

# CAPSULE



June 2024 | R2404



## GROUND WORK FOR PEACE

Reorienting ZOSOs  
for Sustained  
Violence Reduction



This report evaluates the strategic framework and operational design of Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs), a government initiative launched in 2017 to address Jamaica's high rates of violent deaths. ZOSOs aim to address volatile and vulnerable communities using a “clear, hold, and build” strategy derived from Counterinsurgency Theory. This strategy involves displacing gangs, maintaining a continuous security presence while fostering behaviour modification—winning over the “hearts and minds” of the residents—and community strengthening through social investments, including infrastructural work. This strategic review questions the efficacy of the “hearts and minds” approach that underpins the ZOSO strategy, noting its historical failures in other contexts. The analysis advocates shifting the perception of Jamaica's violence from merely criminal or cultural to one rooted in organised violence perpetrated by gangs operating from informal communities—a perspective embodied in the 2013 National Security Policy, yet not reflected in the activities of ZOSOs. These areas are identified as concerns due to their role in fostering high levels of violence.

Security operations that constitute the “clear” and “hold” phases of ZOSO, supported by a localise states of emergency, must be complemented by structural changes during the “build” phase to be effective. A key element of this strategy is the regularisation of semi-formal and informal communities as a catalyst for breaking the cycle of violence. This can be done by regularising land ownership in gang-prevalent areas. This reform not only empowers residents economically but also aligns their interests with the state's interests, thereby enhancing state legitimacy and fostering support for state governance over gang rule.

One of the pivotal aspects of land tenure regularisation is facilitating residential mobility: providing residents with the option to sell their properties and relocate, thereby disrupting entrenched social dynamics that favour gang control. This increased mobility helps to integrate informal settlements into the formal governance framework, boosting the state's capacity to enforce laws and maintain security.

By eliminating the structural and social conditions that allow informal communities to act as sanctuaries for gangs, land tenure regularisation directly reduces gang violence. That, in turn, frees up police resources for addressing non-gang activity while reducing the pool of contract killers, thereby also reducing non-gang violence.

Further integration of marginalised communities into the broader economy and society is achieved through enhanced infrastructure and improved service access. This reduces isolation and diminishes gang control, weaving these communities into the societal fabric where the rule of law prevails.

Economically, transforming “dead capital”, that which cannot be sold or used to earn a financial return, into viable economic assets through formalised land ownership brings multiple benefits.



**Regularizing land tenure in informal communities will undermine gang strongholds, enhance community development, and increase state legitimacy.**

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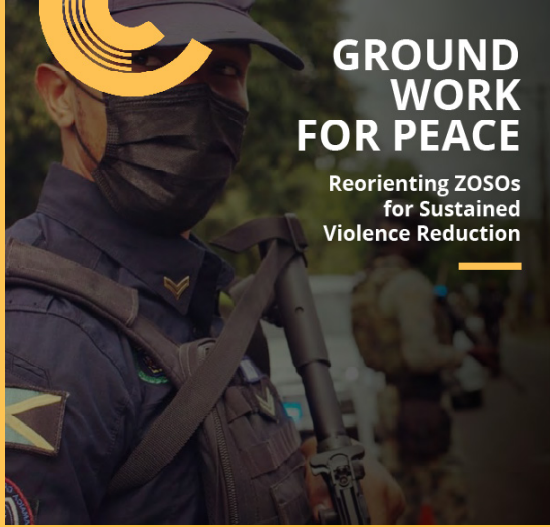
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## GROUND WORK FOR PEACE

Reorienting ZOSOs  
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This report examines the role of women in organised crime and violence in Jamaica, particularly their involvement in gang-related activities. While violent crime is widely considered male-dominated, law enforcement and media reports increasingly suggest that women play active roles in organised criminal groups. However, arrest and incarceration data do not support claims of rising female participation in violent crime. This study evaluates the extent of women's involvement in gang violence, the structural factors influencing their participation, and whether the perception of increased female criminality aligns with actual trends.

Women remain a small minority in Jamaica's criminal landscape, with arrests and incarcerations primarily for non-violent offences such as drug trafficking, fraud, and money laundering. Female arrests for violent crimes, including murder and shooting, are rare and typically involve domestic or interpersonal conflicts rather than gang-related violence. Despite this, law enforcement and media reports suggest that women act as facilitators, financial operatives, and couriers for drugs and weapons, and in some cases, hold decision-making roles within criminal networks. However, no recorded case exists of a woman firing a weapon in a gang-related homicide, reinforcing the perception that "women call the shots but do not fire the shots," even as their roles in gangs evolve. Women's involvement in criminal networks is shaped by structural and socio-economic conditions. Informal and semi-formal communities, characterised by irregular land tenure and weak governance, provide environments where criminal organisations thrive. In these areas, women often navigate between legal and illicit economies, sometimes assuming roles that provide financial stability in the absence of legitimate opportunities. Many women enter criminal networks through familial or romantic connections. Women in gang-affected communities often have relatives involved in crime, increasing their likelihood of participation. Some engage in illicit activities for financial security, whether by facilitating gang operations, laundering money, or participating in lottery scamming. Additionally, women sometimes join gangs in search of belonging, protection, or status in communities where gangs function as de facto governance structures. However, the lack of detailed, gender-disaggregated crime data makes it difficult to determine the true extent of female involvement in organised crime. This study identifies a range of roles that women occupy within Jamaica's criminal networks. Women provide logistical support, such as hiding weapons, transporting contraband, or managing finances. They handle money laundering, extortion proceeds, and other financial transactions for criminal organisations. Some gather intelligence,

infiltrating rival groups or monitoring law enforcement. Women often act as couriers, using their perceived lower risk of police scrutiny to transport drugs, weapons, and cash. While rare, some women hold leadership positions, coordinating gang activities and making strategic decisions. Although these roles demonstrate women's agency within organised crime, their participation remains largely facilitatory rather than as direct enforcers of violence.



Regularizing land tenure  
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Several case studies illustrate the evolving roles of women in Jamaica's criminal networks. Stephanie "Mumma" Christie, a high-ranking member of the Klansman-One Don Gang, managed the gang's financial operations and secured legal representation for members. Sudeen "Pinky" Hylton, described as Jamaica's first "gunwoman," did not fire a weapon but played an instrumental role in orchestrating murders. Kenisha Moodie's involvement with the King's Valley Gang highlights how romantic relationships with gang leaders can serve as pathways into organised crime. Sheryl McCallum and Tishell Bernard, alleged members of the Only the Family (OTF) gang, were arrested for stockpiling firearms and ammunition, reflecting the increasing presence of women in operational roles. These cases show that while women in organised crime may not be the shottas, they play key roles in sustaining criminal networks.

The study concludes that where women are involved in organised crime in Jamaica, beyond what the data shows, that involvement is influenced by structural conditions, economic realities, and social networks, therefore requiring policy approaches that address the underlying conditions. Strengthening governance in gang-affected communities through regularising land tenure will improve opportunities for economic empowerment, thereby reducing both direct and indirect female involvement in criminal networks. While women's direct participation in gang violence remains limited, their roles in sustaining organised crime warrant policy attention.



## Recommendations

- 1. Reframe Gender Narratives in Crime Prevention –** Crime prevention strategies should acknowledge the active roles women play in criminal networks. Gender-responsive approaches should be integrated into crime prevention and intervention efforts.
- 2. Increase Female Personnel in Security Efforts –** Law enforcement agencies should increase the deployment of female officers in anti-gang operations to enhance intelligence gathering and enforcement.
- 3. Structural Community Transformation –** Regularising land tenure and improving governance in informal settlements will weaken the systemic conditions that sustain gangs while creating opportunities for economic empowerment. Prioritising women's inclusion in these processes will reduce their economic dependence and vulnerability to gang influence, fostering safer and more resilient communities.



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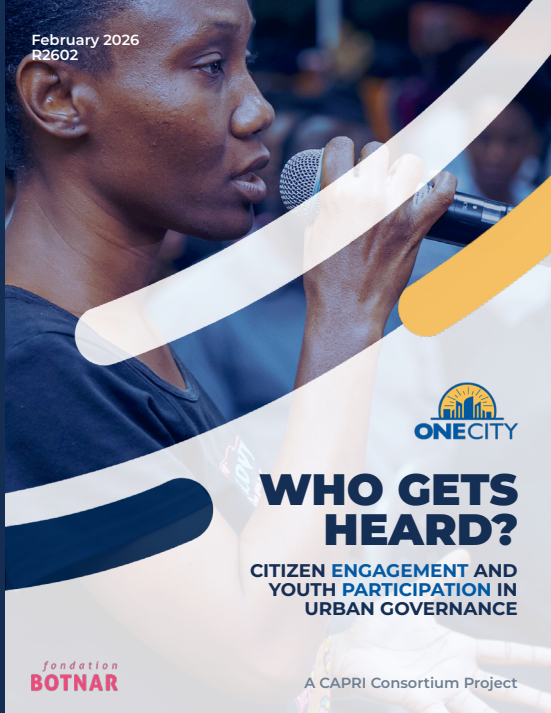
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This report explores how public participation functions within Jamaica’s wider urban governance landscape. Jamaica’s governance landscape features an impressive array of mechanisms for public participation, from community meetings and surveys to digital platforms and youth councils. Yet despite this abundance, citizens—especially young people—frequently report feeling unheard, with participation often occurring without clear pathways to implementation: citizens are invited to speak, but rarely see or experience how their input shapes decisions.

Building on the Right to the City (RTTC) framework utilized in Who Gets What?, Who Gets Heard? shifts the focus from access to services toward access to decision-making. It draws on ecosystem mapping, elite and institutional interviews, youth-led focus groups, stakeholder workshops, and service evaluations to provide the first systems-level analysis of Jamaica’s public participation architecture. It maps over thirty engagement channels across community, municipal, parish, and national levels, classifies them by execution structure, capital ownership, institutional permanence, and level of influence, and ultimately evaluates how well they meet citizen needs, particularly but not limited to those of young people

The findings reveal a participatory ecosystem characterized by abundant channels for participation, but lacking the coordination or coherence needed for them to function as a connected system. Instead, the country’s participation system is defined by fragmentation across its spheres, and results in consultation without impact, dialogue without feedback, and engagement without empowerment.

These structural issues result in a persistent paradox: Jamaica’s participation ecosystem is extensive in form but limited in function, with the problem not the absence of participatory mechanisms but rather weak coordination, unclear ownership, limited capital alignment, and insufficient and inefficient institutional responsiveness. This leads to participation frequently operating as a procedural requirement rather than an effective channel for partnership between communities and the state.

The report challenges the common narrative of citizen “apathy.” Instead, it positions citizen disengagement as a rational response to repeated experiences of consultation without visible outcomes, thereby reducing the willingness to participate in future processes. Public participation, therefore, operates more like a reputational system—

each unacknowledged consultation diminishes trust, while visible follow-through strengthens it.

To improve the citizen experience, the report examines public participation as a service design challenge. Across interviews, channel evaluations, and co-design workshops with institutional convenors, citizens, and young people, a new Public Participation User-Needs Framework was developed. It captures a set of core needs (standards) that shape citizens’ experiences of public participation exercises.



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **1. Operationalize the Local Governance Act**

The Ministry of Local Government should fully implement the participatory provisions of the Local Governance Act, clarifying the roles of Parish Development Committees (PDCs) and Community Development Committees (CDCs).

## **2. Fully Implement Shared Participation Standards Across Government**

Full implementation of the 2005 Consultation Code of Practice, regularly updated and reviewed to reflect contemporary governance realities. Adherence to these standards would ensure clarity of process, accessibility, timelines, feedback obligations, and documentation of outcomes.

## **3. Harmonize Participation Mandates Across Governance Levels**

Convening institutions of participation channels should coordinate engagement and planning to reduce duplication and consultation fatigue. This may also include practical reference models for common participation stages, including announcing opportunities, onboarding participants, facilitating engagement, and providing feedback.

## **4. Resource Citizen Engagement as Shared Infrastructure**

Government should formally recognize and resource the Social Development Commission (SDC) as a core engagement infrastructure, maintained through partnership or cost-sharing mechanisms.

## **5. Strengthen Core Participation Functions Across Institutions**

Public bodies that oversee or delegate participation processes should strengthen coordination by maintaining a public registry of delegated entities and their outputs, standardizing engagement practices, aggregating recurring record of citizens' concerns,

and providing shared tools to reduce execution burdens.

## **6. Use the Citizen Public Participation User-Needs Framework**

Programme managers should apply the Citizen Public Participation User-Needs Framework to identify gaps in being able to Find, Understand, Participate in, and Access records for participation channels.

## **7. Increase Visibility of Community Development Plans**

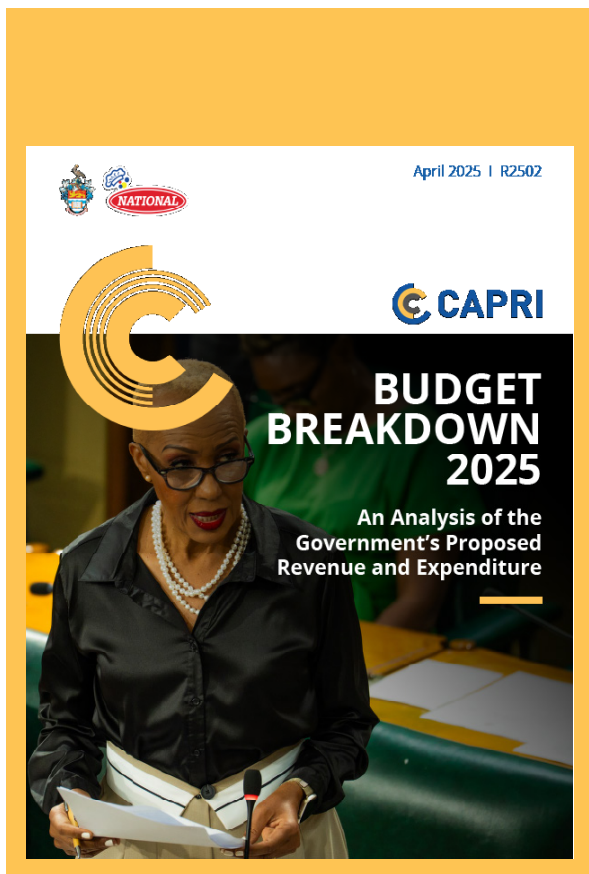
Government should adopt an Open by Default principle for community development plans and consultation outputs and explore establishing a federated public registry to improve discoverability, coordination, and accountability.

## **8. Incentivize Cross-Institutional Investment in Participation**

The Ministry of Finance and Cabinet Office should explore coordination mechanisms that encourage joint investment in participation processes. Matching or collaborative funding arrangements could reward institutions that have shared priorities or reuse existing community inputs.

## **9. Develop a Public-Facing Participation Tracking Platform**

We are developing a public-facing platform that aggregates participation activities, outputs, and implementation status across ministries, agencies, and municipal bodies. Organized by geography, issue, and institution, the platform would improve transparency and allow citizens to track outcomes



This report analyses Jamaica’s budget for the fiscal year 2025/26, aiming to uncover the development policies and priorities implicit within the numbers. The objective is to distil the key takeaways and significant trends of the current budget, thereby enhancing the public’s understanding of how their tax dollars are managed by the government.

The value of money changes over time due to inflation, which affects its purchasing power. To account for this, nominal amounts from previous years are adjusted upwards to reflect how much it would cost now to procure the same amount of goods and services.

The credibility of a budget is determined by whether the revenue and expenditure projections are realistic. Jamaica’s 2025/26 budget is premised on economic growth of 2.2 percent and inflation of 5.3 percent. These projections align with estimates from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which both anticipate GDP growth of approximately 2 percent, and is consistent with the Bank of Jamaica’s forecast of 1 to 3 percent. Newly established macroeconomic stability also supports the assumption of some amount of economic growth. The central bank’s inflation target is in the range of 4 to 6 percent, so the government’s assumption of 5.3 percent is consistent with that. Jamaica’s budget for the fiscal year 2025 is thus deemed credible.

The economy’s resilience further lends to the budget’s credibility. The country’s fiscal responsibility framework, along with its independent central bank, provides a guardrail against unrealistic revenue estimates and politically directed monetary policy. Despite ongoing vulnerabilities due to economic risks and natural or climate-related hazards, a comprehensive strategy involving financial instruments and policies is in place. The strategy serves to mitigate these risks, including various funds dedicated to disaster relief, insurance mechanisms against catastrophes, strategic financial arrangements with international institutions, ample import coverage, and a sustainably low debt level.

Continued, programmed debt reduction underlies the sustainability of the country’s fiscal management (Figure A). Down from 147 percent in 2012, debt/GDP is expected to drop to 64 percent by the end of the 2025/26 fiscal year (Figure A).

Nevertheless, the budget faces several risks. Chief among them are global economic uncertainties, including potential disruptions to global supply chains, inflationary pressures from foreign policy decisions in major trading partners, and the continued vulnerability to natural and climate-related disasters. Between 1994 and 2020, Jamaica experienced 15 tropical storms, causing damage of some US\$719 million.

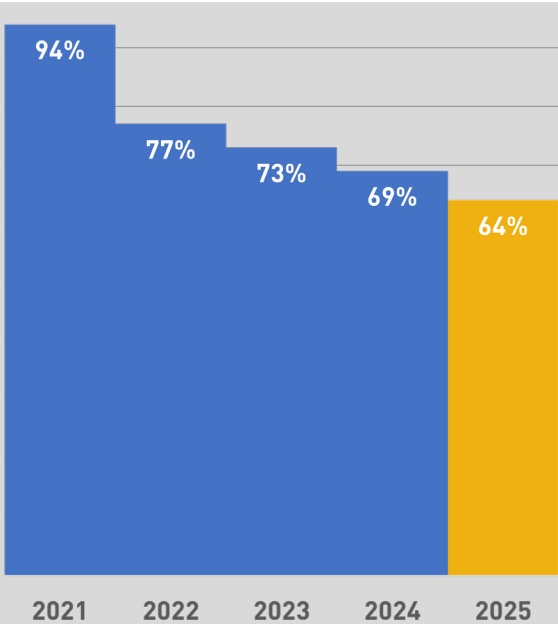
To mitigate such risks, the Jamaican government has established a National Natural Disaster Risk Financing Policy (NNDRFP), which adopts a risk-layered approach to disaster financing. This policy, alongside a robust debt management strategy focused on local currency obligations, enhances fiscal sustainability.

The most prominent and concerning trend in the 2025/26 budget is the continued shift from indirect taxes (which are levied on consumption, production, and imports) to direct taxes (those on personal and corporate income). In five years, the share of revenue derived from direct taxes will have increased from 24 to 31 percent (Figure B).

The underlying cause of this shift is the erosion of the purchasing power of the income tax threshold, the annual level of income below which income tax is not taken. The threshold which had been at \$1.5 million since 2018, was bumped up in 2024/25 to \$1.7 million, which was inadequate to recover the inflationary erosion of the previous six years. Furthermore, the reliance on income taxes in an economy in which income is easily hidden introduces the “horizontal” inequity of having equal income-earners paying vastly different taxes depending on whether they are formally employed or not. The question of whether to increase the threshold further requires grappling with a

Jamaica’s public debt is set to continue on its downward trend

### **A** Debt to GDP Ratio



trade-off. Only 30 percent of those who are compliant currently earn above the threshold. Further increases, therefore, benefit only the wealthiest tercile, which does not seem consistent with equity. However, such a move would reduce the tax liability of that tercile to bring it more into line with those who are evading taxes entirely, thereby reducing that dimension of inequity.

The revenue intake for 2025/26 is projected to decrease by 3 percent in inflation-adjusted terms to J\$1.1 trillion, representing the first revenue contraction since the pandemic. This decline is primarily due to a decrease in non-tax revenue following the conclusion of a one-off securitisation and sale transaction involving the Norman Manley International Airport.

Expenditure is divided into four main categories: National Security, Social Services, Economic Development, and Public Administration. The largest share of the budget is allocated to social services, particularly education and healthcare. Expenditure on Administration will have grown by 29 percent over two years as a result of the implementation of the public sector pay reform and increases. All other functional categories receive a reduced allocation to accommodate the pay reform as well the expected reduction in revenue.

Capital expenditure, which cuts across all functional categories, will decline by 3 percent in 2025/26 to \$63 billion. This trend reflects the completion of several infrastructure projects.

The **Solidarity Programme** is a social assistance initiative designed to provide one-time cash transfers of between \$20,000 and \$50,000 to individuals not enrolled in existing welfare programmes. While well-targeted, the programme's scale and design are limited by its one-time nature. Its principal benefit may lie in helping individuals obtain vital documents such as birth certificates and national IDs, thereby improving access to other welfare programmes.

**NHT Lending Reforms** aim to improve access to homeownership by increasing loan limits and reducing service charges for lower-income contributors. However, these reforms fall short of effectively addressing issues related to informality, which prevents many low-income earners from benefiting from the NHT's offerings.

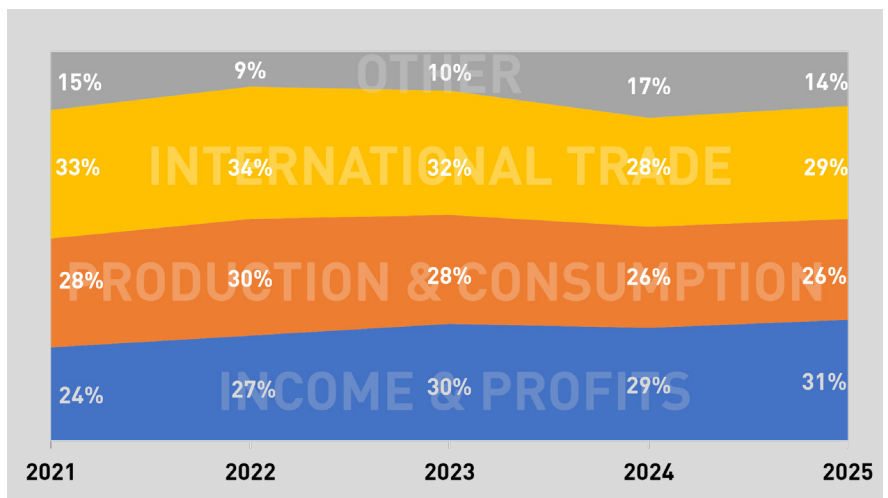
A **revision to the Income Tax Relief Act** was promised. The original act was passed in 2013 with the intention of encouraging foreign direct investment in large scale projects, but has failed to encourage any. The revision promises to correct the flaws underlying the failure of the original act. The problem with tax breaks is that any relief

from one business's obligation to pay for its use of public infrastructure and public services necessarily imposes that cost on all other businesses, thereby impinging on their own viability.

The share of revenue from income taxes keeps rising



## Share of Revenue by Source



## Recommendations

1. **Continue to make debt reduction the focus of fiscal management.** While debt/GDP at 60 percent is held as an "acceptable" threshold, in an increasingly volatile and unpredictable world, both naturally and geopolitically, the vulnerability of a small economy demands a thick layer of resilience that calls for a lower level.
2. **Halt or reverse the trend of the tax burden shifting towards income taxes.** The share of tax revenue due to direct taxes has risen by seven percentage points over five years. To mitigate the inequity between those in and out of the tax net, the government should continue to raise the income tax threshold at least in line with inflation.
3. **Reduce the reliance on tax incentives as an economic growth strategy.** Reduced tax obligations for one sector implies higher taxes than otherwise would be necessary for others. Further, such programmes tend to lead to demands by others for tax breaks, leading to the tax burden falling on fewer and fewer economic activities. Finally, for long term sustainability, businesses should cover all their costs, including external ones provided by the state and paid for by taxation.



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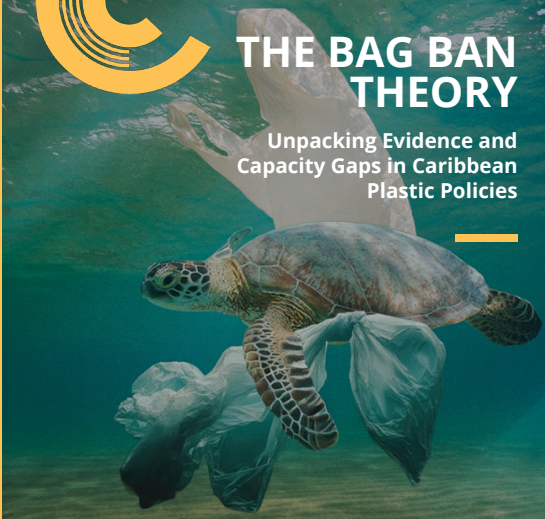
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## THE BAG BAN THEORY

Unpacking Evidence and Capacity Gaps in Caribbean Plastic Policies



This report examines the effectiveness of single-use plastic bag bans in Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, and Jamaica. These countries introduced bans with the shared aim of reducing single-use plastic circulation and litter, alongside broader objectives such as protecting marine ecosystems, reducing flood and health risks, and positioning themselves as regional leaders in sustainability. Each relied heavily on consumer behaviour change and substitution with alternatives, supported to varying degrees by public awareness campaigns and exemptions for food safety.

The analysis found that while some visible progress has been achieved, particularly in curbing plastic bag use in formal retail sectors, the absence of systematic monitoring means the effectiveness of the bans cannot be determined with confidence. None of the jurisdictions established baseline indicators or monitoring mechanisms, leaving evaluations to rely on fragmented administrative data, retailer self-reports, and beach cleanup results. These proxies lack methodological integrity and cannot serve as reliable evidence of impact.

**Plastics contribute to 3 percent of global emissions, and projections suggest it could rise to 19 percent by 2050 if current trends continue.**



In Antigua & Barbuda, the share of plastics in landfills dropped from 20 percent in 2006 to four percent in 2017, though much of this decline preceded the 2016 ban. Government distribution of reusable bags and awareness campaigns supported compliance, and surveys suggested public awareness improved. Yet enforcement inland was uneven, smaller retailers continued distributing banned bags, and health indicators such as dengue incidence fluctuated independently of the ban.

In Barbados, the 2019 Control of Disposable Plastics Act banned a wide range of products and linked the measure explicitly to sustainability and global reputation. Plastics accounted for 12 percent of municipal waste in 2015, declining to three percent in 2021, but cleanup data from 2023 and 2024 still showed plastics making up over 70 percent of litter. A 2017 baseline recorded 21 percent of coastal litter as macroplastics, and by 2021 an estimated 131 tonnes of macroplastics and 177 tonnes of microplastics were still entering the sea. Promised standards for alternatives were not delivered, leaving biodegradable substitutes unregulated and sometimes environmentally harmful. Retailers reported reductions in bag use, but these were self-reported and not independently verified.

Jamaica phased in bans from 2019, targeting bags, straws, and polystyrene containers. International Coastal Cleanup data suggest a fall in plastic bag prevalence from 13

percent of collected waste in 2018 to six percent in 2021, followed by a rise to nine percent in 2022. Imports of plastics increased from US\$191 million in 2015 to US\$275 million in 2023, suggesting substitution into other plastics. Health proxy data showed that dengue incidence fluctuated considerably, with notable spikes in 2019 and 2023 and declines in the intervening years - patterns more closely linked to variations in rainfall and public health conditions than to the plastic ban itself. Enforcement was initially strong, with 52 prosecutions by the end of 2024, but activity has since declined, raising concerns about sustainability.



**Biodegradable and compostable plastics have shown little environmental advantage over conventional bags: many do not degrade faster, and in landfills the lack of oxygen and sunlight prevents**

Across all three countries, the bans have reduced the most visible sources of plastic waste and raised public awareness, but their broader environmental and health impacts remain inconclusive. Plastics are still pervasive, substitutes are poorly regulated, and monitoring and enforcement are inconsistent. Achieving meaningful reductions in plastic pollution will require sustained enforcement, systematic data collection, and stronger regulation of alternatives. To move from symbolic to substantive, governments must strengthen the design and implementation of plastic bans.



## Recommendations

- 1. Establish systematic monitoring of plastics flows:** Ministries responsible for environment and trade should require quarterly importer and manufacturer reports on plastic bags and substitutes, while waste management authorities should conduct regular waste characterisation studies disaggregated by product type and make results public.
- 2. Set and enforce standards for plastic alternatives:** National standards bodies should adopt internationally recognised benchmarks for biodegradable and compostable plastics, require independent testing, and publish annual lists of approved alternatives to guide importers, retailers, and consumers.
- 3. Strengthen enforcement capacity:** Customs agencies should expand inspections to prevent imports of banned items, while environmental agencies should increase inland spot checks of retailers and informal markets, publishing annual compliance reports that detail inspections, breaches, and penalties imposed.
- 4. Institutionalise monitoring of green procurement outcomes:** Annual reports should be tabled to Parliament on compliance and the costs and volumes of alternatives procured.
- 5. Strengthen public education with measurable targets:** Campaigns should set clear targets—such as household adoption of reusable bags—and publish participation rates and outcomes.



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Jamaica spends on its children. Education receives 16 to 17 percent of total government expenditure and approximately 5 percent of GDP—above the Latin American and Caribbean regional average, comparable with the world's highest-performing education systems. Social protection transfers reach a third of all households. A dedicated paediatric hospital is structurally complete. School feeding serves 180,000 students daily. Across nine fiscal years and eight sectors, this report identifies 34 specific commitments the government made to children and assesses each against the budget and the evidence. The question it asks is not whether Jamaica has expressed political will toward children: it plainly has. The question is whether the resources committed to children actually reach them; the answer, across most sectors, is that they

**The constraint on better child outcomes in Jamaica is no longer primarily financial. It is the absence of reporting architecture, institutional accountability, and investment at the right stage of the life cycle.**

do not, or not fully, for two structural reasons that this report traces through the data in detail.

The first is wage bill absorption. In education, compensation of employees consumed 83 percent of child-focused recurrent expenditure in 2017/18 and 86 percent by 2024/25. In child protection, the share rose from 34 to 48 percent over the same period. In public safety and security, it stands at 75 percent. Across labour-intensive social sectors, a growing majority of what is classified as child-focused spending is absorbed by the wage bill before it reaches any child, leaving a thin and in some cases contracting operational envelope for the goods, services, and capital investments that constitute direct delivery. The 2022 public sector compensation restructuring accelerated this pattern without a commensurate increase in the operational resources within which that labour functions, and without the performance frameworks that would be required to establish whether better-compensated public servants are producing better outcomes for children.



The second structural problem is accountability. Jamaica's public financial management system does not require any ministry or agency to identify what it spends on children, to set child-specific output targets, or to report against them. Budget templates contain no such requirement, and no legislative mandate compels it. The 2024 Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability assessment found that only 30 percent of ministries include output and outcome indicators in the Estimates at all. The consequence is that even where money is allocated to child-focused programmes, there is no public basis on which to assess whether it is reaching children who need it most, or reaching them at all. Most agencies consulted during the preparation of this report confirmed they had never previously been asked to account for what they spend on children.

Of the 34 commitments assessed, four are aligned—each has a named institutional home, a traceable and sustained budget line, and a reporting mechanism. Twenty-two are partially aligned: commitment confirmed, delivery incomplete or unverifiable. Nine are not aligned: a commitment was made, but no traceable budget evidence and no confirmed delivery exists. Housing yields no assessable commitment at all; no child-specific allocation with a traceable central government budget line was identified across nine years of Estimates.

There is a third structural dimension that the category findings taken together make visible. Jamaica's child investment is heavily concentrated at the formal schooling stage of the life cycle—the stage where the evidence suggests returns are lower—and insufficiently resourced at the stage where they are highest. The cognitive and developmental foundations that determine whether a child can benefit from schooling are set in the first three years of life. A 20-year longitudinal study tracking Jamaican children who received structured early stimulation found that participants earned 43 percent higher wages as adults than a comparison group who received none. The categories that serve children in the first thousand days—health, nutrition, housing, child protection—are precisely the categories where Jamaica's spending is thinnest, most opaque, and least protected. More investment in education, absent that developmental foundation, cannot be expected to produce proportionately better outcomes.

For the first time in a generation, Jamaica has the fiscal space to get its investment in children right. The constraint is no longer primarily financial: it is the absence of the reporting architecture, institutional accountability, and compositional reorientation that would ensure the resources Jamaica already commits to children actually reach them at the stage of life, and in the form, that the evidence shows makes the greatest difference.



## Recommendations

- 1. Introduce child-disaggregated reporting requirements into Jamaica's public financial management framework.** All ministries and agencies with child-focused mandates should include, in their annual budget submissions, a statement of child-specific programme targets, output indicators, and prior-year reported outturn against those targets.
- 2. Rebalance child investment toward the earliest years:** grow the budgets for early childhood health, nutrition, housing stability, child protection, and family support at a rate commensurate with the evidence on where returns are highest.
- 3. Require the CPFSA when it resumes annual reporting to establish a minimum reporting standard.** This should include caseload, social worker complement, foster care beneficiary numbers, and per-child subvention values against inflation.
- 4. Revise the adoption statute,** establish a foster care financing model indexed to an adequacy standard, and make family-based placement the operational (not merely the stated) default.
- 5. Establish enabling legislation and appoint a fund manager** for the HOPE For Children Trust Fund ahead of the committed 2026/27 seed-funding date.

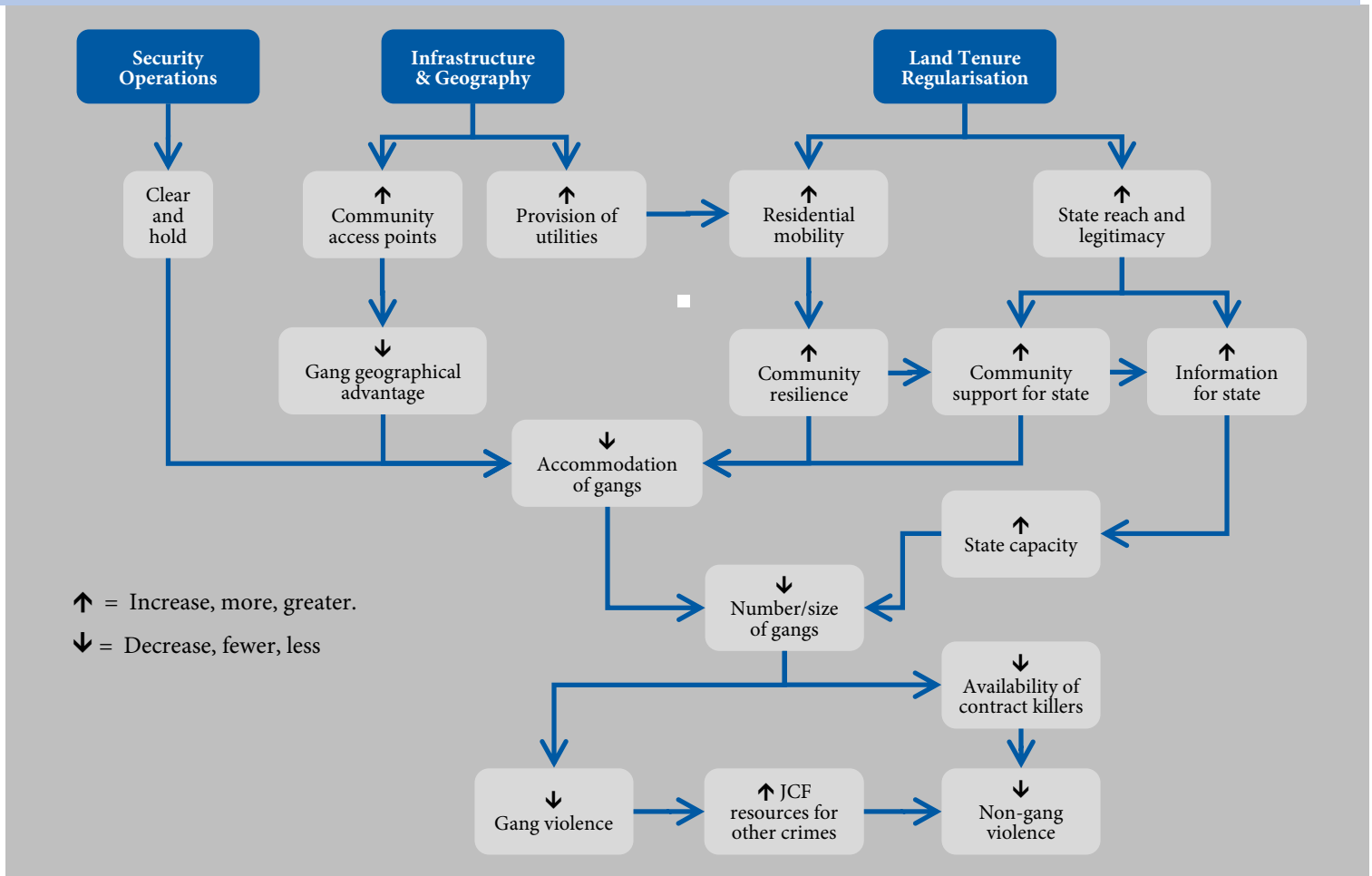


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This diagram shows the chains of events through which the recommended actions lead to the intended outcome of a reduction in criminal violence.

## Theory of Change



Further integration of marginalised communities into the broader economy and society is achieved through enhanced infrastructure and improved service access. This reduces isolation and diminishes gang control, weaving these communities into the societal fabric where the rule of law prevails.

Economically, transforming “dead capital”, that which cannot be sold or used to earn a financial return, into viable economic assets through formalised land ownership brings multiple benefits.

It promotes financial inclusion, encourages participation in the formal economy, and improves living conditions by giving residents the incentive and means to invest in their properties. This economic and social development is instrumental in fostering long-term peace and stability

## Recommendations

1. **Shift the ZOSO strategy away from winning “hearts and minds” to prioritising territorial control**, facilitated by the coordination of land tenure regularisation, infrastructure upgrading, and security operations.
2. **Maintain localised SOEs to support the trident strategy.** This will enable ZOSOs to operate without violent disruptions and reduce armed violence in the short term.
3. **De-prioritise social interventions aimed at behaviour modification**, to redirect focus and resources for the priorities above.



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