



The Committee for the Homeless, a subdivision of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, has embarked on a number of strategies in an effort to end chronic homelessness in Jamaica.

Some of the key measures include: establishing outreach programmes to connect clients to services; instituting appropriate and affordable accommodation; and building partnerships among diverse stakeholders through rehabilitation, empowerment, and reintegration of the homeless with their families.

Speaking at a recent JIS 'Think Tank,' Chairman for the Committee for the Homeless, Dr. Winston De La Haye, informed that the vision is for all homeless persons to have access to suitable housing and resources, which will enable them to live in dignity and reach their fullest potential.

He said that homelessness in Jamaica has become a growing issue and the committee has partnered with a number of stakeholders to cater to the needs of the 1, 097 persons listed as homeless across the island.

Some of the stakeholders are the Ministry of Health (MoH), Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), Food for the Poor, and community and faith-based organisations.

Dr. De La Haye said that the MOH plays a key role in addressing mental health issues. "The mental health officers play an integral role in the work we do, due to the large percentage of homeless persons, who are mentally ill. This particular group works closely with the Committee to treat these persons, depending on their illnesses," he said.

He informed that of the 1,097 persons listed as homeless, one third of that population suffers from various types of psychiatric illnesses, with schizophrenia being the most common.

Homeless persons can access accommodation, warm meals, hygiene and medical care, at several homeless facilities across the island.

These include the Marie Atkins Night Shelter in Kingston; Portland Rehabilitation Centre and Open Arms Drop-In Centre, Portland; Refuge of Hope in St. James; Westmoreland Association for Street People (WASP) in Savanna-la-mar; and the Ebenezer Home in Manchester.

Dr. De La Haye told JIS News that while funding remains a challenge to effectively provide for the homeless, the committee remains committed to securing their wellbeing.

He is urging the public to “reach out and touch the life of the homeless by donating cash or kind, being a volunteer, being a friend, providing jobs; in tandem with their tagline, ‘**SHOW YOU CARE, DO YOUR SHARE**’.