

JAMAICA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

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Project Proposal Form

Project Title:	UNDP/Microsoft Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Training for Disadvantaged Youth		
Name and details of organisation submitting the request:	Jamaica Sustainable Development Network (JSDN) Not for profit, non-governmental organisation Year Organisation was Founded: 1998 Date of Legal Incorporation: October 2002		
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Number of organisations that participated in project activities: four Community Access Points (CAPs) island-wide.

Project Purpose:	The purpose of the project is to use ICT as a vehicle to assist disadvantaged youth, between the ages of 17 and 25, to increase their personal educational levels, increase their income generating capacity, and enhance their ability to contribute meaningfully to the development process in their communities.
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Project Objectives:	To train 600 disadvantaged youth at four CAPs island-wide in ICT fundamental skills over a 72-hour, six-week period To provide opportunities for the youth to qualify for both traditional and (ICT-based) vocational training programmes To assist the youth to seek employment opportunities, if not going back to school.
Duration:	May 2005 – September 2006

**Project
Justification:**

Jamaica is currently faced with an unemployment rate of 16%, a poverty rate estimated at 19.7%, a heavy debt burden and fairly low rates of growth. While there have been positive signs that the economy is now in a growth mode, there are still significant obstacles to be overcome over the short to medium term. A large percentage of the population continue to be at the periphery of the country's productive processes due to isolation from traditional growth sectors. There are worrisome weaknesses in the education sector, which is not producing the calibre workforce prepared for an increasingly competitive international market. Crime and violence are also at unacceptably high levels, and threaten to derail both social and economic achievements.

There is growing recognition that, as the global economy transitions from one that is asset-based to one that is knowledge and service-driven, the challenge for developing societies such as Jamaica will only intensify. This is due to the high dependence of these economies on low value-added traditional export goods and services that constantly suffer deteriorating terms of trade, as well as to their low levels of productivity and high factor costs.

In light of the urgency to transform the Jamaican economy to take advantage of these global changes, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Technology (MICT) released a national Five Year Information Technology Strategic Plan in January 2001. The plan, which was updated in March 2002, has as its main objectives, the aggressive exploitation of information technology in marketing the country's products and services as well as generating efficiency improvements in the public and private sectors. Particularly relevant among the challenges identified by the **National Strategic Plan** are "the creation of a culture of innovation and adoption of technology across the nation" and "the creation and retention of a cohort of IT professionals."

In addition, the GOJ in partnership with the UNDP has supported the JSDNP initiative that has, through the establishment of six rural telecentres, provided some of the first insights into the potential that ICT can have in stimulating rural development. It is felt that this latter initiative, if supported and strengthened, can deepen and extend the benefits of ICT beyond the few communities reached so far. As such, the Government has been pushing to expand this model. For example, the Social Development Commission (SDC), with funding from the MICT, has launched its own community access points (CAPs) that are similar to the JSDN, and, in 2004, the Government secured a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank to provide ICT access to over 60 communities across the island. This UNDP-Microsoft initiative to provide additional support to the JSDN is also situated within this context.

Beneficiaries:	<p>The primary beneficiaries of the project were 600 at-risk youth who were selected for training. Secondary beneficiaries include the families of these 600 youth; as well as other fee-paying customers of the JSDN who benefited from the additional capacity in the 4 CAP sites. The project has the potential to impact a much wider cross-section of the society if the model utilised is subsequently adopted under the Government/IDB project.</p>
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Methodology:	<p>JSDN implemented the “ICT training for disadvantaged youth” project island-wide through four of its established CAPs in the parishes of Kingston, Westmoreland, Clarendon, and St. Mary.</p> <p>The curriculum for the six weeks was as follows: <i>Internet & Computer Fundamentals; Microsoft Word Fundamentals; Microsoft Excel Fundamentals; Web Design Fundamentals; and Digital Media Fundamentals.</i></p> <p>Microsoft classes were taught three hours each day, four days per week, for six weeks; a total of 72 hours. Each student received a hand-out with notes and assignments. A test was given at the end of the programme and if successful, the student received a “<i>Microsoft Unlimited Potential</i>” certificate.</p> <p>The youngsters were recruited from churches, community-based organisations and other stakeholders. A graduation ceremony was held in each CAP at the end of each training period.</p>
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<p>Successes/ Challenges/ Lessons Learned/ Future Direction:</p>	<p>The project was very successful as 600 youth had undergone ICT training, in one year, and gained a “<i>Microsoft Unlimited Potential</i>” Certificate. Some went on to do further studies and a few others were able to gain employment.</p> <p>Despite the successes of the programme, one major challenge was the fact that approximately 24% of the students failed to complete the training. An assessment of this problem indicated that in some cases, students did not feel as though they had a sufficient stake in the programme, particularly since it was administered free of cost. Therefore, one of the proposals for Phase II is to charge a small fee to students entering the programme that would be reimbursable upon completion. It is anticipated that this should act as a disincentive to those who would have otherwise ‘dropped out.’</p> <p>Additionally, partnerships with other stakeholders such as the private sector and other donor agencies were not significantly explored in Phase I of the programme. Thus, the opportunities for linkages and networking were not sufficiently exploited. Phase II intends to engage various partners from the initial stages of the programme in order to ensure that linkages are made that will provide the students with opportunities even when the project formally comes to an end.</p> <p>Phase II, scheduled to start January 2007, will improve on Phase I in regards of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. training 900 disadvantaged youth over a two-year period 2. training for eight instead of six weeks 3. training at five CAPs, up from four, island-wide in ICT fundamentals 4. training will now include personal and career development skills. <p>Finally, the advocacy and communication element of the UNDP/Microsoft Programme was largely absent in the first phase, and therefore, many persons or organisations were unaware of the programme’s objectives and results. Phase II promises to significantly strengthen this component with the aim of increasing public awareness in order to leverage additional resources for the initiative, and more importantly, to assist in creating further opportunities for the youth once this programme has ended by connecting them with other partners or networks that may expose them to employment or other opportunities for advancement.</p>
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Name: Dionne K. Leslie Williams (Mrs.)

Signature:

Position: Manager

Date: December 14, 2006