

**Saint Lucia's Final Report**

***Observational Tour of the Canadian Farm Workers' Program in  
Jamaica***

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Presented to:

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## ***Observational Tour of the Canadian Farm Workers' Program in Jamaica***

<b>Date</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>October 19 – 22, 2010</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Jamaica Department of Labour 110-114 East Street Kingston, Jamaica</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>To expose participants from St. Lucia to the Jamaican Model of the Canadian Farm Program so they could gain insight on strategies and policies for improving the effectiveness of their our program.</b>
<b>Participants</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Mr. George Melchoir, Mrs. Cynthia Francois, and Ms. Benita Polius Ministry of Labour, Information, and Broadcasting - Saint Lucia</b>

### **Brief description of the activities**

The St. Lucian participants attending the exchange were greeted with warm welcomes from the friendly and professional staff at the Jamaica Department of Labour before being exposed to the administrative procedures of the Canadian Farm Program. During the process, we were attached to and had exchanges with the various units linked to the management of the program. Proper planning of the tour made it possible for us to observe the activities of the Medical, Finger Printing, Saving, Welfare Services, Computer and Processing units.

Below is a brief summary of the activities conducted by the various units.

#### **Medical Screening Unit**

This unit comprises a team of medical technicians, nurses, a doctor, and support staff of the Ministry of Labour who oversees all aspect of the medical requirements. The medical process is normally carried-out within 2 days at the premises of the department and includes urinalysis, VDRL, x-rays and physical examinations etc.

#### **Finger-Printing Unit**

Finger printing is done at different stages of the process to ascertain the authenticity of the worker's identify. Samples are cross-checked with the police department to ensure they do not have any criminal records.

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### **Savings Department**

The unit is responsible for the workers financial matters. It ensures that remittances/savings are received on a timely basis, verified to eliminate discrepancies, and posted to the workers accounts.

### **Welfare Services Unit**

This unit makes certain that the well-being of the workers' dependents is taken care of while the workers are away. Ensuring that the dependent children stay in school and are not delinquent, spouses are engaged in economic activities, are some of the activities this unit performs.

### **Computer and Data Unit**

This section deals with all aspect of the worker data from the very first step of applying until they receive their compulsory saving upon returning to the country. This is repeated until the worker is no longer is on the program.

These units collaborate with each other on a number of levels to ensure that the program is run smoothly and efficiently.

## **Main Results and Findings**

### ***Important lessons:***

Overall, the participants felt that observational tour served both as a refresher and also as an opportunity to learn valuable lessons on ways to improve the administration of the Canadian Farm Program. In terms of the information gathered on the tour, we concluded that it was a reinforcement of some of our own assessment of the program.

In the national context, the success of the program is seen as a way of helping to alleviate the perennial domestic problem of unemployment. From the administrative stand point, the general lessons are that:

1. Commitment from all levels (top to bottom) is required for the program to be successful.
2. Proper selection and recruitment is crucial for the sustainability of the program.
3. Program custodians must strive for continuous improvement and innovation.

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However, the most specific lesson learned was the understanding of the various tools and techniques being used by Jamaica's Department of Labour to strengthen its program. It was observed that Jamaica's success at achieving its goals stemmed from:

- Commitment of staff and government to the program
- Proper allocation of resources and support through government subsidies
- Proactive and well-tuned Liaison Service in Canada
- Establishment of resourceful Database – with advanced data – capture capability
- Creation of a Welfare Services Unit (to care for workers dependants locally)

These features of Jamaica's Program are no doubt, what sets their operations apart and above St. Lucia's model.

Most of the activities of the two departments are very similar. However, the manner in which these activities are conducted vary significantly between the two jurisdictions. The Jamaica model is designed for efficiency and speed which cannot be compromised because of the high volume of participants that is frequently processed. Conversely, the St. Lucian model deals with a much smaller volume of participants and doesn't focus on speed but instead places its emphasis on accuracy. An example from the models can be drawn to explain, how the concepts of effective resource allocation is displayed in Jamaica.

Both Jamaica and St. Lucia conduct similar medical screening of their participants, which includes X-ray, Physical, Urinalysis, VDRL etc. However, in the case of Jamaica, all these procedures (except X-ray) are conducted in-house at the department of Labour. Doctors, Nurses, and Lab Technicians are stationed at the department on screening days to ensure that the medical process is completed within two (2) days. In St. Lucia, various components of the medical screening are conducted at different locations (private and public institutions). The workers are sent to these locations in small groups or as individuals and the process can sometimes take up to two (2) weeks (from specimen collection to obtaining results).

The prolonged process in St. Lucia doesn't mean that it is flawed; it is simply more flexible and economical because of the volume (200-300 annually) processed. It would be more costly to adapt Jamaica's model of stationing doctors and nurses at the department. But it can be considered if our goal of increasing St. Lucia's volume is realized and we have a substantially higher number of workers on the program.

## **What can be replicated or adapted in St. Lucia?**

We believe that besides moving in the direction of Jamaica's approach to its medical process, all of the other tools and techniques can be and should be replicated in St. Lucia's Program. The most relevant ones that should be considered for immediate implementation are: the development of a functioning employment database; the creation of a welfare services unit; and the upgrade of the Liaison Services. Although these activities may take some time to develop and can be better classified as mid-to-long term objectives, their importance demand that emphasis be placed on them immediately.

Since St. Lucia is in dire need to increase its number on the Farm Program, its Liaison Service must play a more proactive role in promoting and marketing St. Lucian workers to the Canadian employers. Most of the mechanisms are already in place; however institutional strengthening of the Liaison Service leads the upgrade that is needed in this area. The Liaison Service must be given the resources and a mandate to vigorously market the islands workers. This is the first step in helping to increase the number of workers set abroad.

The employment unit of St. Lucia Department of Labour is well equipped with computers, the internet, and other resources/technology needed to facilitate a fully functioning database. Steps must be made to advance the establishment of this database to capture pertinent information regarding the program.

The establishment of a Welfare Services Unit attached to the Employment Unit must seriously be considered. The benefits to be derived from its services support the need for it immediate endorsement. Though our local Employment Unit attempts to carry out some of these functions in an ad hoc manner, the time has now reached for there services to be formally included in the unit's portfolio.

## **Next Steps**

The biggest challenge in implementing rudiments of Jamaica's model would be the manpower needed to accommodate a Welfare Service and a Database Program Developer. These challenges have to be dealt with at the top-level of management. With this in mind we believe that the government support must be given to any initiative that seeks to improve the local program. The next steps will be to:

- (1) Get support from Management/Government for new initiatives aimed at improving operations of Employment Unit/Canadian Farm Program.

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- (2) Review employment unit – make recommendations to include new features from lessons learnt from Jamaica's experience.
- (3) Conduct full analysis of resources needed – link to department's budget
- (4) Incorporate new activities in work plan.

### **Evaluation of the Activities**

Our objectives were met at the end of the Observational Tour of the Canadian Farm Workers Programme. We observed the medical processing of the workers. The fact that the orientation session began with prayers was an uplifting experience. We then got hands-on training on how to complete relevant documents for the workers. The finger-printing and medical screening of workers are conducted in a concise and efficient manner providing us with some relevant tips on how to sharpen our own system.

Overall, the tour was well-plan and well-executed and met all of our expectations. We have accomplished greatly a large amount of information wish we hope to implement in developing the Employment Unit in handling the Canadian Farm Workers Programme more efficiently.

### **Acknowledgements**

The St. Lucia Delegation of Messrs. George Melchoir, Cynthia Francois and Benita Polius wish to take this opportunity to say thanks to the organizers and persons who contributed to make this program a success.

The participants and the Ministry of Labour, Information and Broadcasting-Saint Lucia would like to thanks the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL) for organizing and funding this initiative that will no doubt redound to the strengthening of our Department's Foreign Employment Services. We also salute and thank all the hard-working and competent staff of the various branches of the Jamaica Department of Labor who donated their time and energy to facilitate our attachment during the tour. Special thanks to Ms. Andrea Miller-Stennett and her team for a well-coordinated and organized program.

Finally, the participants express gratitude to the Ministry and Department of Labour-Saint Lucia for the opportunity to participate in this valuable exchange. We are confident that the lessons learned will enhance our capacity and competencies in dealing with the Canadian Farm program.

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