




WB/Jamaica: 300,000 Children to Benefit from Improved Early Childhood Development Services

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More than 300,000 children in Jamaica will benefit from expanded and improved early childhood development (ECD) programs, as a result of US\$12 million in additional funding approved by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors. Additional funds will contribute to improve parenting, care and school readiness for children from zero to six; as well as screening, diagnosis and early stimulation for children at risk. "Early childhood development is a critical pillar for nation building, says Professor Maureen Samms-Vaughan, Executive chair of Jamaica's Early Childhood Commission. "This additional financing will ensure even greater advancement in early childhood development for the benefit of Jamaica's children and the nation as a whole, she added. There is growing scientific evidence that what happens - or doesn't happen - to a child in the first 1,000 days of life has immediate effects on his or her well-being and future. Jamaica's comprehensive National Strategic Plan on early childhood development is the first of its kind in the region. Compared to other countries such as Chile and Colombia, Jamaica guarantees free preprimary education and has the highest proportion of children enrolled in preschool. "More investment in young lives at an early age can make a huge difference in generating success in adulthood, said Sophie Sirtaine, World Bank country director for the Caribbean. "Scaling-up early childhood services will help every child be better prepared for school and better equipped to fulfill their full potential." Among concrete results to be achieved by the additional funding are: More than 300,000 children will be able to fulfill their full potential by receiving adequate support at an early age. About 75 percent of all the children will be enrolled in authorized Early Childhood Institutions that meet health and safety standards. Every child will have a Child Health and Development Passport to track their health and development milestones and help identify children who require special services. This loan, from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to Jamaica, has a final maturity of 29.5 years, with a 6 year grace period. The World Bank 1818 H Street, NW
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