



Some 3,287 students at 26 all-age and primary schools islandwide are now enjoying improved sanitary conveniences, following upgrading work by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), at a cost of \$177.6 million.

Improvement works carried out under phase one of JSIF's Sanitation for Schools project, entailed construction of new sanitation blocks, equipped with septic tanks; toilets; urinals; and ramp ways to facilitate access by physically challenged persons. These facilities replace pit latrines, which previously existed at the schools.

The project was undertaken at the request of the Ministry of Education, which lobbied JSIF's assistance, and was financed through grant provisions by the PetroCaribe Development Fund (PDF). This was facilitated under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between JSIF and PDF, signed in 2011.

Construction of the facilities was undertaken over five months at schools in 11 parishes. These were: Clarendon, Hanover, Manchester, St. Catherine, St. Elizabeth, St. James, St. Mary, St. Thomas, Trelwany, and Westmoreland.

A symbolic handing over ceremony for seven of the schools, in Clarendon, St. Catherine, and St. Ann, where facilities were upgraded at a cost of \$51.3 million, was held at one of the beneficiary institutions, Milk River Primary School, in Clarendon, on March 13.

The other institutions are: John's Hall Primary, St. Faith's Primary, Hartlands All Age, Chester Primary, Clapham Primary and Carron Hill Primary Schools. The principals and teachers were presented with commemorative plaques by JSIF.

Arrangements for similar presentations are being made for the other schools over the forthcoming months.

Speaking at the function, JSIF's Managing Director, Scarlett Gillings, noted that the PDF's support for the project formed part of the institution's overall effort to extend much needed assistance to communities across Jamaica.

She said the World Health Organization (WHO) underscores the significant benefits to be derived from the provision of adequate sanitation facilities within households, and communities, in general.

"The savings arising from proper sanitation systems include reduced public health costs and avoidance of billions in income that can be lost when trade and production are disrupted because of possible disease outbreaks," Mrs. Gillings said.



In his remarks, the PDF's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Wesley Hughes, underscored the importance of the partnership between the institutions in helping to transform the lives of the youngsters.

This collaboration, he pointed out, has been "most fruitful as we see the impact that it has been able to make on the lives of people very directly."

"We would like to work towards the complete elimination of all pit latrines in our education system," Dr. Hughes said.

Welcoming the new facilities, Local Government and Community Development Minister and Member of Parliament for south west Clarendon, where Milk River Primary School is situated, Hon. Noel Arscott, emphasized the positive effect which proper sanitary conveniences can make in advancing education.

He also expressed gratitude to the Venezuelan government for its contribution to advancing Jamaica's development, through the PetroCaribe Fund.

In her remarks, Community Relations Officer, Ministry of Education, Karene Reid, who represented Portfolio Minister, Rev. the Hon. Ronald Thwaites, noted the Ministry's cognizance that "sanitation issues in our schools need addressing," adding that "we are thankful for this first step (by JSIF and PDF) in that process."

"We know that improving sanitation in our schools improves the overall school experience of our students. The Ministry advocates for partners to always assist with our schools, as this is one way to boost the development of our students, the community, and the country at large," Ms. Reid said.

By Douglas McIntosh, JIS Reporter