

Jamaica to receive World Bank funds to help in crime fight

The World Bank says more than 80,000 Jamaican citizens will benefit from improved services, basic infrastructure and targeted crime and violence interventions in 18 vulnerable inner-city communities as a result of a US\$42 million project for integrated community development.

The Washington-based financial institution said the new project is a continuation of the partnership between the Jamaica government and the World Bank on upgrading some of the country's most vulnerable and volatile communities. It said the project builds on the success of the "Inner City Basic Services for the Poor Project" to address accelerating urban decay and declining citizen security. "The project aims to foster a more inclusive society in Jamaica by improving the quality of life of marginalized city dwellers," said Sophie Sirtaine, World Bank country director for the Caribbean. "It also aims to prevent crime and violence by engaging youth in public safety initiatives and providing them with job skills training," she added. As a result of the funding, Sirtaine said more than 50,000 people will benefit from improved solid waste management services, street lighting, paved roads and drainage. She said residents in the 18 communities would "feel safer" and that 1200 families will have their piped water connection repaired and 4,500 residents receiving educational and skills training. "As we strive to advance the targets of the Vision 2030, where access to reliable services and adequate infrastructure is the norm, enhancing community safety and security is a priority," said Scarlett Gillings, managing director of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund. "And these communities are places of choice to live, work, raise families and do business," she added. In the Kingston Metropolitan Area, the World Bank said poverty has doubled in two years from seven per cent in 2008 to more than 14 per cent in 2010. It also said youth unemployment is on the rise, with more than 50 per cent of young people unemployed, adding that homicides and other violent crimes rates are among "the highest in the Latin America and Caribbean region".