

Jamaica seeks to ID expats for Gov't Database

Jamaica plans to compile a database of information pertaining to 3 million Jamaican expatriates so that the government can tap into their skills and expertise when needed, an official said.

The project will be a boost to the island's development, Donald Robinson, minister of state in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, said in a statement Friday.

"We know absolutely nothing about them, where they live, what their occupations are or their age groups," he said. "So, it is critical that we find a scientific way to start to get the information."

Jamaicans living in Britain, Canada and the U.S. will be targeted with help from local registrar officials in Jamaica.

Expatriates listed in the database will have access to government ministries and agencies, allowing them to make bids on local contracts and possibly receive a discount on travel to Jamaica, Robinson said.

The database will be established with help from the United Nations Development Program and a \$270,000 grant from the European Union, Robinson said. It will be developed at the Jamaica Diaspora Institute of The University of The West Indies in Mona, Jamaica.

Robinson said that the government expects the database to be up and running by the end of this year.