

Return Migration to Jamaica and its Development Potential

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ABSTRACT

Return migration to Jamaica is associated closely with the existence and nature of the transnational linkages established between migrants and their home country, especially at the level of the household and family. Remittances invariably precede, accompany and follow the actual return of migrants and comprise money as well as a range of consumer goods.

Data on the number of returning migrants to Jamaica have been collected officially only since 1992; other information is derived from field studies. The figures show that the US is the source of most return migrants to Jamaica, with the United Kingdom second.

Likewise, there are few official statistics on remittances, especially of those entering the country through informal channels. Nevertheless, data on the receipt of money through the Bank of Jamaica, indicate that during the 1990s remittances as a percentage of GDP exceeded that of the traditional foreign currency earners of bauxite and sugar.

Growing awareness of the potential of the Jamaican overseas community has led the Government of Jamaica to establish programmes, including The Return of Talent programme, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to encourage the return of nationals.

Different types of return migrants have the potential to make different kinds of contributions to national development – some through their skills, educational and professional experience, others through the financial capital which they transfer for investment or as retirement income. However, the most significant development potential of return lies in the social and economic conditions in Jamaica itself. If confidence levels are high, there will be little difficulty in attracting persons to return and financial transfers

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and investments will increase. Furthermore, the social and economic environment largely conditions the extent to which skills and talent as well as the financial capital are effectively utilized.

INTRODUCTION

The return of migrants to Jamaica is conditioned principally by the strength and persistence of the transnational household which is established between the individuals abroad and the family which remains in Jamaica. Factors which contribute to the strength of the transnational linkages are many and varied, but strongly determined by the manner and purpose of the migration itself, the migration of individuals versus family units, and the extent of the obligations required of the migrant to compensate for support and responsibilities left with other family members during his or her absence. Return migration has rarely been a characteristic of middle or upper class groups with the financial capability of moving in family units. This situation has occurred periodically when the social, economic or political position of such groups was perceived to be threatened. However, return has always been an integral feature of the overall migration process with regard to the movement of labour.

The first major labour migration from the island began immediately after the abolition of restrictions to free movement associated with constitutional changes surrounding Emancipation in 1834. Large numbers of workers went to Central America and Panama in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and there were constant outward and return movements between Jamaica and these countries. Return flows of migrants from Panama and Central America were significant until the mid-twentieth century when the cycle was complete and the process was no longer fuelled by new arrivals. Migration to the UK during the 1950s and 1960s, to the US and Canada after the 1960s, likewise generated a significant return movement after the late 1970s.

Large-scale emigration reduced the demands on employment and services and, it was hoped by successive colonial administrations, would disperse the most restless and discontented elements in society and thus lower the potential pressure for fundamental reform. Yet from the perspective of Caribbean people, migration came to be regarded less as a means of permanent escape and more as a mechanism for extending opportunities beyond the resource limitations of small islands (Thomas-Hope, 1992). Return became an integral part of the purpose for emigration which has continued to the present time by providing the opportunity for migrants to reap the benefits of working abroad. These benefits were measured both in economic terms and in terms of opportunities for social mobility for the migrants and their children.

For Caribbean people of all social classes, international migration became the most effective strategy for dealing with the constraints of highly stratified societies and small, dependent economies. Throughout the decades of adjustment and transformation since Emancipation, both government and people came to rely upon it. Jamaican migration at the end of the twentieth century thus reflects the persistence of the earlier meaning of migration and its role in the dynamic relationship between changing conditions both in Jamaica and in the evolving pattern of the international division of labour.

Migration flows are sustained when the predisposition or propensity to emigrate is accompanied by the impetus and opportunity to do so. Many factors associated with the propensity to migrate in the first place, and those which trigger the move, are related to the nature and level of national development. But the association is usually neither a simple nor a direct causal one. Similarly, there is an important correlation between return migration and development. The indices which should be used to measure development and their connections with various aspects of the migration process, including the propensity, the decision and the opportunity to move, are imprecise, involving largely unresolved questions.

The macro-economic differentials between countries are expected to lead to a propensity for people to move to a country or area of relatively high levels of economic prosperity. However, the ways in which economic variables are perceived to enhance the achievement of goals at individual and household levels become critical in the decision-making process. These factors affect the ways in which migrants play a part in the development process on their return. That migrants return from North America and Europe to Jamaica is of itself evidence that moves occur in directions which run counter to the gradient of traditionally accepted indices of development, including personal incomes. In those cases where return migrants subsequently feel that their perception of the social and economic conditions, or the relative importance to their sense of well-being are not substantiated by the experience, their situation becomes unstable and re-migration may occur.

The subtleties and complexities of linkages between migration and development have meant that governments world-wide have been slow to incorporate population movements into development policies. As Ghosh notes, there are few countries, sending or receiving, which have made a serious effort to factor migration into their trade, development and other economic policies in a consistent manner. "In policy formulation and intervention, migration and development have been treated as basically separate issues. The broader societal dimensions of development, in particular the social and cultural capital, as well as the environmental aspects of development reflected in behavioural patterns of a wide variety, have not been seriously considered at all" (Ghosh, 1997: 2).

CHARACTERISTICS OF RETURN MIGRATION

Data on return migration

There is a general paucity of official statistics on return migration to Jamaica. With respect to emigration, the Jamaican authorities produce no systematic data and obtain the relevant information from destination countries for their immigration figures. For return migration statistics, destination countries of Jamaican migration do not provide information, as they are primarily concerned to monitor the entry of migrants rather than their departure. Furthermore, neither countries of source in the Caribbean nor the major countries of destination, namely the US, Canada and the UK, immediately realized the volume and significance of the return movement. This had been pointed out with regard to Jamaica and the Caribbean in general in relation to the mid-1980s (Rubenstein, 1982; Gmelch, 1984; Thomas-Hope, 1985, 1986). Counter-suggestions were consistently advanced based on assumptions that migrants simply talked (or dreamed) about returning, and that it was not and would never become a significant movement.

The time lag which occurred in realizing the volume of return migration and its potential was one factor which has led to the lack of data collected on return migration; the other has been the complexity of the movements themselves. A high proportion of the return migration involves multiple moves, occurring over varying periods of time, in some cases extending over several years. As a consequence, there is no systematically monitored information concerning the age, sex or occupation of the return migrants. Sample data collected by this author (1984) are used here to provide some information on the profiles of the migrants themselves.

Variations in the definition of "return migrant" have to be taken into consideration when different sources are used as this makes the comparability of data sets difficult. How long a person has to be resident abroad to be considered a migrant, and what constitutes "residence", raise a number of issues of definition and fundamentally affect the assumptions inherent in the data. To these factors are added the reluctance of Jamaicans to divulge information about their migration and the impossibility of expecting straightforward information on most aspects of their peripatetic lifestyles; this is especially the case with respect to sources and levels of income. In some cases the difficulty of obtaining the truth about an individual's movements is due to the fact that his/her visa or work permit status does not comply with immigration regulations and is, therefore, illegal.

The only official data on the characteristics of migrants who return have been collected by the Jamaica Customs Department since 1992 in the case of persons returning to Jamaica after long-term residence abroad, and by the programme

for the Return of Talent since 1995 for persons recruited through the programme. Other data on return migration are derived from small sample surveys and case studies.

Volume and source of return migration

Statistics on the volume of return migration of Jamaican nationals resident abroad have been gathered officially in Jamaica since 1992 when returning residents were granted tax-free importation of household and personal goods up to specified limits. The point at which individuals apply for the concession on import tax allowances on household goods is when they declare themselves to be "returning residents" and are so entered in the official statistics. However, these data do not include all returnees since only one person registers the request for importation of personal effects if the family returns as a unit. The actual number of returnees could be conservatively estimated at 50 per cent more than the number recorded.

The officially collected data show a steady increase in the volume of return migration over the period 1992 to 1997 (Table 1, page 204). The largest number of returns were recorded for 1993, and a large number were also enumerated in 1994. Arrivals in 1997 were the lowest for the five-year period since 1993 and may signal a trend towards reduced numbers of returns by the end of the decade. Monthly data indicate that returns peaked in December 1993 and to a reduced extent in the Decembers of 1994 to 1996.¹

Figures on the countries from which the migrants returned over the period 1994-1997 indicate the dominance of the US. The second largest number were from the UK. Fewer return migrants were from Canada and fewer still from all other (chiefly Caribbean) locations combined. The distribution of returnees by country of prior residence is similar for the previous decade as demonstrated by data collected in field work by the author in rural Jamaica. In this study, 48.8 per cent of the returnees were from the US and 32.6 per cent from the UK, 9.6 per cent from Canada and 9.0 per cent from other locations. Most of those persons who had been in the US and Canada were farm workers on less than one-year contracts; most of those from the UK had been long-term migrants.

Characteristics of the returnees

Age and sex. In the above mentioned study of rural communities in Jamaica, of the persons who had previously migrated for any period of time, their age at the time of their first trip abroad varied greatly, although the majority were between 25 and 35. Forty-three per cent had subsequently migrated again, usually to the same country of destination as in the first departure. Duration of stay abroad in the case of the short-term, mainly contract workers, was between

one and five years at any one time; the long-term migrants had remained abroad between 25 and 30 years. The age of the migrant at time of final return varied considerably, but large numbers were still working and the numbers of persons in this situation increased during the 1990s. Even in the older age cohort there were many who were economically active after returning to Jamaica, usually in some form of self employment.

Sex distribution varied with the nature of the migration and while males dominate some flows, females comprise the majority in others. For example, farming and hotel contract workers to the US and Canada were exclusively men, while women predominated in other migration streams. In general, both men and women return in proportion to the numbers in which they emigrated.

Education. The wide range of occupational groups included in the population of emigrants from Jamaica implied that there was a great diversity of educational standards. Varied educational levels were also reflected in the return population, and while some persons migrated with the specific objective of improving their formal educational qualifications and were classified as students, education was not a priority for all types of migrant. Nevertheless, the large majority of migrants improved their education in a general sense through the expanded information base and public education environment to which they were exposed. In particular, most migrants gained new skills and acquired new attitudes and ways of functioning in their work. Few migrants from either the US or the UK acquired any formal educational qualifications but large percentages, including those who went for only short periods to other Caribbean destinations, felt certain that they had improved their education because of the experiences gained outside their home country. These important attributes are rarely taken into account when assessing the value of different types of migrants in terms of their potential for development on return.

Occupation and employment status. While in their country of destination, migrants invariably filled positions which they regarded as of lower status than their positions prior to migrating. This was because a number of workers who occupied skilled blue collar or white collar jobs prior to migrating were obliged to work in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs at the migration destination. On return to Jamaica the situation was usually reversed and they improved upon their employment prior to migrating. In the example of returnees to rural areas of Jamaica, the occupational profile immediately after migration – and then later – showed an upward shift overall. This was due partly to the accumulation of enough capital to become established in some form of independent work. With regard to the labour market, migrants in the rural study did not perceive that their work opportunities had improved after returning home. Only 32 per cent of the sample felt that their work opportunities had improved between their

going abroad and returning; 47.1 per cent felt that their work opportunities had not improved; the rest were not convinced that there had been any difference, either positive or negative, in their employment chances.

Whether occupational changes were primarily the result of accumulated capital, which permitted independent work and self-employment status, or whether the acquisition of a skill and improved qualifications played a part, is not immediately apparent. Returning farm workers appeared to improve their status through the small amounts they had saved, but in the case of long-stay migrants from the UK or the US some change in skill or work experience may also have played a part.

As would be expected, returnees to rural communities were primarily farmers or self-employed in service activities, whereas most of the return migrants to the Kingston Metropolitan Area were in the professional occupational category: 48.6 per cent professionals, 9.2 per cent self-employed; 5.5 per cent clerical; 7.3 per cent craftsmen; 7.3 per cent service; 4.5 per cent manual workers and only 1.8 unemployed (author's field data, 1983).

Investments. In addition to investments made in houses and self-employment in the service sector, some investment was made in agriculture by rural returnees. Consistent with the goals of labour migrants being capital accumulation, it was not surprising that their migration would have a bearing upon land tenure. While 67.6 per cent of the rural sample owned no land prior to their migration, only 42.6 per cent were in this position at the time of the survey. Furthermore, the percentage of returnees owning larger pieces of land, both over one acre and over five, increased quite substantially. It would appear that land ownership among returnees had increased as a direct result of funds repatriated when they returned from working abroad.

The greatest increases in land ownership, irrespective of acreage, occurred among migrants returning from the US and it was only in this group that increase was significant. Overall, 36.3 per cent of returnees bought land on their return home with money earned abroad. A further 36.7 per cent of those who bought land did so entirely for agricultural reasons and 16.4 per cent for a house site only.

Other indications of financial investment made by returnees from capital accumulated abroad included purchase of livestock. But as in the case of land ownership (although ownership of livestock increased after migration), the quantities involved were very small and rarely amounted to an increase of more than one goat, pig or cow. Small increases in agricultural investment were therefore typical of the returnees, irrespective of duration of stay abroad or country of destination.

Return and the migration cycle

Short-stay migrants returned on the conclusion of their contracts or on the completion of their business activities. In the sample selected in the capital city, Kingston, 60.4 per cent of the professionals who returned had been abroad for less than 5 years (11.3 per cent for 5-10 years; 11.3 per cent 11-15 years; 5.6 per cent 16-20 years; 5.6 per cent 21-25 years and 5.6 per cent 26-30 years). This is an important point with respect to policy since it suggests that in the absence of specific incentives to return, professionals were more likely to return within 1-5 years. If they remained for longer periods abroad they were less likely to return. For farmers and other semi-skilled or unskilled workers, they were most likely to return to Jamaica at the conclusion of their working life, invariably after 25 or 35 years. This was a significant, though not surprising situation given the relative opportunities in Jamaica and in the industrialized countries of North America and Europe. From a policy point of view, it also suggests that it is better to encourage professionals to return to Jamaica early on in their migration life cycle, largely because they are more likely to respond to the incentives at that stage, before they have become fully established in their careers and the associated income and pension structures at the migration destination.

Migrants varied not only in time period spent abroad but also in the purpose of their migration and both these factors affected intention to return, the stage at which the return occurred and whether further migration occurred later. Of those who stayed abroad for longer periods, 50 per cent of the rural sample population had been home once, 25 per cent three times, 5 per cent four times and 10 per cent as many as five times. This pattern was common with respect to return migration throughout the Caribbean, as for example in the case of Nevis (Byron, 1994). Thus, whether short-stay or long-stay migrants, from the perspective of the household and family, their absence was rarely seen to be definitive or the separation necessarily disruptive to household activity. Emphasis was always placed upon the overall goals of migration, namely arrangements for the final return.

There was, therefore, no simple pattern of migration behaviour in terms of duration of stay abroad or periodicity of movement back to Jamaica. There was an overwhelming tendency for migrants to return regularly or periodically to Jamaica in preparation for their intended final return. Meantime, they maintained a number of family obligations, invested in land and a house and in preparation for the final move.

Most attention paid to Caribbean international migration has been to countries of destination, with the focus on economic, social and political impacts of the migrations, ethnicity, inter-ethnic relations and migrant adaptation to and assimilation in the receiving society. Emigration from Caribbean countries has

attracted attention chiefly with respect to loss of talent. The migration process itself has been regarded largely as a series of linear movements from points of origin to destination. Yet, only when Caribbean international migration is examined in its entirety will activity at origin and destination be seen to be intrinsically linked, and the presence of the migrant abroad seen to be part of the wider transnational system of outflow, interaction and feedback (Thomas-Hope, 1988, 1996; Georges, 1990; Schiller, Basch and Blanc, 1995).

In addition to considering migration from a demographic aspect, account must also be taken of the importance of movement of capital, ideas, influence and goods. The return of Jamaican migrants has been greater than expected in the absence of official statistics about them. Whether the migrants returned to resume permanent residence back in the Caribbean or not, so long as they intended to return their household retained its transnational character. The psychology of return has been accompanied by the sending of remittances while the intention to return remained, or while the transnational household has to be maintained.

Remittances and return

The sending of remittances was closely linked to return and the intention of returning, and both preceded and followed the final residential moves by the migrants themselves. Money was sent to Jamaica prior to the actual residential move in order to invest in land and/or to purchase a house or business; goods were sent to provide household and family members with basic requirements as well as gifts, in part due to the system of obligations which existed between migrant and non-migrant family and, in part, in preparation for the return. There were further sums of money remitted after the final return, especially by retired persons in the form of pensions and social security payments. The pensions and benefits on retirement continued for the rest of the person's life. This meant that for some twenty to thirty years the returnees' pensions would be maintained, though it would decline over time as the number of return residents diminish upon the death of those in receipt of pensions.

Remittances were sent from migrants direct to relatives and friends in Jamaica through both formal and informal channels. The only situation in which the government of Jamaica has evolved a scheme whereby there was an obligatory transfer of funds has been in relation to agricultural contract work in the US and Canada. Farm workers have always been recruited by the Ministry of Labour to take short-term contracts in the US or Canada. As part of the agreement, they were obliged to make savings while abroad. No data are available for recent years on sums earned or remitted from this group of workers, but figures for 1983 serve to indicate the magnitude: in excess of US\$47 million, and for Jamaicans in Canada in the same year over C\$7.5 million. The number of workers involved were 9,946 and 2,608 respectively. The Jamaican govern-

ment derived some benefit because the agreement with workers stipulated that 23 per cent of their bi-monthly pay would be automatically transferred to a bank account in Jamaica and later received by the workers in local currency on their return to Jamaica. McCoy estimated that for the 1980-81 sugar season in Florida alone, nearly US\$19 million were earned by Caribbean (mostly Jamaican) contract workers, of which US\$7,764,000 were remitted through the mandatory savings plan, US\$6,669 remitted otherwise, and the rest spent in the US, much of it on consumer items which were taken home when the workers returned at the end of their contracts (McCoy, 1985: 21).

Remittances rose dramatically in the 1990s. Table 2 (page 204), shows the foreign currency received by the Bank of Jamaica through personal transfers between 1991 and 1997. There were also sums reflecting outflows from Jamaica overseas, chiefly for the support of students in overseas institutions, but these were very small in comparison with the inflows. The increases in receipts by the Bank of Jamaica were due largely to the lifting of restrictions on the holding of foreign currency accounts by Jamaican nationals and on the expatriation of foreign currency. This reduced the fear which people had of sending foreign currency which would become "trapped" in Jamaica dollars. In addition, there was the facilitation of financial transfers through the involvement of private companies, commercial banks and building societies which advertised widely both in Jamaica and in the centres of Jamaican populations overseas. Thus the formal transfer of funds by returnees, as well as through personal overseas connections, shifted from predominantly informal transactions to formal transfers through financial agencies and ultimately to the Bank of Jamaica. Informal transfers involved a number of private arrangements which did not involve money transfers but were reciprocal arrangements between persons at each end of transnational linkages.

Even today, not all remittances are sent through the formal banking system, nor are they all monetary in nature. Smaller sums in particular are transferred by visiting migrants; goods are brought in by individual travellers, and larger quantities shipped in crates and more portable barrels (cylindrical, reinforced cardboard containers). While a large proportion of the households receive money, some receive food, clothing, electrical and non-electrical household items. Farm equipment is also brought back by a small number of returning farm workers.

CONDITIONS SURROUNDING THE RETURN

Return migration propensity

While virtually every Jamaican abroad could be regarded as a potential returnee, the propensity to return reflects combination of the potential or

disposition to return and the actual conditions which influence the decisions made and which finally encourage and facilitate the move. Return is the intended conclusion to migration for the majority of persons at the time of their initial departure from Jamaica. A major objective of the migration, and an important point after which return is deemed appropriate, is the migrant's perception of having achieved what was originally intended, namely success based on the acquisition of those material assets, or improved educational and occupational status, which would ensure a satisfactory lifestyle back in Jamaica.

In addition to the disposition towards returning to Jamaica, a number of factors influence the propensity to do so at a particular time or stage in the migration. These include contract and visa restrictions which, for the majority of migrants, are not applicable. Return is a self-selective process. Stage in the life cycle is an important factor which conditions the timing of return and which varies with the nature of the migration and type of migrant, whether student, contract worker, long-term worker or dependent. The final decision to return or begin the return process is based largely on the combination of two sets of factors: personal and domestic circumstances of the individual and his/her family, including the age and stage in career and household life cycle; and perceived conditions in Jamaica.

National conditions evaluated by prospective returnees in making the decision to return include the anticipated "comfort level" of living in their "home country" relative to their present country of residence. The standard of living and the prospects for living comfortably are assessed, especially the type of house they could afford to purchase and the kind of lifestyle they could reasonably expect to maintain. Conditions for enjoying a healthy environment are also considered to be important, especially by older returnees who may suffer from poor health. Other issues rated highly significant in the decision are cost of living, level of crime, opportunities for investment, political stability, and attitudes in general towards returning migrants in particular.

Just as in the initial emigration, so in the return, negative factors are generally minimized. However, should negative aspects of the situation in Jamaica turn out to be as bad as, or worse than, they were believed to be, they will create an incentive to re-migrate after a short time. This accounts for the fact that prior to returning, migrants ensure that they have dealt appropriately with their residency or citizenship status in the country of migration before departing. This is their "safety valve" should they decide to leave Jamaica again for short or long periods. Many returns are, therefore, tentative in nature.

On balance, the return experience must be perceived to be sufficiently favourable that initial moves by those migrant groups which it is felt should be encouraged to return, create a momentum which sustains itself and encourages

long-term continuation of the process. This issue relates especially to professional and other skilled persons, and may not be as difficult as actually retaining them in the workforce. Even more difficult, yet vital to the effectiveness of return migration in the development process, is that policies and conditions in Jamaica utilize the economic and human potential of the returnees and their overseas networks towards the formulation and achievement of national goals.

Conditions in Jamaica

Macro-economic conditions. Until the 1950s, Jamaica had been a typical colonial economy dependent upon an export oriented monocrop – sugar. From the late 1950s to the end of the 1960s, diversification of production was based on the emergence of bauxite mining, tourism and manufacturing. By 1970, the economy was diversified but still heavily dependent on demand in its export markets and externally determined prices of supplies in its import markets. Between 1977 and 1990, the government negotiated a succession of International Monetary Fund agreements and World Bank structural adjustment loans in addition to Inter-American Development Bank adjustment loans. By the 1990s, the end of the period of structural adjustment, there remained a heavy dependence on external funds in order to maintain levels of economic activity and social welfare programmes. The prospects for achieving sustained economic growth and development remain fundamental concerns.

Macro-economic signals in 1996 indicated significant improvement since the episodes of instability during the early 1990s. The announcement of a National Industrial Policy (NIP) was initiated to lower inflation, stabilize the exchange rate and improve performance in the external sector. To achieve this, monetary policies remained tight, interest rates remained high and average lending rates were around 58.8 per cent before falling to 55.2 per cent at the end of 1996. Money supply was controlled and effectively the growth in money supply reduced (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1997).

GDP stood at J\$ 17,756.7 million in 1992 and J\$ 17,987.1 in 1996. However, calculated as real growth, there had been a decline from 1.5 per cent in 1992 to 1.7 per cent in 1996. Inflation was 27.3 per cent in 1992, 22.1 per cent in 1993; 36.1 per cent in 1994; 19.9 per cent in 1995 and 26.4 per cent in 1996. The recent lowering of inflation was accompanied by poor performance in manufacturing though positive performances were reported in some of the main primary producing sectors, particularly agriculture and mining. Tourism retained its lead position in the economy but its net contribution, based on revenue generated relative to the outflows from the country, has not been calculated.

Climate for investment. The average exchange rate for the Jamaica dollar against the US dollar was J\$ 23.01 in 1992 and J\$ 37.02 in 1996 (Planning

Institute of Jamaica, 1997). The Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) has developed programmes to promote Jamaica as an investment location and to provide advice to prospective investors in priority sectors. Factory owners complain that heavy bureaucratic regulations and “red tape” are a disincentive to invest and a reason for closures. Problems relating to infrastructure, including utilities and transport, also serve to frustrate investors who require speed and efficiency for their operational activities.

The greatest single blow to the confidence of migrants who had either returned or were in the process of doing so, was the fragility of the financial sector and, in particular, the collapse of three major banks during the 1990s. A high proportion of remittances had been deposited in the banks which offered high interest rates. Although the government has put in place a mechanism for dealing with the eventual return of some funds to depositors, immediate losses and uncertainty about the time and amount of final settlements have played a very significant role in undermining confidence. The high interest rates which had been offered by banks in Jamaica greatly encouraged persons in the island and abroad to save in Jamaica, and although rates have had to be reduced, they remain high in relation to external competitors.

Unemployment remained high throughout the 1990s, increasing slightly from an official rate of 15.7 per cent in 1992 to 16.0 per cent in 1996. Female unemployment of 22.8 per cent in 1992 was generally maintained, and in 1996 was 23.1 per cent (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1997). On the other hand, shortages in the labour force are consistently recorded in some professional fields, for example engineering.

The work environment. For Jamaicans in North America and Europe, return usually necessitates a major loss of income and benefits. Furthermore, managerial and operational styles in Jamaica differ from those practised in those regions. Migrants return with expectations of speed of activity and effectiveness of infrastructure. Those who have been away for many years invariably become frustrated while non-migrant colleagues become suspicious or even resentful of them. Unless the returnees are able to adapt to the new working environment, it is likely that they will consider re-migrating. Although the work environment does not generally provide an incentive to return to Jamaica, living conditions are usually regarded as being favourable.

Lifestyles and standards of living. Return migrants of all types expect to obtain standards of living which are equal to, or higher than, those experienced abroad. This is usually achievable in Jamaica, and one of the more positive aspects of the migrants’ experiences relate to the pleasant lifestyles which they enjoy on return. Likewise, conditions are generally conducive to good health, primarily on account of favourable climatic conditions. High quality educational institutions are available for migrants returning with children. On

the negative side is the high incidence of serious crime and the perceived threat to personal security. Numbers of reported crime rose by 4.2 per cent between 1994 and 1996, but the increase in reported murder was 18.6 per cent and in shooting 32.0 per cent. Reported crimes against property generally declined: burglary by 2.3 per cent, larceny from dwelling by 30.2 per cent. The main exception to the overall decline in property incidents was that larceny of motor vehicles increased by 44.7 per cent over the three-year period 1994 to 1996 (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1997).

Associations of returning residents

The existence in Jamaica of sixteen associations of return residents and additional interest groups is a clear indication of the shared sense of identity which exists among return migrants, as well as their need of support in adapting to conditions in Jamaica. Through the associations, returnees provide mutual support in resolving problems encountered in trying to re-adapt to life in Jamaica. The associations provide information and advice on matters of health, especially with regard to the most common chronic diseases suffered, such as diabetes, blindness and hypertension. Information is disseminated on the benefits to which return migrants (especially from the UK) are entitled and how to go about obtaining them. The associations are also concerned to contribute to the welfare of their community and the development of Jamaica. A number of the associations have “adopted” welfare or educational projects in order to give regular support.

IMPACT OF RETURN MIGRATION

The characteristics of the migrants and the migration pattern on the one hand, and the socio-economic environment and policies in Jamaica on the other, combine to determine the extent to which the potential for development of the return migrants and their associated transnational linkages is maximized. Depending on the purpose and country from which they return, and the age and career stage at time of return, migrants vary in the extent and ways in which they make an impact upon the household and community. In addition, there is an important socio-cultural impact of return migrants which is not easily quantified: the leadership roles which they invariably play in their community. Some of the attitudes and behaviours in the areas of work and social interaction which were adopted by the migrants abroad also contribute to changes in society which would be beneficial to Jamaica’s development goals.

In terms of numbers, the impact of return migration is not a major issue. At national level, their demographic impact is chiefly through its contribution to current trends in the ageing of Jamaica’s population. At the local and household level, the return migrant’s presence is more apparent. In the sample of house-

holds in rural Jamaica to which reference has already been made, more than two-thirds had at least one person present at the time of the survey who had been abroad at some time in the past (author's field data, 1984).

A main concern regarding national development is that returnees do not usually fill the labour force requirements of the country. The need for engineers, architects and related professionals is rarely filled by the spontaneous return of Jamaican nationals. Return to service sector activities, small farming or as fully retired persons, does not contribute to the labour force in those areas which have been identified as priority for current development objectives and labour market deficits. Usually, skills acquired abroad are used in self employment activities and make a contribution to the community in a number of ways, not least through the money they remit which enters the local economy. Indeed, the return of retirees is a major economic benefit since they are remitting money from pensions based on previous earnings abroad. Although from an economic perspective one might assume that large numbers of retired persons inserted into the Jamaican economy would have a negative effect through their demand for services, this is not the case since they rely on private rather than government provisions. Indeed, this is an important concern of those intending to return to Jamaica; many persons postpone their final move until they have adequate finance and insurance to cover their needs in old age.

The significance of private transfers is evident when the sums transferred are compared with national production figures. Table 3 (page 205) shows production in three major economic sectors – sugar, bauxite and alumina – compared with remittances as a percentage of Jamaica's total gross domestic product (GDP) from 1991 to 1997. Excluding tourism,² only alumina is comparable to remittances. Over the period 1994-1996, private transfers to the Bank of Jamaica were over 10 per cent of total GDP. Furthermore, while the value of total exports decreased from 1993 to 1997, the value of foreign currency transfers from abroad increased.

The implications of remittances for households is also substantial. Many rely heavily, a few almost entirely, upon the receipt of money and goods from return migrants and other transnational linkages. Returnees who have retired and have no other source of income are totally dependent upon pensions and savings remitted from the country of their migration destination.

The literature on development is primarily concerned with government revenue foregone and net losses or gains in the labour force. In addition to this level of aggregation, much is also to be learned from evaluating the implications of the movement at the household and individual levels. Whatever the national significance of migration, at the personal and household level, it is associated with self-improvement in relation to circumstances prior to the move. This may be reflected in the upgrading of housing stock and higher standards of living

with which concentrations of return migrants are associated, and the educational and professional gains which most migrants make and which inevitably have an impact upon the community in which they live upon their return.

POLICIES RELATING TO RETURN MIGRATION

Current government policies

An initiative for filling labour force needs throughout the Caribbean followed the West Indian Commission Report *Time for Action* (1992), which proposed free movement of labour between countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) with a view to establishing a single market for human resources, served by a common pool of workers at all levels of skill. This would begin with opportunities for the freer movement of professional and skilled persons, starting with graduates of the University of the West Indies, itself a regional institution. The issuing of work permits which would facilitate Caribbean nationals working in Jamaica are handled by the Ministry of Labour and is separate from the thrust of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade to attract Jamaican nationals. To this end, the Government of Jamaica has also established its own programme.

This programme has a high level profile and takes a proactive approach to encouraging Jamaican nationals abroad to return.³ The impetus for this came largely from long-standing concern about the impact which the so-called “brain drain” was having on the labour force. In many areas of professional activity there were critical shortages for highly qualified and experienced personnel. The government was also aware that all Jamaicans abroad were potential returning residents. Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the government initiated The Returning Resident Programme in January, 1993 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, 1998).

The Returning Residents Programme. The overall objective was that in addressing the needs of returning Jamaicans, the programme would provide information; incentives on duty concessions for eligible persons; streamlining of systems and procedures to facilitate the relocation process; and encouragement to persons who wished to participate in the workforce. An information guide was published and made available at consular missions in London, Toronto, Ottawa, Washington D.C., Miami and New York. A Returning Residents Facilitation Unit was created within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade to administer the Programme, headed by a Chief Executive Officer at the Ambassadorial level (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, 1998).

A further government initiative was to establish an Efficiency and Reform Directorate in the Office of the Prime Minister under the Administrative Reform Programme/Structural Adjustment Programme to search for and recruit persons with skills for the public sector. In May 1994, a Skills Bank Facility was established as part of the Returning Residents Programme in order to try to match demand and supply. In addition, the government of Jamaica included in its National Indicative Programme under the 7th Protocol of the LOME IV Convention, a two and a half year Return of Talent Programme. This was funded by the European Union (one million ECU) and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (Williams, n.d.).

The Return of Talent Programme. This project was implemented in Kingston, Jamaica in two phases. The first, from February 1, 1994 to June 4, 1997, recruited and facilitated the return of 39 highly qualified professionals to fill vacant positions in the public sector. Candidates were recruited from the US, Canada, the UK, Guyana, the Bahamas, the Czech Republic and Belgium. Applications were also received from candidates in Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, Hungary and Lesotho. Forty-two per cent of applicants were females, 57.5 per cent were males. The second phase of the programme, June 5, 1997 to June 4, 1998, was mandated to recruit 20 persons. This was against a background of 118 requests from the public sector for filling vacancies (IOM documents).

Financial incentives offered were one-way air fares for the candidate and immediate family members; up to fifty per cent of the cost of shipping household goods; a one-time re-entry subsidy; two-year full medical and accident insurance; monthly salary subsidy; and equipment, including literature and machines, required for the candidate's work. The aim was that the persons recruited would remain in their assigned positions in the public sector for a minimum two years of the project, during which time the required transfer of knowledge and technology should have occurred.

CONCLUSION

The impact of return migration to Jamaica is conditioned by a combination of two factors: the characteristics of the migrants who return in terms of their skills, experience and attitudes, and conditions in the country itself. From a policy perspective, one objective should be to encourage the desired types of migrants to return; the other to take measures to improve the level of confidence in the social and economic environment.

The numbers and types of migrant which should be encouraged to return are important in terms of the capacity of the Jamaican economy and society to absorb them. There is a general tendency to assume that highly skilled persons

would offer the greatest potential and would automatically be of developmental benefit. One of the problems in focussing on this category of migrant is that it is difficult to attract them away from the higher salaries, better working conditions and securities of health care and other welfare provisions to which they have become accustomed. Even if they can be attracted to return to Jamaica they are among the most likely to become frustrated and re-migrate. However, the data suggest that highly skilled persons would more readily and successfully return to Jamaica if they were encouraged to do so within the first five years of going abroad. This would primarily involve young persons who had left Jamaica to pursue higher educational studies. It is suggested that policy should focus on facilitating the return and satisfactory re-entry into the labour force of this group of Jamaicans in order to fill the gaps and reduce shortages in the professional sectors.

With regard to attracting financial capital to the country, migrants who remit the largest amounts of money are those returning (or intending) to retire in Jamaica. Short-term migrants, including farm workers, also remit considerable sums of money. The extent to which the Jamaican overseas population will invest and save in Jamaica is determined partly by the competitiveness of interest rates and investment opportunities, and their confidence in the stability of the country in general and the financial sector in particular. To fully benefit from the potential which exists in capital flows from the large populations of overseas nationals and the wide networks of transnational households, every effort should be made at policy level to fundamentally alter the conditions which have reduced confidence and produced negative signals.

An indication of the significant potential of the migration process with respect to capital flows is already evident. Remittance flows from returning residents themselves, as well as through the wider transnational linkages of the migration network, currently exceed the income from most traditional exports and is comparable to the highest revenue earners – alumina and tourism. The potential for development occurs at various levels, household and local community and the wider national level. Some migrants make a contribution to one aspect; others to another. Besides, there is an important value added of a qualitative nature gained through the experiences and positive orientation towards national development with which Jamaicans overseas invariably return.

How the return component of migration and its associated system of overseas linkages could be used to assist in Jamaica's development goals, demands serious evaluation of development itself. Attention must be paid to the importance of both economic growth and the build up of social stability. They are essential requirements of the process and would place return migration among the highest factors for enhancing development in Jamaica at the present time. On the negative side, there is a danger that the greater the dependence on migration the more persistent would be the country's external dependence.

Furthermore, return migration and remittances tend to encourage inflation due to the higher prices charged to returning migrants for houses and services in particular.

It is also important to take into consideration in any development programme based on remittances that they will not be maintained at the same level indefinitely. Without careful investment planning, these flows of financial capital would not of themselves contribute to the achievement of a sustainable means of development. It is therefore important that, while benefiting from remittances received from the return of professional and other skilled persons in the short-term, the developmental potential be harnessed in a more fundamental way for the long-term. This would be based on changing attitudes and behaviours which contribute to the human resources needed in long-term and sustained development. Most returning migrants are aware of these issues through their exposure abroad. These need to be reinforced, built upon and extended to a wider public through systematic programmes of public education. Such an approach should lead to the migration experience at the national level making a more sustainable impact with a more lasting legacy through attitudes and behaviours which survive beyond the lifetime of both the return migrants and their remittances.

Since 1993, the Government of Jamaica has put in place a vigorous programme for encouraging the return of migrants. This could be critical both in encouraging the movement of highly skilled overseas residents back to Jamaica as well as highlighting, at government level, the significance of repatriating human and financial capital. The existing programmes to stimulate and facilitate flows of returning residents are essential to building confidence and ultimately momentum for the continuation of the process and reflecting the government's commitment to harnessing migration potential as a resource. In addition to the effort to stimulate return flows, it will also be important for the government to focus on the establishment of mechanisms which would capture and optimize developmental potential. This may be approached by encouraging the continued enthusiasm of the returning residents in areas of community development as well as investment, and assisting dialogue with a wider public to bring about the sharing of ideas and expertise. Experience has shown that the more liberal the financial policies, the more investment and movement takes place. It is also likely that the more open the opportunities for dialogue, the more mutually beneficial the process will be. This could help break down some of the frustrations and suspicions that arise between returning residents and others, and contribute to the building of common goals.

It is also important to appreciate the complexity of the process and to try and understand the nature of the dynamic of migration in its entirety, including return as being not simply a further element of population displacement but as a phenomenon itself - part of the Jamaican experience in which all must share,

non-migrant and migrant alike. For the majority of Jamaican nationals, the propensity to return exists, in a general sense, from the time of initial migration. The circumstances (many of which are personal) which permit or encourage the final decision to return must also exist for the move to take place. But even where the actual return move does not occur, the migrant is not necessarily lost to the system back home. The return movement is an essential part of the activity of the transnational household and family and, by extension, of the transnational community. This of itself is a valuable potential resource for Jamaica.

NOTES

1. Five figures on monthly returns, countries of origin, land ownership before and after migration, and remittances were included in the paper presented at The Hague Technical Symposium, which may be obtained from the author.
2. Tourism has not been included because of unavailability of information on net income for the sector.
3. Personal interview with the Head of the Facilitation Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

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TABLE 1
RETURNING BY RESIDENTS TO JAMAICA BY COUNTRY
OF ORIGIN, 1992-1997

Year	Territory				Total
	UK	USA	Canada	Other	
1992	-	-	-	-	1552
1993	-	-	-	-	2493
1994	999	977	333	108	2417
1995	1008	905	287	153	2353
1996	995	863	296	195	2349
1997	997	762	244	91	2094

Source: Jamaica Customs.

TABLE 2
PRIVATE TRANSFER OF MONEY TO JAMAICA, 1991-1997
(millions of US dollars)

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Private (Net) Transfer	153.3	248.2	306.4	447.2	544.4	583.8	606.3
Inflows	183.3	285.2	331.0	479.8	595.1	651.2	668.7
Outflows	30.0	37.0	24.6	32.6	50.7	67.4	62.4

Source: Bank of Jamaica.

TABLE 3
 MAJOR SECTORS OF THE JAMAICAN ECONOMY REVENUE AS A PERCENTAGE
 OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Remittances as a percentage of GDP	4.1	7.8	8.1	11.5	11.7	10.7	9.8
Bauxite as percentage of GDP	3.1	2.8	2.2	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.2
Alumina as percentage of GDP	14.7	14.8	11.6	13.9	13.6	11.0	10.5
Sugar as percentage of GDP	2.4	2.6	2.6	1.8	2.1	2.0	1.6

Source: Based on data from the Bank of Jamaica, Planning Institute of Jamaica, Economic and Social Survey, 1996 and 1997.

LA MIGRATION DE RETOUR EN JAMAÏQUE ET SON POTENTIEL DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

La migration de retour en Jamaïque est étroitement liée à l'existence et au caractère des relations transnationales nouées entre les émigrés et leur pays d'origine, surtout au niveau du ménage et de la famille. Invariablement, les transferts précèdent, accompagnent et suivent le retour effectif des émigrés et englobent, outre les salaires, tout un éventail de biens de consommation.

Officiellement, les données relatives au nombre de migrants rentrés en Jamaïque n'ont commencé à être recueillies que depuis 1992; les autres données sont dérivées d'études sur le terrain. Les chiffres indiquent que la majeure partie des migrants qui rentrent en Jamaïque viennent des Etats-Unis, le Royaume-Uni venant en deuxième position. De même, on dispose de peu de statistiques officielles sur les rapatriements de salaires, surtout en ce qui concerne ceux qui sont entrés dans le pays par des canaux non officiels. On dispose néanmoins de données sur les rentrées de fonds effectuées par le biais de la Banque de Jamaïque. On sait ainsi que, pendant les années 90, les rapatriements de salaires exprimés en pourcentage du BNP ont dépassé les rentrées de devises traditionnelles provenant de l'exportation de bauxite et de sucre. Suite à la prise de conscience croissante du potentiel qu'offre la communauté jamaïcaine d'outre-mer, le Gouvernement jamaïcain a mis sur pied un certain nombre de programmes, dont le Programme de retour de main-d'oeuvre qualifiée qui jouit de l'appui de l'Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM), en vue de favoriser le retour des nationaux.

Les différentes catégories de migrants qui rentrent au pays sont à même d'apporter différents types de contributions au développement national – certains par leurs compétences, leur expérience professionnelle et leur formation, d'autres par le capital financier qu'ils transfèrent à des fins d'investissement ou pour assurer leur retraite. Toutefois, le potentiel de développement le plus significatif qu'offrent les migrants de retour réside dans les conditions économiques et sociales régnant en Jamaïque. Si la confiance règne, il ne sera pas très difficile d'inciter les émigrés à rentrer au pays et, de ce fait, les transferts financiers et les investissements augmenteront. Par ailleurs, l'environnement économique et social conditionne largement la mesure dans laquelle les compétences et le savoir-faire, de même que les capitaux financiers, sont effectivement utilisés.

MIGRACIÓN DE RETORNO A JAMAICA Y SU DESARROLLO POTENCIAL

La migración de retorno a Jamaica está estrechamente vinculada con la existencia y naturaleza de los vínculos transnacionales establecidos entre los migrantes y su país de origen, especialmente a nivel del hogar y de la familia. Invariablemente las remesas preceden, acompañan y siguen el retorno real de los migrantes y comprenden dinero así como una serie de bienes de consumo.

Los datos sobre el número de migrantes retornantes a Jamaica han sido acopiados oficialmente únicamente desde 1992. La demás información proviene de estudios realizados en el terreno. Estas cifras demuestran que los Estados Unidos de América son la fuente principal de retorno de los migrantes a Jamaica, siendo el Reino Unido el segundo en la lista. Igualmente hay pocas estadísticas oficiales sobre las remesas, especialmente sobre aquellas que ingresan al país a través de medios informales. Ello no obstante, existen datos sobre el acuso de recepción de dinero a través del Banco de Jamaica, y ello ha demostrado que durante los años noventa las remesas a nivel de porcentaje del PNB superaron los ingresos en divisas exteriores tradicionales de la bauxita y el azúcar. A la luz de la creciente conciencia del potencial de la comunidad Jaiquinu en ultramar, el Gobierno de Jamaica ha establecido programas, incluido aquél de retorno de talentos, que apoya la Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM), para alentar el retorno de nacionales.

Los distintos tipos de migrantes de retorno tienen el potencial para efectuar diferentes aportaciones al desarrollo nacional – algunos a través de sus competencias, de su educación y de su experiencia profesional, otros a través del capital financiero que transfieren para la inversión o como ingreso de jubilación. Sin embargo, el hecho más significativo de desarrollo potencial en el retorno reside en las condiciones sociales y económicas de Jamaica. Si los niveles de confianza son elevados, no será difícil fomentar el retorno de personas y aumentarán las transferencias e inversiones financieras. Además, el entorno social y económico condiciona en gran medida en qué magnitud las competencias y el talento, así como el capital financiero, se utilizan efectivamente.