of all school-age mothers, with the aim of ensuring the continuance of their education and mitigating the factors that contribute to recidivism and drop-out rates. This will involve facilitating access to school-based, community-based and national social support programmes, to ensure that the needs of reintegrated students and their children are met. An im-

MILESTONE	TIME FRAMES
Amendments made to Education Regulations and other laws to enhance fulfilment of rights of school-age parents	Year 4
<b>Communications</b>	
Communications Plan developed	Year 1
Communications materials on policy developed and distributed	Years 1-2
Public awareness programme implemented	Years 2-4
Advocacy programme instituted in schools	Years 1-4
<b>Prevention Campaign</b>	
Adolescent SRH programmes with teen pregnancy prevention messages developed and implemented	Years 1-4
Case studies on past school-age mothers documented, with strong non-discrimination and prevention messages	Year 2
<b>Partnership Building</b>	
MOUs and guidelines for inter-agency collaboration in place	Years 3-4
Parish-based networks of school and community-based organisations providing support to school-age parents and their families developed (including health, child protection, mentorship, youth empowerment, SRH promotion, parenting and faith-based programmes)	Years 2-3, incrementally
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	
Project MoE system established to ensure full implementation of policy	Years 1-2
Post-integration monitoring system instituted in schools to track teen mothers until they complete secondary education	Years 2-3, incrementally
Research project developed and implemented to identify and analyse hindrances to effective reintegration	Years 3-4

a total of 300 girls under the age of 18 years having second and third births during the course of that year.

*Table1: Annual Number of School Aged Mothers and the Percentage Not Registered by WCJF 2003-2008*

<sup>4</sup>Source: Registrar General's Department

<sup>5</sup>Olaniyi et al, 2007, *The Determinants of Sexual Intercourse Before Age 16 Among Rural Jamaican Adolescents*

<sup>6</sup> Chevannes, 1996, *The Women's Centre of Jamaica – An Evaluation*, UNICEF/UNFPA. See also Brown et al c.1995, *WCJF: A Tracer Study*, Canadian Children's Fund and Caleb Drayton, 2000, *Recidivism Among*

Year	Live Births to Child Mothers		# New Registrants in WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers		% School-Age Mothers (<18) Not Served by WCJF
	Under 15	Total Under 18	Under 15	Total Under 18	
2003	311	3685	214	987	73%
2004	278	3572	207	973	73%
2005	301	3752	210	898	76%
2006	211	3387	178	886	74%
2007	211	3202	194	876	73%
2008	223	2981	202	873	71%

*Teenage Mothers*, (unpublished doctoral thesis).

<sup>7</sup>The girls interviewed in the Simpson study (2010) (*ibid*) provide examples of these trends.

<sup>8</sup>Chevannes 1996, *ibid*

<sup>9</sup>Chevannes 1996, *ibid*

The WCJF's Programme for Adolescent Mothers serves approximately 1500 girls each year. The steady decrease in the numbers of live births to girls under 18 years<sup>10</sup> may impact the level of demand on the WCJF. Yet the Programme's capacity is below the actual demand for

transitional spaces for school-age girls who become pregnant. Table1 shows that new registrants to the WCJF for 2003-2008 averaged 915 each year. The average number of mothers age under 18 years registered by the Registrar General for the same period was 3,430. In the 2004-2009 period, the median drop-out rate for the programme was 236. This suggests that the WCJF serves less than thirty per-cent of all mothers under the age of 18 years. This may be the result of a lack of information, interest or resources. While anecdotal and small-scale studies are in-structive, there is insufficient data on the hindrances to effec-tive reintegration of these girls in the formal school system.

Among those who return to school after completing the WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers, 46 may dropout before completion<sup>11</sup>.

Research<sup>12</sup> conducted among a cohort of WCJF past students has identified the following as key contributing factors that frustrate the completion of education by girls returning to high school through WCJF placement<sup>13</sup>.

- Inadequate preparation for the return to school;
- Insufficient post-placement monitoring resulting in a failure to identify and address problems that ultimately lead to dropping out;

<sup>10</sup>Provisional figures from the Registrar General for 2009 place the estimate for live births to girls under 18 at 2139.

<sup>11</sup>Chevannes, 1996, *The Women's Centre of Jamaica – An Evaluation*, UNICEF/UNFPA

## APPENDIX 2

### PROPOSED PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

MILESTONES	TIME FRAMES
<i>Programme Implementation Structures</i>	
Programme integrated in the Guidance and Counselling Unit's Workplan	Year 1
New TOR established for the Reintegration Committee	Year 1
Policy-based projects developed and funding secured	Years 1-2
<i>Strategic Planning and Change Management</i>	
4-year Strategic Plan completed	Year 1
Annual Work Plan completed	Annually
WCJF recognised as an approved education programme	Year 1
WCJF curriculum and programs revised	Years 1-2
Referral system instituted in schools	Years 1-2, incrementally
WCJF places increased by 100 percent to serve additional pregnant teens	Years 1-4, incrementally
Outreach sites established in remote areas	Annually
Partnerships established for implementing transitional programmes for pregnant teens with disabilities	Years 2-3
Mandatory reintegration activities integrated in MoE & WCJF Corporate Plans and Annual Budgets	Annually
Automatic reintegration process institutionalised in schools through the reservation of spaces for school-age mothers	Years 1-2, incrementally

- Inadequate coping skills to manage the competing and equally intense demands of being a student and being a parent;
- Little or no familial support to manage issues such as the cost of attending school or providing day-care services for the new born;
- Financial constraints, which affect school attendance as well as the availability of food and other necessities for the teen mother and her child. For some students, by leaving school to have a child they lost previous benefits that would have lowered the cost of education.

Access to PATH was also complicated by the fact that the school-age mother is not a recognised 'head of a household', and would then require the support of her parents and guardians to access benefits for herself or her child.

Eighty percent of the respondents in this study cited financial constraints as a primary inhibitor in the completion of their education.

- Domestic challenges, including the work involved in child-rearing.
- A second pregnancy, which typically results from the continued dependence on male intimate partners to

<sup>12</sup>Simpson, 2010, *The Return of Teen Mothers to the Formal School System – Redeeming the Second Chance to Complete Secondary Education* (unpublished doctoral thesis).

<sup>13</sup>These factors were confirmed by stakeholders consulted in the development of this policy as either impeding or preventing the completion of formal schooling. A synopsis of stakeholders' priorities is captured in Appendix 5.

assist with the financial demands of parenthood.

The Ministry of Education's policies and plans all promote the vision of education for all. The Ministry's mission statement speaks to the provision of an education system that "secures quality education and training for all persons in Jamaica". Among its strategic objectives is the goal of securing 'teaching and learning opportunities that will optimize access, equity and relevance throughout the education system'<sup>14</sup>.

These ministry-specific goals are reflected in national plans including Vision 2030, which provides for a world class education and training system that, *inter alia*, facilitates the completion of secondary level education for the average beneficiary.<sup>15</sup>

Among the national strategies for achieving this is the expansion of 'mechanisms to provide access to education and training for all, including unattached youth'.<sup>16</sup> This target group would include those school-age mothers who are excluded from the formal school system.

The Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework highlights this sector outcome as one of the National Priority Outcomes for the 2009-2012 planning period. These equitable aims are jeopardised when one cohort of children is routinely denied access to education through the formal school system.

The fact that school-age mothers who are denied access to the formal school system comprise a gender specific group exposes fundamental cultural and institutionalised gender-

## APPENDICES

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<sup>14</sup>Extracted from the MoE's Strategic Objective 2

<sup>15</sup>Extracted from Vision 2030, National Outcome 2

### *THE REINTEGRATION COMMITTEE*

1. Guidance and Counselling Unit
2. Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation
3. Child Development Agency
4. Office of the Children's Advocate
5. National Family Planning Board
6. National Centre for Youth Development
7. Ministry of Justice: Victim's Support Unit
8. Bureau of Women's Affairs
9. Jamaica Constabulary Force: Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse
10. UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund
11. UNICEF
12. Jamaica Teachers Association
13. Jamaica Association of Principals and Vice-Principals
14. Jamaica Association of Principals for Secondary Schools
15. National Parent Teachers' Association of Jamaica

based inequities. This further compromises sector-level and national planning goals. Vision 2030, for example, identifies as a strategy for achieving effective governance the correction and mitigation of 'gender-related inequalities in the society and the imbalances that result'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Extracted from Vision 2030, National Strategy 2-8

<sup>17</sup>Extracted from Vision 2030, National Strategy 6-6

### *3.3 HUMAN, FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES*

State-based education and support services to school-age mothers are currently centralised in the WCJF. However, the WCJF has no formalised linkages with the Ministry of Education or the official school system. Since it was launched by the government in 1978, the WCJF has been moved to several ministries, often falling (as it currently does) within the broader portfolio of the Minister with responsibilities for Gender and Women's Affairs. This lack of integration with the education system has created gaps in the governance framework surrounding the right of school-age mothers to access the education system.

There is the need to strengthen coordination between state agencies serving the various needs of school-age mothers. This will reduce inefficiencies and inequalities and establish clear standards in programme delivery. Referrals to the WCJF from other government agencies are made based on the information, exposure and preferences of staff in those agencies. The Children's Court, for example, refer pregnant girls routinely to the WCJF and incorporate compliance with the Foundation's programmes in the court orders.

This is based on parish level interagency collaboration, rather than an established operational partnership between the respective government agencies. The effectiveness of the partnership is therefore vulnerable to personnel changes. Within the implementation framework for this policy, increased collaboration and formalised referral process have been identified as important strategies.

### *7.1 Policy Review*

This policy will be reviewed at the end of the four-year period for mainstreaming the reintegration of adolescent mothers into the formal school system. Stakeholder inputs in the review process will be coordinated through the Reintegration Committee, which will make recommendations to the Minister of Education for improving the policy and various implementation programmes and initiatives. Thereafter, the policy will be reviewed every five years.

## *APPENDIX I*



## 7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system will be needed to ensure policy success. Indicators for measuring the policy's successful implementation will include measures tracking the completion of secondary education by girls who have been reintegrated post-pregnancy. This will ensure the ultimate cost effectiveness of the policy and advance Jamaica's attainment of national and international development goals targeting education for all.

In the initial roll-out phase of the policy, monitoring and evaluation can be arranged through the Reintegration Programme unit, with oversight provided by the Reintegration Committee. As activities are mainstreamed the MoE capacity of the WCJF and the MoE can be expanded to cover various aspects of the reintegration policy. A comprehensive post-reintegration monitoring system will be co-implemented by the WCJF officers and school-based Guidance Counsellors. This will be designed for the early identification and resolution of issues that could result in student-parents dropping out of school.

There is a gap in the social welfare programmes that are available to school-age mothers who lack the resources to continue their education. Girls who require PATH assistance for school attendance are routinely taken off the PATH programme when they leave school. Specific provision for maintaining the educational assistance for such girls while they attend the WCJF has not been institutionalised. The Foundation has over the years raised funds to assist with transportation, food, healthcare and related costs for the majority of its clientele.

Some schools have cooperated routinely in facilitating the re-entry of girls, post-pregnancy. Simpson, in her 2010 study cites best practices by one school<sup>19</sup>, which employs a mix of strategies to facilitate such students.

These include:

- Preserving the privacy of school-age mothers by treating them as 'regular' students and concealing their status.
- Partnering with the WCJF to strengthen the monitoring of girls after re-entry. This allows for the early identification and resolution of issues that could lead girls to drop-out of school.
- Fostering a climate of acceptance of school-age mothers, and facilitating their special needs by allowing them time off to address health-care and other parental issues.
- Integrating school-age mothers in the school's

counselling and welfare programmes.

This provides a guide for the role of schools in the implementation of this policy.

The institutional framework within which this policy will be implemented is supported by adolescent sexual and reproductive health programmes that are currently being instituted. These include the Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) and Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programmes of the Ministries of Health and Education respectively. This policy raises the need to strengthen such programmes with preventative messages specifically addressing early or unplanned parenting.

## 4.0 THE POLICY

### 4.1 VISION AND VALUES STATEMENTS

#### 4.1.1 Vision Statement

This policy is formulated to fulfil the following vision: ‘An education system that upholds the universal right to education by facilitating all school-age mothers to complete their

address child perpetrators of statutory rape where a pregnancy results. As a result, young men attend the WCJF to undergo life skills, parental training and other social interventions.

Inconsistencies in the Law’s treatment of adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights impact policy and decision-making in this area. Stakeholders have called attention to the discrepancy between the age of consent, which stands at 16 years, and the age of majority, which is 18 years. This communicates mixed messages regarding the level of protection and support that ought to be provided to girls 16 years and older, once they become pregnant.

For girls above the age of consent, having a child may erroneously be interpreted as bringing an end to their childhood, and parents often seek to stop maintenance and support of such children. This policy will not directly address these issues, but draws further attention to the need for ongoing legislative reform.

### *Children in Residential Care*

For children who are wards of the state, the Child Care and Protection Act and Regulations (2007) provide guidelines for minimum standards of care which includes the provision of education to these children. Through linkages with this policy, institutions housing adolescent mothers can be encouraged to ensure that minimum education standards are in alignment with MoE curricula, and that they also cover the wider psycho-social support and life skills training that have been integrated into the WCJF Programme for Adolescent Mothers.

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<sup>19</sup> The identity of the school was kept anonymous for research purposes

- The Health and Family Life Education Curriculum, and draft Policy which set standards for introducing adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues in the school setting.
- The draft National Parenting Support Policy, which sets a framework for strategic and productive partnerships between the school and the home.

### *Health Sector*

The Child Health Policy in the Ministry of Health aims at maximising health services to children and is supported by adolescent health promotion plans and programmes. This emphasises adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights through behaviour modification and access to information and services. Opportunities for strong linkages with the education sector exist in regard to adolescent health promotion, targeted family planning activities under the National Family Planning Act (1970) and the implementation of the National HIV and STI Prevention Policy.

### *Child Protection Sector*

Mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse is a relevant factor for many teen pregnancies, particularly where the parent is below the age of consent, 16 years. This creates a linkage between the security sector, the justice sector and programmes for school-age mothers. At present the WCJF is integrated in pilot programmes under the draft Child Diversion Policy. Through this pilot, the WCJF is identified as an alternate mechanism to

education within the formal school system’.

#### 4.1.2 Values Statements

##### *A. Inclusiveness*

The formal school system is a pillar of child and nation development and should strive to include every child.

##### *B. Redemption*

Children are predisposed to correction and rehabilitation and should be provided with opportunities to recover, learn and grow from their mistakes.

##### *C. Non-Discrimination*

The regulations, policies and practices of the education system should not discriminate against any class, race, gender or other social group, neither overtly nor covertly.

##### *D. Collaboration*

In an environment of limited resources, public and private entities should work together to overcome social problems.

#### 4.2 GOAL

The goal of this policy is to ensure that all adolescent mothers are reintegrated into the formal school system.

#### 4.3 OBJECTIVES

The objectives towards achieving the policy goal are as follows:

- To develop and implement a system for the mandatory reintegration of school-age mothers into

the formal school system.

- To institute a school-based system for referral and monitoring of pregnant students, in partnership with the WCJF's Programme for Adolescent Mothers.
- To create a framework for integrating and expanding the support services available to assist school-age mothers to complete their education.
- To increase public awareness of the right of school-age mothers to an education and the need to reduce incidents of teen pregnancy.
- To increase institutional acceptance of mandatory reintegration of school-age mothers into the formal school system.

## **STRATEGIES**

The policy expectations/strategies are described below, as they relate to each objective.

**Objective 1:** Mandatory Reintegration of School-age Mothers in the Formal School System

**Expected Result:** 100 percent reintegration of school-age mothers in the formal school system

**Strategies:**

- *MoE* will issue guidelines to schools (Appendix 3) to

Mandatory reporting, however, leads to a fear among pregnant teens, their partners and families that by accessing the services of the WCJF they will turn the spotlight of the criminal law unto themselves. An unwillingness to precipitate the arrest and indictment of the baby's father will often prompt school-age mothers and their families to reject the WCJF and other state services, including attending pre-natal clinics or registering the new born.

### ***The National Parenting Support Commission Act (2012)***

The National Parenting Support Commission was established to coordinate the State's support to parenting. The Commission is mandated to assist in the development of positive partnerships between the school and the home and will become a key player for any social initiative emanating from the education sector.

The Commission will become the focal point of the National Parenting Support Policy and any plans that are developed under that policy.

## **6.0 LINKAGES**

### ***Education Sector***

The implementation of the policy will be affected by wider issues within the legal and policy environment. Within the Education sector, the policy aligns with and complements:

rangements may be made for girls to take examinations during pregnancy, in order to continue their education thereafter.

This policy is consistent with the Ministerial discretion to facilitate the continuing education of school-age mothers post pregnancy. It establishes a system for the exercise of that discretion and a formalised process by which school-age mothers are reintegrated into the formal school system.

### *The Sexual Offences Act, 2009*

The Sexual Offences Act (2009) establishes the age of consent at 16 years. Therefore, any girl under age 16 years who is pregnant is deemed the victim of a sexual offence, and the father of her child a sex offender. If the father of the child is under the age of 16 years, the pregnant teen has contravened this law. The definition of a child in need of care and protection includes child victims of sexual offences. The CCPA's mandatory reporting provisions will therefore create a duty to report whenever a person knows or suspects that a child is or has been the victim of a sexual offence.

This obliges persons providing services to pregnant girls under the age of consent to ensure a report is submitted to the Children's Registry. In this way, carnal abuse and corollary offences such as incest, trafficking, child prostitution or rape can be investigated and addressed.

ensure the reservation of spaces for pregnant girls who leave school during the period of pregnancy.

- *MoE* will register WCJF as an approved education facility, and make provisions such as subventions, supervision, curriculum development and monitoring for its students and programmes.
- *WCJF* will design and implement an expansion programme to reach at least 80 percent of pregnant adolescents and cover every parish.
- *WCJF* will work with the MoE to increase the outreach sites for The Programme for Adolescent Mothers in rural areas.
- *WCJF* will work with the MoE and forge partnerships within the disabilities sector to institute programmes for pregnant girls with disabilities.
- *The Committee on Reintegration* will spearhead the process of reviewing laws to enhance the fulfilment of a school-age mother's right to an education.

### *Objective 2: Monitoring and Referral of Pregnant Students*

*Expected Result:* Focal point created for pre-natal and post-natal tracking of students.

## Strategies

- *MoE* will issue guidelines to schools (see Appendix 3) to put in place a system for:
  - a. Confidential recording of students who become pregnant;
  - b. Referral of all pregnant students to the WCJF; and monitoring and support for school-age mothers who have been reintegrated into schools.
- *MoE* will work in partnership with the WCJF and other social programmes to provide counselling, parenting and family planning support to school-age mothers.
- *The Committee on Reintegration* will spearhead the research and statistical analysis regarding the hindrances to the effective reintegration of school-age mothers in the formal school system.

**Objective 3:** Integrated Support Services to Help School-age Mothers to Complete Their Education

**Expected Result:** Reduced recidivism and school drop-out rate (<10 %) among adolescent mothers who return to the formal school system.

## Strategies:

- *The MoE and WCJF* to collaborate on developing guidelines for inter-agency networking and coordination to support school-age mothers.

- The regulation gives the Minister the discretion to permit a pregnant student to ‘continue her education in that institution or if convenient in another public education institution’.

### *Education Regulations, Regulation 31, Paragraphs 2&3*

*(2) A student of a public education institution who becomes pregnant shall be excluded from attending the institution during the period of pregnancy, but the Minister may take such steps as may be necessary to permit her to continue her education in that institution or if convenient in another public education institution.*

*(3) Arrangements may be made to enable students who have been suspended or excluded from school for pregnancy or other health reasons to sit important examinations in connection with the completion of their education. Pg. 26*

- This discretion is therefore referring to the period *during* pregnancy. The return and reintegration of school-age mothers into the formal school system *post-pregnancy* should not necessarily be entirely dependent on a special act of ministerial discretion.
- Paragraph 3 of Regulation 31 allows schools to make examination arrangements for ‘students who have been suspended or excluded from school due to pregnancy, or other health reasons’. The term suspended is used in place of the term ‘expelled’. Nothing in the paragraph suggests that the exclusion envisioned for ‘pregnancy or other health reasons’ is a permanent one. The paragraph clearly envisages that special ar-



Women, and advances the nation's achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

### *Education Act and Regulations*

The Education Act (1980) reinforces the parental duty to ensure the child's education, and is the fundamental law guiding the operations of the formal school system. The attendant Regulations sets operational guidelines for schools and school boards that fall within the public education system.

Article Regulation 31 of the Education Regulations has been the primary guiding legislative provision used in relation to school-age mothers, as it provides for the exclusion of 'a student of a public education institution who becomes pregnant' from 'attending the institution during the period of pregnancy'.

The regulation then reserves, for the Minister, the discretion to provide for the continuance of the education of such girls.

Regulation 31 provides schools with the legal basis for forbidding pregnant girls from attending school, but does not authorise their permanent exclusion from the formal school system. Of note:

- The exclusion is definitive only in relation to the institution the girl was attending and only 'during the period of her pregnancy'. It does not provide a basis for forbidding the return and reintegration of such mothers *after* the period of pregnancy.

- *The WCJF* to develop a comprehensive parish-level referral system that networks social programmes and services that can support school-age mothers.
- *The Committee on Reintegration* should include the PATH programme secretariat, with a view to ensuring the PATH support is tailored to pregnant girls and school-age mothers enrolled in the WCJF or the formal school system.

### *Objective 4: Increased Public Awareness*

*Expected Result:* Increased awareness that school-age mothers have an inalienable right to an education.

#### *Strategies:*

- *MoE* will work with the WCJF and the Reintegration Committee to develop and implement a public education campaign that promotes the reduction of adolescent pregnancy and the right of school-age mothers to an education.
- *The Reintegration Committee* will seek to bring on board partners from the faith-based community, civil society and other potential advocates to champion the education of adolescent mothers.
- *WCJF* will document and publish case studies that capture successes of alumni of the Programme for Adolescent Mothers and promote delayed first pregnancy.



- *MoE* will integrate adolescent pregnancy prevention messages in the ASRH, HFLE and parenting education programmes that are implemented in schools

**Objective 5:** Increased Acceptance of School-age Mothers within Schools

**Expected Result:** High levels (> 80 percent ) of institutional compliance with policy guidelines among schools

**Strategies:**

- *MoE* will plan and conduct training and sensitisation programmes on this policy for principals, PTAs, school staff, *MoE* staff, the Child Development Agency, children's courts, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, NGOs, the faith-based community and other partnering agencies.
- *MoE* will develop and circulate confidentiality and non-discrimination guidelines for school administrators and teachers to reduce the stigma and discrimination that may face student mothers.
- *MoE* will put in place a monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure that schools are in compliance with this policy.

#### 4.5 KEY POLICY DELIVERABLES

Any programme developed in support or promotion of this policy shall seek, where practicable, to mitigate any negative impact on the environment and promote the sustainable and responsible use of resources.

## 5.0 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

### *Child Care and Protection Act (2004)*

The Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) (2004) seeks to enshrine and institutionalise references to rights-based principles in policy and decision-making on behalf of children. It acknowledges the best-interest principle as the focal point for decision-making and puts a strong emphasis on the roles that parents, professionals and the wider society play in child protection. It establishes a mandatory reporting obligation for parents, professionals and other persons who know or suspect that a child is in need of care and protection. As the duty to report is backed by criminal sanction, reporting has become a key factor within programmes in the education and health sectors, and in any institution interfacing with adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights.

Section 28 of the Child Care and Protection Act (2004) establishes a parental responsibility to ensure that all children between the ages of 4 and 16 are enrolled in and attending school. Similar requirements are echoed in the Education Act, 1980. This reflects and fulfils the Government of Jamaica's commitments under articles 2(1) & 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and articles 2 & 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against

- b. Increasing the budgetary allocation to the WCJF by 100 percent .<sup>21</sup> This will cover the expansion of classroom spaces within the WCJF's centres or outreach sites. The review of the WCJF's current curriculum and programmes will also be necessary as the majority of girls who currently drop out of the system place an increased demand on existing facilities.
- c. Communication and training activities will be necessary, but these may be done in partnership with funding agencies<sup>22</sup> that already form part of and give support to the Reintegration Committee or the WCJF.
- d. Welfare support to school-age mothers through PATH or NGO interventions will be strengthened through partnerships. As a registered foundation, the WCJF and its board are authorised to raise funds independently of GOJ subventions, and will continue to do so in support of the girls who utilise their facilities.

## 4.6 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

This policy will have no foreseeable deleterious effects on the environment.

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<sup>21</sup>The Foundation's 2010 allocations amounted to approximately \$66,000.00 per student per annum. It supplements these funds through fundraising.

<sup>22</sup>Support has come from the UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund and there are indications of interest from UNICEF.

To support the implementation of the policy, it is proposed that a Programme for Reintegrating School-age Mothers into the formal school system be established within the Guidance and Counselling Unit of the Ministry of Education. This programme will be designed to manage the full implementation and mainstreaming of the policy, which should occur over a four-year timeline. By the end of this period, mandatory reintegration should have been mainstreamed and a range of partnerships forged to support school-age mothers in completing their education.

The Guidance and Counselling Unit will drive and monitor policy implementation. This unit will liaise regularly with the executive director of the WCJF. The WCJF will provide technical guidance to the policy implementation, and will accept most of the responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of students within the programme. The Reintegration Committee will provide support, and assist in problem-solving and partnership building to ensure the successful implementation of the policy.

The Guidance and Counselling Unit will develop annual work plans to advance policy implementation. The Policy Implementation Framework at Appendix 2 gives an indication of milestones that will need to be achieved over the course of the four-year roll-out of the policy.

Implementation will involve activities in the corporate plans and annual budgets of the MoE and the WCJF, as reintegration is mainstreamed through a change management process.

The main expected outcome of the policy is the mandatory reintegration of school-age mothers into the formal school system. Other outcomes are designed to support this primary aim, as well as to ensure that there is no discontinuity in a school-age mother's education – either during or after pregnancy – until secondary level studies are completed.

To this end, pregnant students will be automatically referred to the WCJF by their guidance counsellors, and will be able to use this facility to continue their education during and immediately after pregnancy. The holistic nature of the WCJF curriculum and programmes will seek to ensure that student mothers and their families are adequately prepared for the complex challenges of returning to the formal school system, completing their education and becoming new parents. Multi-sectoral partnerships will be necessary to strengthen this aspect of the policy, and to ensure that wide range of support services are integrated in the policy implementation framework. The implementation of the policy will therefore involve a three-pronged approach to policy delivery:

- a. *Establishing a Reintegration Programme within the MoE's Guidance and Counselling Unit* to undertake coordination, communication, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the policy and the roll-out across the formal school system. These activities will be guided by the Reintegration Committee, which will receive new Terms of Reference to provide support to the full implementation of the policy.
- b. *Expanding access to transitional programmes through the WCJF.* The WCJF programme has been identified as a best practice for state services to pregnant

Several other strategies are low-cost initiatives designed to improve inter-agency coordination and efficiency. Thus, mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and referral will be developed and integrated into the operations of the WCJF as well as the MoE's existing monitoring functions.

The development of guidelines provides a low-cost opportunity for standardising service delivery to school-age mothers. By tailoring existing services through PATH, Children's Courts and the Child Development Agency, school-age mothers can be better served by the existing state infrastructure. The reservation of places for school-age mothers once they leave school is another low-cost option that can have significant impact.

Other costs such as communications, advocacy, training and research activities may be projectised for funding from the MoE and the WCJF's several partners in the international development funding sector. Other members of the Committee for the Reintegration of School-age Mothers in the Formal School System are expected to integrate the communication goals of the new policy into their own advocacy and training activities. A list of committee members is appended.

The main resource requirements that the policy will need are therefore as follows:

- a. Upon the registration of the WCJF Programme as a recognised education facility of the Ministry of Education, the MoE will make provisions (subventions, supervision, curriculum delivery etc.) in keeping with the requirements for secondary education.

## *Resource Requirements and Financial Implications*

## *Implications*

A primary supporting strategy will involve the expansion of the WCJF's Programme for Adolescent Mothers to provide access to transitional schooling for a greater percentage of student mothers. This would require the extension of the Foundation's seven centres and six outreach sites island-wide, to provide coverage in every parish. Outreach services will be necessary, and can be arranged through partnerships with schools, NGOs and faith-based organisations with credible staff and facilities, to ensure that children in remote areas and those with disabilities are not excluded.

A 2010 estimate of the subventions provided by the government to the WCJF indicates a cost of \$66,000 per student per annum. Although no specific estimate exists of the total numbers that will need to be served by the WCJF when mandatory referral is put in place, it is likely that the capacity of the WCJF must at least double in the short-to-medium term, in order to meet demands.

Of note, as students are being transferred from the formal school system to the WCJF for a period and back, the policy entails the transfer of allocated subventions for students already in the education system. This aspect of the policy does not involve additional costs to the Government of Jamaica.

adolescent. A profile is included at Appendix 5. It currently serves an estimated 30 percent of school-age mothers. While some pregnant students may be close to "aging out" of the formal school system and others may have access to private education, these statistics suggest that a vast proportion of school-age mothers are currently not accessing educational programmes. The WCJF's programme will therefore need to be expanded to at least twice its current capacity, to serve those students currently dropping out of school during pregnancy.

Outreach programmes<sup>19</sup>, particularly for those in remote areas and for students with disabilities, can also be developed in partnership with other community-based organisations or special schools. Statistics from the Registrar General's Department indicate a steady decrease<sup>20</sup> in the number of teens giving birth in the last few decades. This steady decrease suggests that the overall need for places will ultimately decrease if the policy's prevention messages succeed.

- c. *Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Partnerships* to support the holistic aims of the policy. These will be particularly useful in providing the broad-based support that school-age mothers and their families require, as well as ensuring that a strong prevention message undergirds the policy. Community-based organisations are best suited to integrate fathers and men in general, into the policy implementation activities, and to help to reduce the stigma and discrimination that currently limits the ability of school-age mothers to complete their education.

## *Communications & Advocacy*

There are two key messages built into the policy that must be treated as complementary and equally significant pillars. The first message highlights the right of every child to an education, and reinforces the fact that early pregnancy does not negate or nullify this right. The second and equally important message is that the fulfilment of the rights of the school-age mother does not necessarily undermine the moral values to which schools, families or communities aspire. Rather these values can be promoted as an aspect of the responsibilities that balance and complement society's fulfilment of the rights of the child.

Stigma and discrimination forms a key hindrance to girls seeking to return to school post-pregnancy. Wider public education programmes are necessary as much of the discrimination forcing student mothers out of the classroom is generated within the family and community, or among their peers. Training and sensitisation activities targeting the school community will also be necessary to ensure their compliance with, and support of the policy's aims.

The policy will be undergirded by a strong prevention message that seeks to identify and address the factors contributing to teen pregnancy. Prevention messages will be integrated in school-based and national Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) and Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programmes. Men and boys who father the children of school-age mothers will also be targeted, through

attend a new school if this is within her best interest. Schools will not be able to refuse to accept a girl who wishes to retain her place in the institution, unless other grounds for expulsion exist. Note that this position does not preclude parents from arranging private tutelage for pregnant girls, if they so desire. The onus is on parents to prove that the private institution or other arrangement is in tandem with MoE curricula and standards.

the programmes of the WCJF and their on-going partnerships with the security and justice sectors.

### *Consultations*

Multiple consultations have been held to inform and validate the content and approach of this policy. Over 200 men, women and children have been consulted island-wide and there has been strong consensus on the need to ensure that adolescent mothers complete their education. A summary of the consultations and key recommendations is provided at Appendix 4.

### *Reintegration Options*

In stakeholder consultations, options for reintegrating adolescent mothers in the formal school system were often discussed, with the following polar views debated:

*Option 1:* Reintegrate students in the same school they attended prior to becoming pregnant, by mandating schools to reserve a space for students who leave during pregnancy.

Advantages:

- The student would have a familiar setting, including friends, teachers and support systems that

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<sup>19</sup>The WCJF currently establishes outreach centres on an *ad hoc* basis to meet the needs of communities that are distant from its six centres islandwide. As the number of teen pregnancies in an area decreases, outreach programmes in a given community are closed, and others opened elsewhere.

<sup>20</sup>The number of live births to teen mothers decreased from 3,685 in 2003 to 2,981 in 2008.



they may have benefitted from before and during pregnancy.

- The school may have a sense of ownership over the student and feel interested in her completing her education.
- The student would have uniforms, books and other supplies required by the school, thus limiting the cost of returning to school.
- Particularly in rural or remote communities, the school may be the only convenient facility in which the student can complete her education.
- School-age mothers, once trained and exposed to WCJF programmes, are strong advocates for delaying pregnancy until adulthood.

**Disadvantages:**

- The student's past associations may further expose her to risky behaviour and future pregnancies.
- The student may face discrimination and stigma from peers, teachers and parents who are aware of the pregnancy.
- Schools and parents may feel threatened by the example that student mothers exhibit to the other students

**Option 2:** Reintegrate girls in a new school of the same level as the one they attended prior to becoming pregnant.

**Advantages:**

- Student mothers can blend in anonymously and safeguard their privacy.
- Schools avoid the need to directly address adolescent pregnancies by keeping the status of the adolescent mother confidential.

**Disadvantages:**

- This places no direct obligation on any school to accept any student. The rejection of students by schools is a significant and pervasive weakness in the current framework and exposes school-age mothers to institutionalised stigma and discrimination.
- The school-age mother who is forced into a new environment may face additional difficulties settling in, and lack of peer and teacher support may place her at an increased risk for dropping out.
- A new school may place increased financial burdens on the family, requiring new uniforms, school books and supplies.
- In rural and remote areas, mandatory placement in a new school will likely bring increased transportation costs, as students will have to travel to a school outside of the area.

**Option 3: Proposed Compromise Position**

It is proposed that, as a compromise, schools should be required to maintain a space for their students who become pregnant, but girls should not be mandated to return to the same school. In this way, schools may negotiate student exchanges or a girl can be given an opportunity to