

**The Planning Institute of Jamaica
(PIOJ)**



'Lift Self, Lift Yaad'

The EAGLES BREAKAWAY CONFERENCE 2006

**By
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Director General**

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I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to an audience of young people because you are the future. As Director General of the PIOJ, my job is always about the future. Planning is essentially about the future. If you are not concerned about the future, you need not plan.

Things may not always turn out the way you plan them, but that is why it is even more important to plan and make allowances for things that may not go according to plan. For example, we at the PIOJ expect the economy to grow in 2006. We expect real GDP to be approximately 3.1% higher than for 2005. We expect the services sector, in particular, to perform well. Our outlook for the year is positive.

If, however, we did not plan, how would we compare trends and determine how well or how poorly the economy performed? How would we set targets? How would we envision the better future that we want to attain?

I know you are concerned about your future and that of your country which is why you are studying or plan to study further. As young people a constant question that you should have at the forefront is: 'How can I contribute to my country's development?' How can I make the future better and brighter?

The rapidly changing environment is making it very difficult to answer these questions definitively. Part of the problem is the fact that many of our youth feel

alienated or disconnected from society. Youth often feel that not enough is being done by the system for them or with them. There are mounting problems being faced by all societies as we come to terms with the rapid pace of globalization which is making life quite tentative. Many of the things we were certain about in the past are no longer so. Some jobs, and even whole industries, are disappearing; new technologies are emerging all the time. These are often being used to, not only enhance efficiency and national competitiveness but also, sometimes, to destroy the environment and a way of life.

The outcome of globalization and technological advancement is not all negative. There are new and real opportunities being created even as old one ones disappear. This is what the German Economist Joseph Schumpeter called “creative destruction.” It is similar to a developer buying an old house and destroying it to build a new structure. As I drive around the city, I see a lot of this type of construction and development taking place. If we focus only on the destruction of the old building we will have a negative or pessimistic outlook. However, if we move beyond the rubble of the old building and focus on the new structure, our outlook will be much more positive. While we need to be concerned about the problems we face, about the impact of globalization and other negatives, my duty as Head of the Planning Institute and you as young people looking to the future, must be to create solutions that will make life better. Remember that a positive outlook will eventually win out.

We have to plan and execute at the local and community level in dealing with many of our problems. While we must insist on the state playing its legitimate roles, many initiatives can be taken at the micro or community level to make life better.

At the macro level a lot of resources are spent on education in Jamaica. The education system caters to about 800,000 students in both the public and private sectors at all levels: early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. There are over 22,000 teachers employed in over 1,000 institutions. Government spends over \$30 billion on education each year and households spend an additional \$19 billion. This is a very large commitment and the truth is, it is not seen as enough. More is needed for us to build a world class education and training system. Currently, the Government is working towards the goal of eliminating shift schools and providing more school spaces for students to alleviate overcrowding in schools by September 2007. Early childhood education has moved from 4.4% of the Education Ministry's budget in 2003 to approximately 8%.

But, more does not necessarily mean money. What is often needed is more creativity and imagination in how we spend or use what we have. We do not have unlimited financial resources so we have to be innovative with what we have and plan wisely.

This conference is an important micro level initiative in planning for youth development as it asserts the role of education in personal and social development and mobilization. It presents education as a tool for value-added development which is something that I think is worthy of support. The strategy brings tertiary-level students to share their experiences and advice with secondary-level students; this is valuable. We have organizations here in Jamaica, such as 4E (Eager for Education, Employment and Earnings)¹ which give scholarships for SAT classes and which assist potential university students from Jamaica to find colleges in the United States.

This conference is motivational in that students return and give back to their younger counterparts by helping to motivate them to be high achievers; not just to receive college offers of admission but also attractive financial aid packages. These students are providing a value-added service to Jamaica that cannot be quantified in financial terms but may be compared to the building of social capital.

I particularly admire the objective to 'help Jamaican students (especially those studying overseas) to discover the areas in which their contribution to the recasting of Jamaica's social fabric and economic structure is needed and present avenues through which it can be achieved.' The Caribbean has a high level of outward migration which poses a challenge for our development. It is up

¹ 4E has operated in the United States for the past 19 years but only began operations in Jamaica in October 2002.

to us, as planners, the policy makers and you, to come up with creative solutions to this challenge.

As globalization evolves, the movement of labour across the globe will become a common feature of economies. Jamaica, like most countries will require many new skilled workers, some in areas we cannot even imagine at this point. We know however, that there are many areas in which people will be needed: health workers to treat the elderly, educators and trainers, technicians, personal care givers, computer specialists, accountants, auditors, creative workers, entertainers, etc. These are areas that we can take advantage of to train large numbers of our people knowing full well that some will travel abroad. This is an opportunity to educate and train people for both local employment and for the export of labour services.

This is a personal message to those of you that are already at the tertiary level to assess and evaluate the skills which the country and the world need, and see how you can contribute to filling the gap.

Those of you who are at the secondary level need to be reminded how important academic performance is. There's no room for mediocrity in a modern society, if you can't meet the global standards as an individual or as a society you will be left behind. Globalization is creating winners and losers. The winners are those who are educated and trained to find jobs in areas that are producing goods and

services that the world demands. The losers are those who find themselves in industries whose products are not needed and workers who cannot be trained. You have to ask yourselves from now if you want to be winners or losers.

There are many things out there to detract students: much more than during my teenage years. But, alternately, there is much more out there to motivate you than what I was exposed to during my young years.

Information and technology is at your fingertips. You are global citizens, interacting in the knowledge society, even if you never leave Jamaica's borders because you can speak to someone on the other side of the globe just as easily as you can speak to the person right next to you. You can research any topic without even leaving your home or school, once you have access to the internet, as there are virtual libraries. Your future is full of possibilities: possibilities that you cannot imagine as yet; possibilities that you may create or assist in creating. Your future is in your hands, literally.

Over the past decade, and in particular the past five years, the Government of Jamaica has sought to institutionalize the concerns of youth through a number of strategies.

- the National Youth Service's Corps Programme;
- the National Centre for Youth Development (NCYD);
- the National Strategic Plan for Youth Development;

- the revised National Youth Policy;
- the National Youth Link-Up Programme;
- Operation Phoenix and Youth Information Centres (YIC);
- the Jamaica Values and Attitudes Programme for Tertiary Students (JAMVAT);
- the National Summer Employment Programme.

There are many other initiatives that I have not mentioned. However, my objective is to inform those who don't already know of the opportunities that are available in Jamaica to youth.

The theme of this conference: 'Lift Self, Lift Yaad,' is about identity building among youth. "Self" is each of you here today and all the other youth who are elsewhere in Jamaica. "Yaad" is Jamaica. Therefore, if we want to lift this country, Jamaica, it has to begin with each of us. We have to lift ourselves to lift our country. We have to improve our literacy levels. We have to improve our CSEC passes, especially in English Language and Math. We have to make ourselves employable. Money is being spent on Education. We need to demonstrate that it is being effectively spent and lift our standards.

We have to empower ourselves if our country is to be empowered. You, our youth, are especially vital to Jamaica's future. If you are not going anywhere, neither is Jamaica. A country without youth has nowhere to go! Lift 'self' and 'yaad' will be elevated.

