

## Women to benefit from 'Way Out' project

Thousands of Jamaican women could benefit economically from a project to be launched this week by the Government.

The project, titled: 'The Way Out: Jamaican Women's Political and Economic Empowerment', will be launched on International Women's Day, Tuesday, March 8, under the theme: 'Education and Training: Decent Work for Women'.

Executive Director of the Bureau of Women's Affairs, Faith Webster says that the project is aimed at improving the economic and personal development of over 4,000 unemployed and under-employed women, including persons who are informal sector entrepreneurs and household workers.

She notes that skills training will be organised for at-risk women, who may have dropped out of school for a number of reasons.

'Not everybody gets into the Women's Centre Foundation of Jamaica, so we have to identify these women to see how we can help them to improve their skills level as well as to empower them,' she adds.

Miss Webster cites the difficulties faced by some women when they are not trained. 'They end up in low paying occupations, not only low paying jobs, but sometimes the treatment in these low paying occupations and the environment in which they work is really not very conducive to one feeling a sense of dignity and pride,' she adds.

The project, which will be funded by a grant from UN Women, formerly the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), through its fund for Gender Equality, will be implemented by the Bureau, in collaboration with the Dispute Resolution Foundation.

As part of the ceremony, there will also be the launch of the National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE), which was recently approved by Parliament. The policy aims to set a framework for gender equality. It addresses critical gender inequality issues and seeks to address systemic imbalances facing both men and women.

Miss Webster points out that the 32-month Way Out project will seek to initiate implementation of key aspects of Jamaica's NPGE, while seeking to increase the political and economic power of the women to be targeted.

The project, which comprises several phases, will also place emphasis on increasing the capacity of the public sector to lead gender mainstreaming across all sectors by equipping key ministries, departments and agencies with gender analysis tools.

According to Miss Webster, 150 key entities will be targeted to promote gender awareness and to increase the

knowledge and capacities of women leaders. Persons in at least 35 private sector entities will be trained in gender mainstreaming, collecting sex disaggregated data, gender responsive budgeting, gender responsive planning and mediation.

The Way Out project will offer leadership training and development of women from all walks of life and some 160 women will be targeted for leadership training, so as to encourage their participation in decision making in the spheres of the country.

“We want to work with women who have expressed an interest in politics and other areas of society. We want to help them to develop skills in those areas,” Miss Webster says.

Pointing to the need for women to be trained, she argues that women sometimes work twice as hard as men to show their capabilities. —JIS