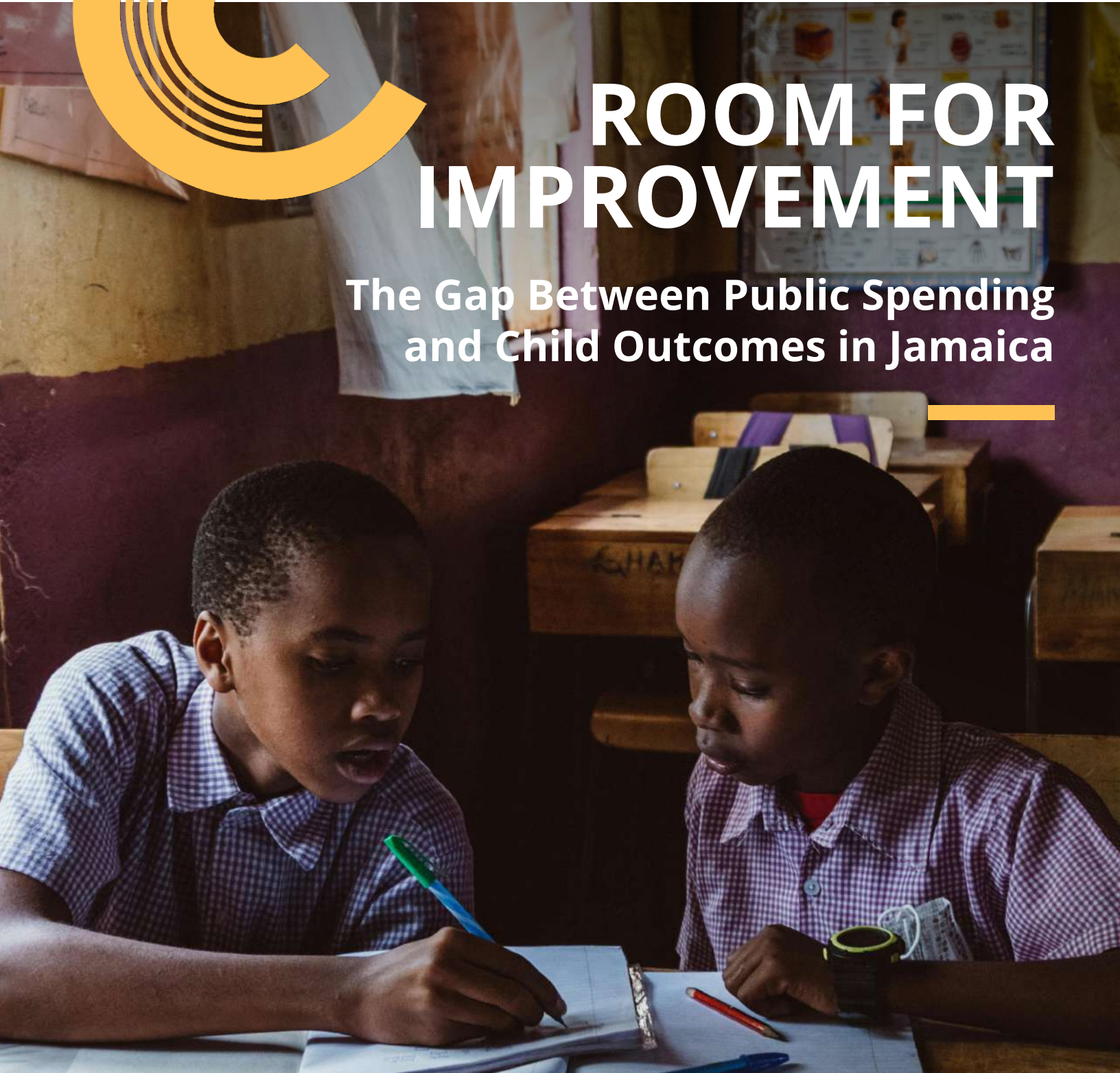




ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Gap Between Public Spending and Child Outcomes in Jamaica



Room for Improvement

The Gap Between Public Spending and Child Outcomes in Jamaica

Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CAPRI)

Kingston, Jamaica

Commissioned by UNICEF Jamaica

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Acronyms

BNTF9	Basic Needs Trust Fund 9
C-PEM	Child Public Expenditure Management
CAPRI	Caribbean Policy Research Institute
CCPA	Child Care and Protection Act
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CHASE	Culture, Health, Art, Sports and Education Fund
CoE	Compensation of Employees
CPFSA	Child Protection and Family Services Agency
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
ECC	Early Childhood Commission
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOJ	Government of Jamaica
HAI	Housing Agency of Jamaica
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRIE	IRIE Classroom Toolbox (early childhood behaviour management programme)
ISSA	Inter-Secondary Schools Sports Association
ISSS	Inter-Ministerial School Support Strategy
JCDC	Jamaica Cultural Development Commission
JSIF J	Jamaica Social Investment Fund
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
NHT	National Housing Trust
NPSC	National Parenting Support Commission
OCA	Office of the Children's Advocate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONRTIP	Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons
PATH	Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PF4C	Public Finance for Children
PPE	Purchasing Power Equivalent (deflator)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Violence Against Children Survey
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
ZOSO	Zone of Special Operations



Executive Summary



Jamaica is investing in its children at rates comparable to the world's top-performing education systems, but not producing the outcomes that investment should.

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 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 account-

ability. 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

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.

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.

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.

2



3

Require the CPFSA when it resumes annual reporting to establish a minimum reporting standard that includes caseload, social worker complement, foster care beneficiary numbers, and per-child subvention values against inflation.

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.

4



5

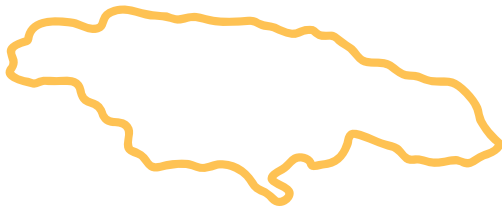
Establish enabling legislation and appoint a fund manager for the HOPE For Children Trust Fund ahead of the committed 2026/27 seed-funding date.





1

Introduction



The gap between what Jamaica commits and what Jamaican children receive is what this report is about.

A national budget reveals not just what a government spends money on but what it considers worth spending money on. For children, this distinction carries particular weight: they cannot vote, cannot organise politically, and cannot advocate for themselves in ways that determine how public resources are allocated. Children's claim on the public purse depends entirely on the willingness of governments to prioritise their needs, and on the existence of systems capable of identifying what those needs cost.

In Jamaica, that willingness has been repeatedly expressed. The government is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which imposes a direct fiscal obligation on states parties: to allocate the maximum extent of available resources to realising children's economic, social, and cultural rights.¹ Vision 2030 Jamaica commits to ensuring that every child accesses the best learning environment and that vulnerable citizens receive a fair chance at an improved quality of life.² Across nine years of national budgets, governments have made specific, named commitments to children: hospitals to be built, feeding programmes to be expanded, protection systems to be reformed, trust funds to be created. The question this report addresses is whether those commitments are matched by money, whether the money that is allocated actually reaches children, and how we account for it.

Jamaica allocates approximately 5 percent of GDP to education alone—above the Latin American and Caribbean regional average, above the OECD average, consistent with expenditure levels in the world's top-performing education systems.³ But the outcomes are disappointing: a child entering school in Jamaica today can expect to do 11.4 years of schooling but acquire the equivalent of only 7.1 years of full-quality learning.⁴ The World Bank's Human Capital Index places Jamaica at 0.53, meaning a Jamaican child is on track to realise just over half their productive potential by age 18. Jamaica is investing in its children at rates that wealthy countries would recognise, but it is not getting the outcomes that investment should produce.⁵

That gap—between what Jamaica commits and what Jamaican children receive—is what this report is about. It does not present a headline per-child expenditure figure, as no such figure could possibly be entirely accurate: budget lines are not sufficiently disaggregated and large portions of child-relevant activity are financed through entities and mechanisms outside the central government Estimates. Further, even a complete and accurate total would not answer the question that matters more than the quantum of money spent: money allocated is not money delivered, and the link between what goes in and what children receive depends on implementation, institutional capacity, and accountability.

A per-child figure cannot say whether Jamaica is doing enough for its children; it is the pattern of spending, and the distance between that pattern and the outcomes children experience, that matters.

Instead, what this report can and does establish is the direction, composition, and trend of child-focused public expenditure across eight sectors and nine fiscal years, from 2017/18 to 2025/26: whether allocations are growing or contracting in real terms, whether operational resources are keeping pace with wage costs, and whether the structure of spending is consistent with the commitments governments have made. The analysis draws on the Approved Estimates of Expenditure—the central government budget documents published annually—supplemented by a systematic review of ministerial sectoral presentations, Throne Speech addresses, post-Cabinet press briefings, public statements, and official policy documents. Thirty-four specific government commitments across eight sectors are assessed. The methodology, including classification decisions and the treatment of excluded allocations, is set out in the appendices.

A Country at a Turning Point: Fiscal, Demographic, and Societal Context

This is the first systematic examination of child-focused public expenditure in Jamaica since the Witter study of 2003/4

A budget reveals what a government considers worth spending on. For children — who cannot vote — that willingness cannot be assumed.

to 2005/6.⁶ The two decades that separate that exercise from this one were not a period of stasis: Jamaica's fiscal position has been substantially transformed, its child population is shrinking, and the structural conditions shaping children's lives have shifted in ways that make the questions this report asks both more urgent and more answerable than they were twenty years ago.

Fewer children, higher stakes

Jamaica is in the midst of a demographic transition which has implications for child investment. The total fertility rate has fallen from 4.5 in 1975 to approximately 1.3 by 2025, among the lowest rates recorded globally and well below replacement level.⁷ Outward migration reinforces the trend, drawing working-age adults and young families abroad at rates that further thin the child cohort. As the number of children declines, each child's contribution to Jamaica's social and economic future grows larger: a smaller cohort must underpin the workforce, generate the tax revenues, and sustain the social institutions of a society in which the proportion of older persons is rising. Under-investment in any child in this environment carries a larger long-run cost than it would in a context of demographic surplus. The case for getting child investment right—not just spending more, but spending differently and more accountably—has never been stronger.

Fiscal space that did not previously exist

For decades Jamaica carried one of the highest debt-to-GDP ratios in the world, and large shares of public revenue were consumed by debt servicing, compressing the space available for social investment. Implementation of successive adjustment programmes has substantially altered this picture: debt ratios have declined significantly, macroeconomic stability has improved, and the economy has in recent years generated primary surpluses, though economic growth has remained below the level and pace of Jamaica's development ambitions.^{8,9} The fiscal constraints that once made under-investment in children structurally unavoidable have

eased. Where gaps in child-related expenditure are identified in this report—and this report identifies several—they are correspondingly less readily attributable to resource constraints than was the case in earlier decades. The question is increasingly one of prioritisation.¹⁰

Children remain disproportionately poor

Jamaica's overall poverty rate has improved markedly over the past decade, falling from 17 percent in 2021 to 8 percent by 2023.¹¹ Children are consistently poorer than the national average, and rural children are poorer still. Between 16 and 21 percent of children under the age of 14 live below the national poverty line, a rate that exceeded the national average of 17 percent recorded in 2021.¹² Children in rural areas face poverty rates around 22 percent; among rural adolescents the rate rises to nearly 24 percent.¹³ Approximately 4 percent of children and adolescents experience extreme poverty. The World Bank's October 2025 Poverty and Equity Brief, applying the upper-middle income poverty line, recorded a poverty rate of 32 percent among children aged 0 to 14 in 2021, compared with 21 percent for the working-age population.¹⁴ Social protection programmes, most significantly PATH, have attempted to bridge this gap, but the structural conditions sustaining child poverty are not addressable through income transfers alone.

The limits of the education response

Jamaica's principal response to the challenge of child disadvantage has been investment in education. Education accounts for 16 to 17 percent of total government expenditure and approximately 5 percent of GDP, consistent with or above regional averages, and per-student spending at the secondary and tertiary levels ranks among the highest in Latin America.^{15,16} The premise is that education is the principal mechanism through which societies convert investment in children into productive adults. Jamaica's education outcomes illustrate the limits of that premise when investment is concentrated at the formal schooling stage:

Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling stand at 7.1 against 11.4 expected years, and the Human Capital Index places Jamaica at 0.53.¹⁷ These outcomes reflect a system that is not underfunded, but whose investment is concentrated at a later point in the life cycle than the evidence supports.

The first thousand days as the determining factor

The timing, composition, and targeting of spending matters as much as its scale, and this is nowhere more pertinent than in a child's first thousand days. The cognitive foundations that determine whether a child can benefit from schooling are set in the first three years of life, through the quality of caregiver interaction, language exposure, play, nutrition, and household stability a child experiences before formal education begins.¹⁸ Where those foundations are inadequately laid, the returns to subsequent schooling are structurally limited regardless of the quality of the school itself. A consistent finding in the research literature is that household chaos—characterised by irregular income, insecure housing, inconsistent routines, and unpredictable caregiving—is a more reliable predictor of poor developmental outcomes than family structure alone.¹⁹

Jamaica has produced some of the most rigorous evidence in the world for this proposition. The Reach Up Jamaica home-visiting intervention targeted stunted children in poor Kingston households. Participants followed up at 20 years earned 43 percent higher hourly wages and 37 percent higher overall earnings than the control group.²⁰ The government committed in 2019 to translating that evidence into a national programme, but implementation did not proceed as intended.²¹ Its significance here is structural: Jamaica's largest child-focused investment—education—is operating in a context where a substantial share of the children it serves arrive without the developmental foundations that would allow them to benefit fully from it.



Where children live compounds everything

Approximately 70 percent of Jamaican children reside in coastal or climate-vulnerable areas exposed to hurricanes, flooding, and associated hazards that disrupt schooling, damage infrastructure, and strain household livelihoods. An estimated 600,000 Jamaicans—over 20 percent of the population—live in informal settlements.²² Children in rural areas face higher poverty rates, more limited access to quality education, and reduced access to specialised health services including mental health care.²³ These distributional disparities compound every other disadvantage documented in this section.

The budget does not show what the state spends on children

Jamaica's public financial management system rests on a series of interlocking statutes—the Financial Administration and Audit Act, the Public Procurement Act, the Public Bodies Management and Accountability Act, and the Fiscal Responsibility Framework—none of which requires that budget submissions identify or disaggregate expenditure by its impact

on children, or that public bodies report in ways that make child-specific outcomes visible. The Estimates of Expenditure do not disaggregate allocations by beneficiary age group, by geographic area, or by child-specific outcome target. What the state spends on children is therefore not automatically discernible from the budget. It can only be established through the kind of applied enquiry this report undertakes, and even then, the picture is incomplete. 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. Without disaggregated data, Jamaica cannot assess whether it is meeting its CRC obligations, cannot evaluate whether child-focused programmes are working, and cannot identify where resources are falling short before the consequences become visible in outcomes.

It is against this backdrop that the eight sectoral chapters of this report are set. Each chapter addresses what the government has committed to children in that sector, what the budget shows about how those commitments have been resourced, and what the available evidence says about whether that resourcing has produced results. SDG assessments for each sector are

consolidated in Appendix 2; commitment summary tables, containing the full alignment ratings for all 34 commitments, appear in the full technical report available from CAPRI and UNICEF. The wage bill analysis is not uniform across sectors: where compensation of employees is not separately identifiable in published budget documents—as is the case for health from 2020/21 onwards—the question of whether operational resources are keeping pace with wage costs cannot be answered from the Estimates alone, and this limitation is noted in the relevant chapter.

Across the eight sectors, the analysis distinguishes three forms of misalignment that the data make visible: fiscal misalignment, where funding is absent or opaque relative to stated commitments; institutional misalignment, where the design of a commitment outstrips the capacity available to implement it; and outcome misalignment, where expenditure levels have not produced measurable improvement in the conditions children experience. These three forms are analytically distinct and do not always co-occur; tracing their separate contributions to the gap between commitment and delivery is one of the report's central tasks.



2 Education



In 2017/18, the wage bill absorbed **83%** of child-focused education spending. By 2025/26, it absorbed **86%**. The real operational envelope has not grown.

Education is Jamaica's largest and most consistently funded child-focused expenditure category. Between 2017/18 and 2025/26, total child-focused education expenditure grew in nominal terms from J\$74 billion to J\$125 billion, a real-terms gain of approximately 12 percent over eight fiscal years. All major programme streams remained operational throughout: teacher compensation, special education, early childhood provision, and learning materials.

The aggregate figures do not, however, reflect an equivalent expansion in what reaches children. The primary driver of expenditure growth has been the wage bill. In 2017/18, compensation of employees accounted for 83 percent of total child-focused education expenditure; by 2025/26 that share had risen to 86 percent. The 2022 public sector compensation restructuring accelerated this trend sharply: real compensation increased by J\$10 billion between 2021/22 and 2022/23 alone, while other recurrent expenditure fell over the same period. The resources available for teaching materials, school maintenance, and non-salary programme delivery have remained essentially flat in real terms throughout the period. Per-child allocations stand at approximately J\$3,500 at the primary level and J\$17,000 at the secondary level, against research-estimated costs of J\$53,000 and J\$80,000 respectively.

Commitments

The commitments assessed below are selective rather than exhaustive—those for which the available evidence supported a reasoned assessment.

Successive national development frameworks have identified early childhood as a priority, and the expenditure record shows real increases: a 30 percent funding uplift in 2017/18, Brain Builder Centres—government-supported early stimulation facilities—expanded to 127 by 2023, and 13 new infant departments established within primary schools. Real expenditure on pre-primary education grew from approximately J\$5 billion in 2017/18 to J\$7.5 billion in 2024/25. The qualitative picture is less straightforward: the target trained practitioner-to-student ratio of 1:10 for children aged 3–6 remains unmet, the dedicated early childhood budget line was consolidated into a broader envelope from 2020 onwards making investment no longer independently legible, and MICS 2022 records pre-primary attendance at 61 percent in the poorest wealth quintile against 75 percent in the richest.²⁴

The disability inclusion and special education record is relatively strong.²⁵ The Lyssons Centre of Excellence received a capital upgrade in 2018 through a co-financing arrangement between the Ministry of Education and the Digicel Foundation. The Special Education Intervention Unit, covering five service streams—Braille pro-

vision, mainstream integration support, special education school programming, community-based early intervention, and rehabilitation—grew from J\$1.2 billion at announcement in 2019 to J\$2.2 billion in real terms by 2024/25. The Ramps in Schools programme, launched in 2018 to retrofit physical accessibility across the public school estate, is confirmed as active but no completion timeline or coverage data has been published.²⁶

The IRIE Classroom Toolbox, adopted as the national early childhood behaviour management training programme following a 2019 launch by the Early Childhood Commission in partnership with UNICEF, produced documented results: a Lancet-published cluster-randomised trial confirmed approximately a 67 percent reduction in violent episodes by trained teachers. Over the five years to 2026, UNICEF Jamaica invested approximately J\$50 million in ICT-related activities, training all Development Officers (approximately 100) and approximately 30 percent of early childhood practitioners islandwide, with scale-up currently underway.²⁷ No discrete budget line for IRIE appears in the Estimates; delivery runs through the ECC's operational budget, within which the wage bill climbed from 76 percent in 2019/20 to 89 percent in 2022/23, compressing the resources available for field deployment.^{28, 29}

Other recurrent education expenditure — teaching materials, school maintenance, non-salary delivery — stood at **J\$19 billion** in 2017/18 and **J\$18.5 billion** in 2025/26. No real growth in eight years.

Pathway coaching—literacy, mathematics, and special education coaches deployed to support Pathway 2 and 3 students entering secondary school without foundational skills—is confirmed as active, with peer-reviewed evidence of improved outcomes in non-traditional high schools, but carries no discrete budget line and no published data on coverage

or ratios. Twenty-seven schools and tens of thousands of students remain on the shift system, which limits instructional time to approximately 4.5 hours against 5.5 in full-day schools; the 2028/29 elimination target remains stated policy. Textbook and device delivery across multiple resource types over consecutive years represents one of the stronger commit-

ment records in the portfolio; by 2022/23, 95 percent of primary school teachers had laptops. Capital investment through the Primary and Secondary Infrastructure Project exceeded J\$2 billion across three fiscal years across all six administrative regions, peaking in real terms in 2018/19 before declining.³⁰

Expenditure



Child-focused education expenditure by object, 2017/18–2025/26 (J\$ billion, 2025/26 prices)

Fiscal year	Comp. of employees	Other recurrent	Capital	Total	CoE share
2017/18	J\$95.2bn	J\$18.9bn	J\$0.4bn	J\$114.6bn	83.1%
2018/19	J\$98.2bn	J\$19.1bn	J\$2.1bn	J\$119.3bn	82.3%
2019/20	J\$87.9bn	J\$17.6bn	J\$0.5bn	J\$106.0bn	82.9%
2020/21	J\$93.6bn	J\$16.1bn	J\$0.6bn	J\$110.3bn	84.9%
2021/22	J\$89.1bn	J\$25.6bn	J\$0.8bn	J\$115.4bn	77.2%
2022/23	J\$88.9bn	J\$17.1bn	J\$0.9bn	J\$106.7bn	83.3%
2023/24	J\$99.1bn	J\$11.3bn	J\$1.7bn	J\$112.2bn	88.4%
2024/25	J\$110.6bn	J\$17.1bn	J\$0.4bn	J\$128.1bn	86.3%
2025/26	J\$122.5bn	J\$18.5bn	J\$0.4bn	J\$141.3bn	86.7%

Source: Estimates of Expenditure, various years. Real terms: nominal ÷ PPE deflator, base year 2025/26 = 1.0000. The lower compensation share in 2021/22 reflects an atypically high other recurrent allocation in that year.^a



A child entering school in Jamaica today can expect 11.4 years of schooling and acquire the equivalent of 7.1 years of full-quality learning.

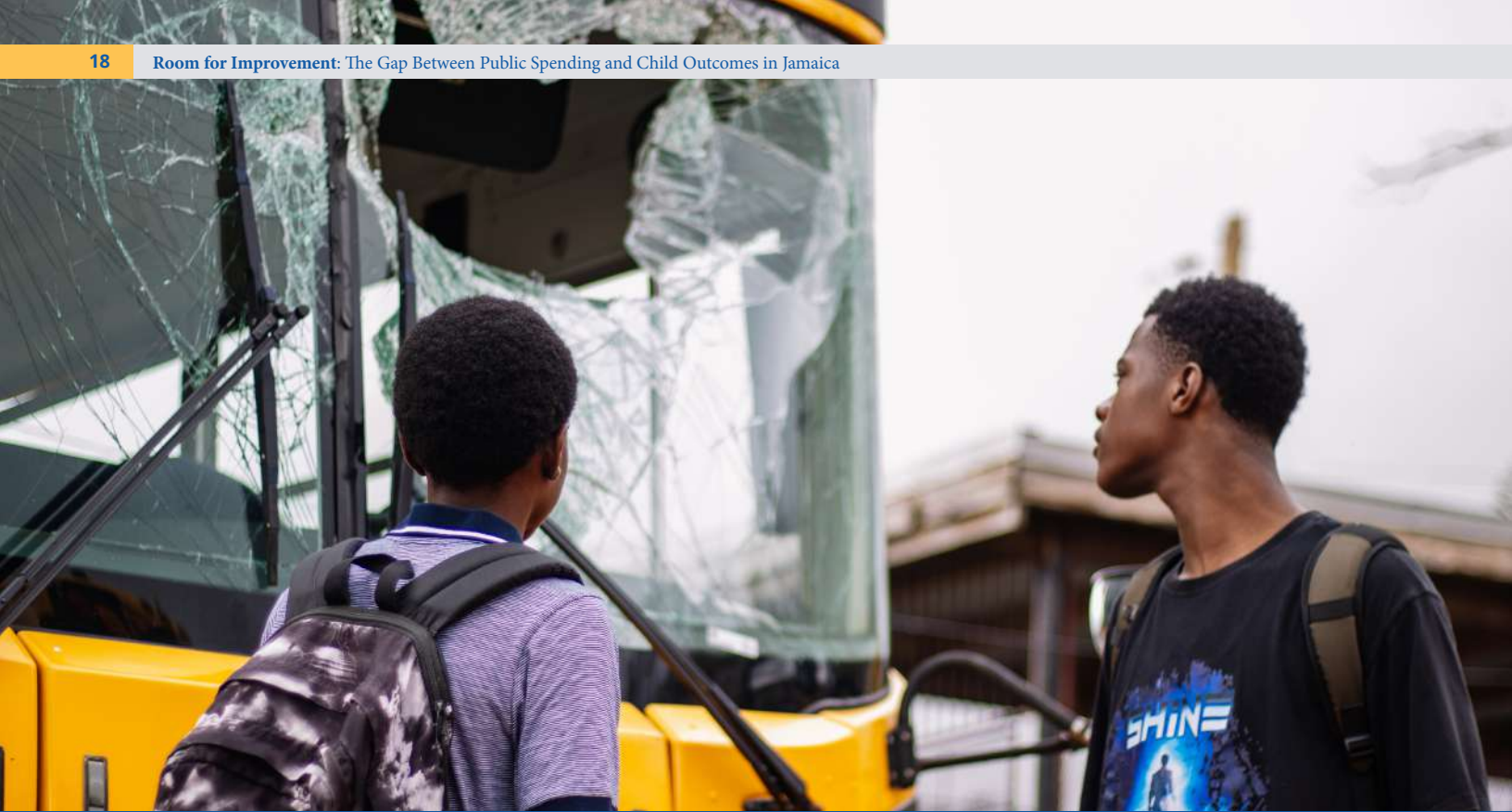
Across nine fiscal years, virtually the entire real increase in child-focused education expenditure was absorbed by the wage bill. Other recurrent expenditure stood at J\$19 billion in 2017/18 and J\$18.5 billion in 2025/26, both in 2025 prices: no real growth in eight years.

The outcome evidence situates this record. Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling stand at 7.1 against 11.4 expected years. The Human Capital Index places Jamaica at 0.53. MICS 2022 records foundational literacy at 62 percent and numeracy at 50 percent among children aged 7–14, with wealth quintile gaps of 36 and 34 percentage points respectively.³¹ Near-universal attendance has been achieved; the gap between attendance and learning has not closed.

Jamaica's education expenditure is heavily concentrated at the stage of the life cycle where the evidence suggests returns are lower, and insufficiently concentrated at the stage where they are highest. There is sustained and increasing investment concentrated at the formal schooling stage, while the early years remain underfunded. The level of investment has not been matched by the outcomes that spending at this scale should produce, or by the outcomes children experience.

Per-child allocations stand at approximately **J\$3,500** at primary and **J\$17,000** at secondary, against research-estimated costs of **J\$53,000** and **J\$80,000** respectively.





3

Child Protection



Child protection spending grew **50%** in real terms between 2017/18 and 2025/26. That growth is accounted for almost entirely by the wage bill.

Jamaica's formal child protection system is in practice two agencies: the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA) and the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA). Between them they account for nearly all identifiable child protection expenditure in the central government Estimates of Expenditure. The gap between what they are asked to do and the resources available to do it runs through every finding in this chapter.

Three structural conditions define the operating environment. Social worker density stands at approximately 111 practitioners per 100,000 children, roughly 45 percent below the minimum benchmark for a functional child protection system. The Child Care and Protection Act has been under active review for more than a decade without conclusion, and the Children (Adoption of) Act dates to 1958. Jamaica's stated policy favours family-based placement over institutional care; the expenditure record moves in the opposite direction. MICS 2022 establishes the household context: only 26 percent of children aged 0–17 live with both biological parents, and 15 percent live with neither.³² Of those outside parental care, 91 percent are in kinship households—a substantial informal care system operating without state subvention or regulatory oversight. Approximately 4,500 children are in formal state care, around half in

some 50 residential facilities; the foster care programme supports approximately 1,350 children.³³

Commitments

The following commitments are those for which the available evidence permitted a substantive assessment; the list is not exhaustive.

Core institutional operations have been maintained and selectively expanded. The child abuse hotline was replaced by the more accessible three-digit 211 number in 2021.³⁴ The National Children's Registry was staffed to provide seven-day, 24-hour service. Three mobile mental health units were deployed at community level, and child-friendly spaces added at the Registry and at Glenhope Place of Safety. These are confirmed outputs. What the institutional record cannot confirm is whether the response to those reports was adequate: with a social worker complement 45 percent below the functional minimum, the available evidence is consistent with material constraints on investigation and follow-up that the current reporting framework cannot quantify. The CPFSA has not published an annual report since 2018, foreclosing independent assessment of whether allocations are reaching their intended purpose.

The Child Care and Protection (Amendment) Act 2023, passed by the Senate in

September 2023, repealed Section 24 of the principal Act—the provision that allowed children deemed uncontrollable to be placed in penal institutions—replacing correctional orders with therapeutic orders. The amendment has not been brought into force. Commencement requires a network of residential therapeutic facilities that has not been established. One outpatient therapeutic centre was delivered at the Maxfield Park Children's Home in June 2023 through Caribbean Development Bank grant funding and CPFSA resources; it does not constitute the residential network the Act requires. No capital budget line for residential therapeutic facility construction appears in the Estimates during the review period. The barrier has not been primarily financial: the agency has not demonstrated the project execution capacity required to plan and deliver the residential infrastructure the amendment envisions. The broader CCPA review remains incomplete after more than a decade; the adoption law is unchanged after 67 years.

The EU-funded Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Family Violence operated between 2020 and December 2023 at a total cost of US\$10.7 million. Confirmed outputs include six Domestic Violence I-Care Centres, two state-run shelters, 612 police officers trained, 131 healthcare workers trained, 1,722 students reached through school-based prevention, and the

Social worker density stands at approximately 111 practitioners per **100,000** children — roughly **45%** below the minimum for a functional child protection system.

Violence Against Children Survey 2023 conducted—which confirmed that over 75 percent of children and youth have experienced lifetime violence.³⁵ Not one of the six commitment areas carried a Government of Jamaica budget line. When the programme concluded, no domestic allocation was established to sustain the services. The institutional strengthening, legal reform, and data systems components produced no outcomes visible in the public record.

A Cabinet decision in 2021 directed the merger of the National Parenting Support Commission with the CPFSA, on the grounds that a unified entity would better coordinate parenting support and child protection for children most at risk.³⁶ The merger has not taken place. The NPSC continues to operate as a separate agency with its own budget line and governance structure. No public explanation for the non-execution of a Cabinet decision has been provided. The UNICEF

2022 Child Protection System Evaluation identified operationalisation of the NPSC Strategic Plan as outstanding; it remained so at the end of the review period.³⁷

Expenditure

In real terms the combined category total grew from J\$3.7 billion in 2017/18 to J\$5.5 billion in 2025/26, an increase of 50 percent. Table 2 shows the composition.



Child protection expenditure by object, 2017/18–2025/26 (J\$ billion, 2025/26 prices)

Fiscal year	Comp. of employees	Other recurrent	Capital	Total	CoE share
2017/18	J\$1.25bn	J\$2.23bn	J\$0.17bn	J\$3.65bn	34.3%
2018/19	J\$1.41bn	J\$2.54bn	J\$0.14bn	J\$4.09bn	34.4%
2019/20	J\$1.40bn	J\$2.55bn	J\$0.15bn	J\$4.10bn	34.1%
2020/21	J\$1.44bn	J\$2.61bn	J\$0.13bn	J\$4.18bn	34.4%
2021/22	J\$1.37bn	J\$2.37bn	J\$0.11bn	J\$3.85bn	35.6%
2022/23	J\$1.58bn	J\$2.13bn	J\$0.12bn	J\$3.83bn	41.3%
2023/24	J\$1.75bn	J\$2.60bn	J\$0.12bn	J\$4.47bn	39.1%
2024/25	J\$2.37bn	J\$2.70bn	J\$0.13bn	J\$5.19bn	45.6%
2025/26	J\$2.62bn	J\$2.73bn	J\$0.13bn	J\$5.47bn	47.8%

Source: Jamaica Estimates of Expenditure, Heads 41051 and 07000. Real terms: nominal ÷ PPE deflator, base year 2025/26 = 1.0000.



The 50 percent real growth is accounted for almost entirely by the wage bill, which nearly doubled while other recurrent spending grew by only 22 percent. By 2025/26 compensation approaches parity with other recurrent at 48 percent of the total. Capital expenditure declined 22 percent in real terms over the period.

The foster care subvention tells the most specific story. Table 3 shows the per-child real value across the review period.

A Cabinet decision to merge the NPSC and CPFSA remains unexecuted five years later, without public explanation.

The subvention peaked at J\$404,000 per child in 2018/19 then was frozen in nominal terms while child numbers rose—producing a 57 percent decline in real per-child value by 2023/24. It remains frozen at J\$249 million in 2025/26, with a per-child value of J\$185,000—below the 2017/18 starting point. Every year since the peak, each child in a foster placement has received less in real terms than the year before, in a system whose stated policy is to expand family-based care through deinstitutionalisation.

The OCA's Programme 139—covering complaint investigation, legal representation for children before courts, and public education—is frozen at J\$140 million in both 2024/25 and 2025/26, losing real value. With compensation absorbing 78 percent of a frozen programme budget, the agency has neither the staff complement nor the non-salary resources to investigate complaints, represent children before courts, and conduct public educa-



CPFSA foster care subvention—real per child, 2017/18–2025/26 (J\$'000, 2025/26 prices)

Fiscal year	Total subvention (real)	Children	Per child (real)
2017/18	J\$173,135k	960	J\$180k
2018/19	J\$387,928k	960	J\$404k
2019/20	J\$357,818k	1,190	J\$301k
2020/21	J\$326,712k	1,190	J\$275k
2021/22	J\$301,452k	1,050	J\$287k
2022/23	J\$278,434k	1,050	J\$265k
2023/24	J\$260,519k	1,500	J\$174k
2024/25	J\$255,627k	1,350	J\$189k
2025/26	J\$249,390k	1,350	J\$185k

Source: Jamaica Estimates of Expenditure, Head 41051.

tion at a scale the country's child protection needs require.³⁸

The child protection category grew by 50 percent in real terms. That growth is accounted for by the wage bill. The residential care estate receives less maintenance in real terms than at the start of the period. The preferred care model is progressively defunded in real per-child terms. The one legislative amendment enacted has not been operationalised. The most significant service expansion of the review period was entirely donor-financed with no domestic sustainability mechanism. A Cabinet decision on institutional reform remains unexecuted after five years without public explanation. The level of investment has not been matched by the institutional arrangement needed to deploy it, or by the outcomes children experience.

The CPFSA has not published an annual report since 2018. There is no public basis to assess whether allocations are reaching children.



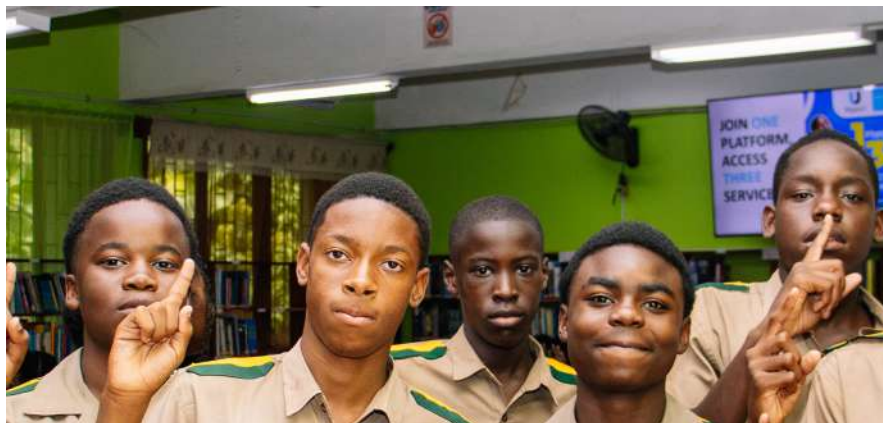
4 Social Protection



Social protection is the one category where the wage bill does not crowd out delivery. The dominant item in the budget is the transfer itself.

Social protection encompasses the public policies and programmes aimed at preventing and reducing economic and social vulnerability, which for children is a foundational condition rather than merely a poverty reduction instrument. Material deprivation during childhood has consequences that extend into adult outcomes; investment at this stage generates returns that diminish as beneficiaries age. Article 26 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges states parties to recognise every child's right to social security and to implement such measures to the maximum of available resources. Jamaica's social protection spending is assessed here not only as a fiscal category but as the state's principal instrument for discharging an obligation that is simultaneously economic, ethical, and legal. PATH has been the primary vehicle through which Jamaica has expressed that commitment across the review period.

The national poverty rate has followed a broadly positive trajectory: it fell from 19 percent in 2017 to a record low of 8 percent by 2024, interrupted by a COVID-19-related rise to 17 percent in 2021. Children, however, experience poverty at rates consistently above the national average. In 2021, the poverty rate among children aged 0 to 17 was 22 percent against a national rate of 17 percent; applying the upper-middle income poverty line, the



World Bank recorded 32 percent among children aged 0 to 14 against 21 percent for the working-age population.³⁹ MICS 2022 confirms that 86 percent of children under 18 lived in households that had received any social transfer in the preceding three months, with PATH reaching 33 percent across all households—54 percent in the poorest wealth quintile against 11 percent in the richest. These coverage figures must be read alongside adequacy: in October–November 2024, 57 percent of households in the poorest quintile experienced moderate to severe food insecurity, linked in part to Hurricane Beryl's impact on agriculture and food prices.⁴⁰

Commitments

Not all government commitments in this category are assessed; the selection re-

fects the availability of verifiable evidence against which a reasoned judgement could be made.

PATH has been consistently funded, with bi-monthly payments uninterrupted throughout the period to over 350,000 beneficiaries, a 30 percent budget uplift in 2023/24, and demonstrated capacity to respond to acute need: a J\$1 billion injection in March 2020 was followed by four supplemental payments across that year, and a J\$40 million UNICEF grant supported 2,700 vulnerable families. Back-to-School grants and post-secondary grants for PATH beneficiaries pursuing CXC qualifications and diplomas were institutionalised and regularly disbursed—among the clearest examples in the portfolio of a commitment backed by consistent, verifiable budget action. Two qualifications

PATH reaches **54%** of households in the poorest wealth quintile. The Back-to-School grant has been fixed at **J\$3,500** since 2018, losing real value with no adequacy assessment.

apply: PATH social assistance—distinct from direct beneficiary grants—declined from 2021 to 2023 before recovering in 2024, a three-year regression in a core support stream without public explanation. The Back-to-School grant has been fixed at J\$3,500 since 2018, losing substantial real value over seven years without any published adequacy assessment against the national poverty line or minimum food basket.

The Jamaica 60 HOPE For Children Trust Fund, announced by the Prime Minister in 2024, would provide each eligible child—PATH beneficiaries and wards of the state born after August 6, 2022—with a savings account accessible at age 18. The government committed to seeding the fund with J\$200 million in FY 2026/27. CAPRI's Budget Breakdown assessed the design as sound: low administrative costs, clear eligibility, strong equity credentials. As of the end of the review period, no enabling legislation has been tabled, no fund manager identified, and no beneficiary has received an account. The fund exists only as an announcement.⁴¹

Expenditure

A data quality issue affects this category. Three fiscal years—2020/21, 2021/22, and 2023/24—show totals irreconcilable with confirmed PATH disbursements and are excluded from trend analysis as data gaps rather than genuine expenditure figures. The most probable mechanism in each case is mid-year supplemental appropriations or reclassifications between programme heads that are not reflected in the approved Estimates as published—a recognised limitation of relying on approved rather than revised or outturn figures, and one that is documented here rather than resolved through estimation. This is the category in this report where public expenditure most directly reaches children. Compensation of employees accounts for between 1.5 and 6.3 percent of total expenditure in the complete years—



Social protection expenditure, complete years only (J\$ billion, 2025/26 prices)

Fiscal year	Total (real)	CoE share
2017/18	J\$11.3bn	1.5%
2018/19	J\$12.3bn	5.3%
2019/20	J\$12.4bn	6.3%
2022/23	J\$9.9bn	1.7%
2024/25	J\$12.7bn	2.5%
2025/26	J\$11.5bn	3.3%

Source: Jamaica Estimates of Expenditure, various years. Real terms: nominal ÷ PPE deflator, base year 2025/26 = 1.0000. Years 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2023/24 excluded due to incomplete source data.

In 2021, the poverty rate among children aged 0 to 17 was **22%** against a national rate of **17%**

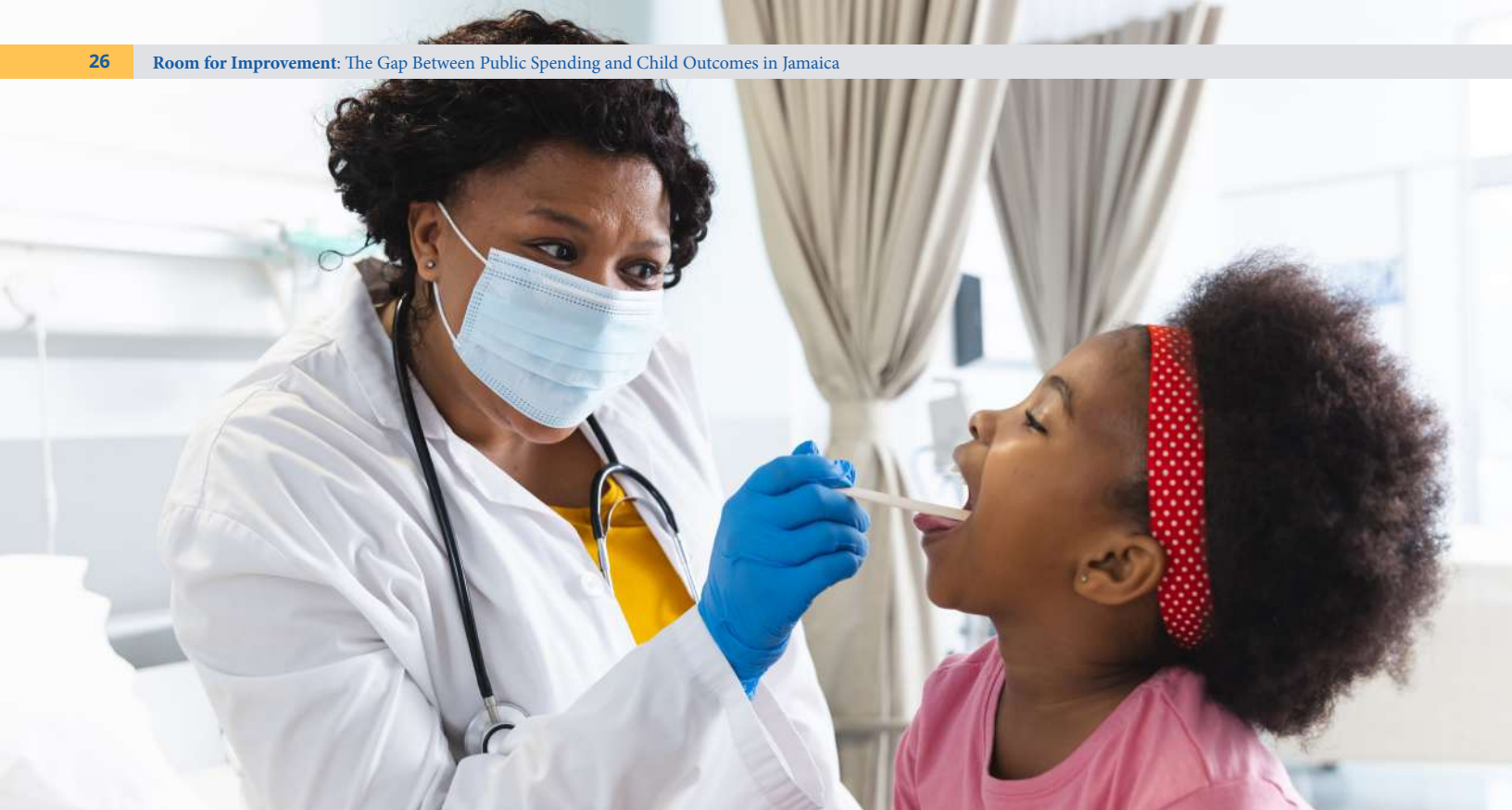
the dominant item is the transfer itself. That structural distinction sets social protection apart from every other chapter in this report, where the wage bill consumes a majority of the child-focused allocation before any service reaches a child.

Jamaica's social protection record is the strongest in this analysis in terms of commitment follow-through. The structural limitation is not fiscal architecture but adequacy and accountability: grant values have eroded in real terms, food insecurity among the poorest households persists, and the HOPE Trust Fund—the commitment with the greatest structural potential—has not progressed beyond announcement.



The World
Bank recorded
32%
among
children aged
0 to 14 against
21% for
the working-
age population





5 Health



The Western Children and Adolescent Hospital — the first dedicated paediatric hospital in the English-speaking Caribbean — is structurally complete. No opening date, staffing plan, or recurrent budget has been confirmed.

Health is Jamaica's second-largest budget category. The survival rate to age five stood at 0.99 across the review period—a positive baseline consistent with Jamaica's structural peers.⁴² Below that headline figure, however, MICS 2022 documents inequities that aggregate rates conceal. Full immunisation coverage among children aged 24–35 months stood at 56 percent nationally, with an anomalous distribution: coverage in the Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area was lower (45 percent) than in rural areas (61 percent), and higher in the poorest wealth quintile (59 percent) than in the richest (55 percent). These patterns do not follow conventional socioeconomic gradients; whatever the mechanism, urban location and higher household income do not predict better immunisation outcomes. Exclusive breastfeeding at six months was 33 percent nationally, with a marked rural-urban divide. Mental health is a documented area of acute unmet need: the 2017 Global School Health Survey found that 25 percent of Jamaican adolescents aged 13–17 had considered suicide and 18 percent had attempted it, and VAC 2023 confirms that violence exposure is significantly associated with mental distress and suicidal ideation in adolescent females.⁴³

Commitments

The assessment covers those commitments for which sufficient evidence existed to support a substantive finding; others were identified but could not be assessed from available sources.

Since April 2008, all children have been entitled to receive care at public health facilities free of charge, with the Ministry of Finance compensating the health system for an estimated J\$526 million in foregone revenue annually. The policy has operated continuously for over 17 years across multiple administrations without reported interruption. The fee waiver eliminates one barrier to access but not others: MICS 2022 shows that 44 percent of children in the poorest wealth quintile received no advice or treatment during fever episodes, against 29 percent in the richest. Geographic distance, waiting times, and the availability of paediatric-trained staff are supply-side constraints the waiver does not address.⁴⁴

The Western Children and Adolescent Hospital—a 220-bed facility on the Cornwall Regional Hospital compound in Montego Bay, the first dedicated paediatric hospital in the English-speaking Caribbean—represents the most ambitious child health infrastructure investment of the review period at a total estimated cost of J\$5 billion. Structural works were complete by December 2024; the 2025/26 budget

allocates J\$800 million for furniture and equipment. No opening date has been published, no staffing plan confirmed, and no recurrent operational budget identified. A hospital without staff and a recurrent budget is not a functioning health service.

Jamaica faces a severe and documented shortfall in child and adolescent mental health services: only 8 percent of children who require mental health services receive them, one child psychiatrist serves every 267,000 children, and the 23 Child Guidance Clinics operate at 30 percent of required staffing, reaching approximately 8,000 children per year against an estimated need of 160,000. Three commitments were made within the review period: the National Mental Health Strategic Plan 2020–2025 identified child mental health as a priority; the U-Matter text counselling service for youth aged 16–24 was launched in 2022 with UNICEF financing and a government commitment to absorb it after two years; and the School Mental Health Literacy Programme was launched in October 2022 targeting 500 trained school professionals and 177 schools within three months. An October 2025 Ministry press release announced the literacy programme would resume with a scope limited to awareness and coping—making no reference to the 2022 targets. U-Matter was transferred to the National Council on Drug Abuse rather than absorbed by the Ministry as committed. Both programmes

Free healthcare for children under 18 has held for over 17 years. But **44%** of the poorest children received no treatment during fever episodes, against **29%** of the richest.

are awareness interventions, not clinical service delivery. The fiscal architecture compounds the problem: child mental health expenditure runs through aggregated regional health authority budgets with no discrete line item, rendering it unquantifiable from any public source and foreclosing public accountability for whether children's needs are being re-sourced.

The Early Stimulation Programme, committed in 2019 based on the Reach Up Jamaica curriculum—whose 20-year follow-up found participants earning 43 percent higher wages than the control group—was disrupted by COVID-19

and reconstituted as Early Start, Bright Future. Its current coverage, beneficiary numbers, and budget allocation are not published and not identifiable in the Estimates. The neonatal nurse training programme at Victoria Jubilee Hospital, through which 15 nurses completed specialist training between November 2024 and March 2025, was financed entirely by the Issa Trust Foundation with no government budget line—philanthropic delivery of a function the state had not resourced, at a scale that cannot be replicated from within the public fiscal framework.⁴⁵

Expenditure

Capital expenditure driven by the Western Children and Adolescent Hospital dominates this category, which means the wage bill absorption dynamic visible in recurrent-heavy categories is less pronounced. Where compensation of employees is separately identifiable—2017/18 to 2019/20—it accounted for a declining share of a rapidly expanding recurrent budget. For the remainder of the period it is embedded in aggregated programme lines and cannot be separated from public data.



Child-focused health expenditure, 2017/18–2024/25 (J\$b, 2025/26 prices)

Fiscal year	CoE	Other recurrent	Capital	Total (real)
2017/18	J\$0.30bn	J\$1.05bn	J\$2.23bn	J\$3.58bn
2018/19	J\$0.27bn	J\$2.18bn	J\$2.88bn	J\$5.33bn
2019/20	J\$0.24bn	J\$2.57bn	J\$1.69bn	J\$4.50bn
2020/21	—	—	J\$1.60bn	J\$1.60bn*
2021/22	—	J\$0.55bn	—	J\$0.55bn*
2022/23	—	J\$1.50bn	J\$0.00bn	J\$1.30bn*
2023/24	—	J\$1.64bn	J\$1.15bn	J\$2.25bn
2024/25	—	J\$1.15bn	J\$1.09bn	J\$1.78bn

Source: Jamaica Estimates of Expenditure, various years. Asterisked years contain incomplete or reclassified data. CoE not separately identifiable for 2020/21–2024/25.

The most durable commitment of free care at the point of service has held for over 17 years. The most ambitious—a dedicated paediatric hospital—is struc-

turally complete but not yet open. The most urgent need is child and adolescent mental health, but only awareness interventions have materialised against a

clinical service gap of documented severity, with expenditure unquantifiable from any public source.





6 Food and Nutrition



A commitment to expand school feeding to 245 under-resourced schools was made in March 2025. No new appropriation was announced.

Food and nutrition carries the clearest evidence of genuine political will in this report: a costed, institutionally embedded programme that reaches the majority of enrolled students. Yet its central nutritional commitment has never been publicly evaluated for adequacy. The National School Feeding Programme is the sector's most consistently traceable budget record and, at the same time, its most conspicuous accountability gap. Jamaica is feeding its children; whether it is nourishing them is a question the current expenditure framework cannot answer.

MICS 2022 provides a window into nutritional practice at the household level. Only 33 percent of infants under six months were exclusively breastfed, below the WHO-recommended standard. Bottle-feeding rates were markedly high at 73 percent of children aged 0–23 months, rising to 80 percent in the Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area. Only 34 percent of children aged 6–23 months met the minimum acceptable diet threshold.⁴⁶ The World Bank's 2022 Systematic Country Diagnostic documents growing rates of childhood obesity alongside signs of increasing overweight—a double burden of malnutrition that current public expenditure monitoring does not address.⁴⁷

Commitments

The commitments discussed below are those for which the public record supported a reasoned assessment; the selection is not intended to be comprehensive.

The National School Feeding Programme targets 180,171 students across early childhood institutions, Brain Builder Centres, primary, secondary, and state-care settings, with a stated commitment to supply at least one-third of each child's daily nutritional requirement. Nutrition Products Limited supplies breakfast and snacks through the Nutri-bun component; cooked meals are delivered through a semi-decentralised Traditional Cooked Lunch Programme. Per-meal subsidy rates were substantially raised from April 2023—from J\$150 to J\$280 for secondary schools, and from J\$40 to J\$100 for Brain Builder Centres. The establishment of 683 permanent cook positions in 2023/24 represents a structural improvement in delivery capacity. A 2024 global survey of school meal programmes noted steady funding, wider coverage, and more feeding days, while also identifying persistent weaknesses: no dedicated nutritionists, inadequate monitoring capacity, and ongoing funding constraints.⁴⁸

The one-third nutritional threshold has never been publicly evaluated against actual dietary adequacy. Whether the programme meets its own stated standard, and

whether that standard is itself sufficient, remains unexamined. The National School Nutrition Policy, once implemented, will provide a broader regulatory framework; it does not substitute for an evaluation of current practice.

In March 2025, the Ministry of Education committed to expand school feeding to 56 high schools and 189 primary schools where underperformance is directly linked to nutritional deprivation, providing both breakfast and lunch. The budget line directly relevant to this expansion—School Feeding Assistance for non-PATH students—stood at J\$129 million nominal in 2024/25, static in nominal terms since at least 2021/22 and 14 percent below its 2017/18 real value. No new appropriation was announced. A commitment to expand coverage without additional resources risks displacing deprivation rather than addressing it.

The National School Feeding Programme reaches **180,171** students daily. Whether it meets its own stated standard of one-third of daily nutritional requirements has never been publicly evaluated.



Expenditure



Food and nutrition expenditure, 2017/18–2024/25 (J\$ billion, 2025/26 prices)

Fiscal year	CoE	Other recurrent	Total	CoE share	Fiscal year
2017/18	J\$0.43bn	J\$16.56bn	J\$16.98bn	2.5%	2017/18
2018/19	J\$0.02bn†	J\$7.82bn	J\$7.84bn	0.3%†	2018/19
2019/20	J\$0.36bn	J\$8.74bn	J\$9.10bn	3.9%	2019/20
2020/21	J\$0.42bn	J\$8.85bn	J\$9.27bn	4.5%	2020/21
2021/22	J\$0.41bn	J\$0.95bn	J\$1.36bn‡	30.3%‡	2021/22
2022/23	J\$0.42bn	J\$7.30bn	J\$7.72bn	5.4%	2022/23
2023/24	J\$0.61bn	J\$7.91bn	J\$8.52bn	7.1%	2023/24
2024/25	J\$0.65bn	J\$7.90bn	J\$8.54bn	7.6%	2024/25

Source: Jamaica Estimates of Expenditure, various years. Real terms: nominal ÷ PPE deflator, base year 2025/26 = 1.0000. † 2018/19 CoE anomalously low—possible reclassification. ‡ 2021/22 collapse reflects COVID-19 school closures; PATH household transfers continued through MLSS and are not captured here.

The food and nutrition record is one of sustained fiscal commitment to school feeding, rising per-meal subsidies, and expanding coverage. The gap is account-

ability: the programme's own nutritional standard has not been evaluated, the expansion commitment is not matched by additional resources, and stunting and

wasting data were not collected in MICS 2022, leaving a material gap in the national evidence base for this category.



The National School Feeding Programme is the sector's most consistently traceable budget record and, at the same time, its most conspicuous accountability gap.



7 Public Safety and Security



More than **75%** of Jamaican children and youth have experienced lifetime violence. Reporting rates for violence against children remain below **50%**.

More than 75 percent of Jamaican children and youth have experienced lifetime violence exposure, according to the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VAC) 2023. Among females, 24 percent experienced childhood sexual violence. VAC 2023 confirms that violence exposure is significantly associated with mental distress, self-harm, and suicidal ideation, connecting the public safety record directly to the health outcomes documented in the previous chapter. Reporting rates for violence against children remain below 50 percent.⁴⁹ Jamaica's violence burden is concentrated in a small number of communities, which are also, in many cases, zones of educational and developmental disadvantage: children in these areas face compounded risks of physical danger, disrupted schooling, and early exposure to criminality.

This chapter covers juvenile correctional services, the Family Court, the Child Diversion Programme, the Schools' Safety and Security Programme, the Inter-Ministerial School Support Strategy, and the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons.

Commitments

The following assessment covers those commitments for which verifiable evidence was available; it does not purport to cover every commitment made within this category.

Jamaica's school safety architecture predates the review period: security and safety policy guidelines were introduced in 2008 and revised in 2015. The Schools' Safety and Security Programme, established in 2017 in partnership with USAID and the

National Education Trust, delivered confirmed physical outputs: CCTV cameras at primary school entrances, perimeter fencing, 35 walk-through metal detectors, and 630 handheld security devices. Budget allocations peaked at J\$134 million nominal in 2019/20; no further allocation has been identified in publicly available budget documents thereafter. The murder of an eight-year-old child abducted from a primary school entrance in June 2023 prompted an immediate governmental response: the Prime Minister directed a review of school safety policy and cameras were announced for primary school entrances, with no reference to the 2017–2020 installations. By May 2024, 154 schools had installed 1,955 cameras, with approximately 30 percent being replaced with improved technology and a tender planned to outfit all schools.

The ongoing ministerial activity confirms



Comprehensive analysis of women's involvement in gangs must account for the structural and contextual impact of irregular land tenure, as it shapes both the opportunities and constraints that define their participation.

continued political commitment; it does not establish that original outputs are being maintained or that successor programmes with a publicly accountable budget line have replaced them.

The Inter-Ministerial School Support Strategy targets students in 34 schools across seven Zones of Special Operations communities, providing psychosocial support, literacy interventions, school attendance monitoring, and behavioural support. In May 2024 Jamaica and the United Kingdom signed a six-year Violence Prevention Partnership valued at approximately J\$2.9 billion, with the ISSS identified as a primary delivery vehicle. The government's own recurrent contribution to the ISSS has not been stated in any document reviewed, including the Estimates. No independent evaluation of the strategy's effect on child safety, school attendance, or learning outcomes has been publicly released.

The Child Diversion Programme, established under the Child Diversion Act 2018 and operational from 2020, provides an alternative to formal justice system engagement for children aged 12 to 17.⁵⁰ It is the category's smallest budget line but analytically significant: 764 children were diverted from formal court proceedings in 2023/24, with a 45 percent completion rate across all referrals since the programme's launch. The allocation peaked at J\$143 million in real terms in 2021/22 before declining sharply to J\$64 million in 2023/24, and no allocation was separately identifiable in the 2025/26 Estimates. Whether the declining allocation reflects a deliberate efficiency judgement or a straightforward reduction in programme capacity cannot be determined from the Estimates alone. A Joint Select Committee of Parliament was reviewing the Child Diversion Act at the time of writing, with deliberations covering the programme's eligibility criteria, scope, and legislative footing; the outcome may affect both its statutory basis and its budget trajectory. There is confirmed delivery against a clear child-focused mandate, but with a budget trajectory and legislative status that remain unresolved.

Jamaica's anti-trafficking framework is

anchored in the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment) Act, prescribing penalties of up to 30 years' imprisonment for offences involving a child victim. The National Rapporteur function was announced in 2015 and became operational in 2016. ONRTIP operates within its mandate but has consistently lacked the resources to do so effectively; US State Department Trafficking in Persons Reports for 2023, 2024, and 2025 are consistent in this finding.

Expenditure

Compensation of employees accounted for 72 percent of total category expenditure in 2017/18 and rose to 82 percent by 2025/26. The two largest commitments—the Schools' Safety and Security Programme and the ISSS—carry no discrete traceable budget lines in the Estimates; the government's own recurrent contribution to both cannot be independently verified. The Family Court services line—covering the Child Abuse Unit and Teen Pregnancy Unit—warrants specific note: from a relatively stable base of J\$370–420 million in real terms between 2017/18 and 2019/20, the allocation rose to over J\$600 million by 2021/22 and has remained elevated, before approximately doubling again to J\$1.2 billion in the 2025/26 Estimates. The drivers of that increase are not explained in available budget documents; whether it reflects expanded service mandate, post-pandemic caseload recovery, a wage adjustment specific to judicial staff, or a reclassification of budget lines cannot be determined from published sources. A doubling of a budget line in a single year, in a category where accountability for results is otherwise thin, warrants scrutiny.





The two largest public safety commitments — the Schools' Safety and Security Programme and the Inter-Ministerial School Support Strategy — carry no discrete traceable budget lines in the Estimates.





Public safety and security child-focused expenditure, 2017/18–2025/26 (J\$ billion, 2025/26 prices)

Fiscal year	CoE	Other recurrent	Capital	Total	CoE share
2017/18	J\$1.24bn	J\$0.47bn	J\$0.04bn	J\$1.75bn	70.9%
2018/19	J\$1.34bn	J\$0.51bn	J\$0.01bn	J\$1.86bn	72.0%
2019/20	J\$1.35bn	J\$0.43bn	J\$0.10bn	J\$1.88bn	71.8%
2020/21	J\$1.39bn	J\$0.38bn	J\$0.00bn	J\$1.77bn	78.5%
2021/22	J\$1.31bn	J\$0.34bn	J\$0.00bn	J\$1.65bn	79.4%
2022/23	J\$1.46bn	J\$0.36bn	J\$0.00bn	J\$1.82bn	80.2%
2023/24	J\$1.57bn	J\$0.38bn	J\$0.01bn	J\$1.96bn	80.1%
2024/25	J\$1.79bn	J\$0.40bn	J\$0.01bn	J\$2.20bn	81.4%
2025/26	J\$1.93bn	J\$0.42bn	J\$0.01bn	J\$2.36bn	81.8%

Source: Jamaica Estimates of Expenditure, various years.

Jamaica has established the architecture of commitment to child safety. What the record does not demonstrate is sustained accountability: programme activity is

confirmed across commitments but institutional accountability for results is not. Violence exposure among children remains high, perceived safety in public

spaces remains low, and reporting rates remain below 50 percent. These indicators have not measurably shifted across the review period.





8

Housing and Infrastructure



No child-specific housing commitment with a traceable central government budget line was identified across nine years of national budgets. The absence is itself a finding.

A growing body of research documents associations between the quality of a child's physical environment—exposure to toxins, noise, crowding, and inadequate housing—and cognitive and socioemotional developmental outcomes. Housing instability is associated with impaired working memory, executive function, and stress regulation.⁵¹ As established in the introduction to this report, household chaos is a more reliable predictor of poor developmental outcomes than family structure or school enrolment status. Housing stability is not a peripheral concern: it is a foundational environmental condition for the effectiveness of public investment across every other category this report assesses.

This chapter differs structurally from all others. No standalone child-specific housing expenditure line exists in the central government Estimates of Expenditure. School construction and rehabilitation is captured under education; capital works at child protection facilities under child protection. What remains after those reclassifications is sparse. That scarcity is itself a finding: it reflects an institutional architecture in which housing investment flows primarily through extra-budgetary entities and is not structured or tracked in ways that make its child-specific dimensions visible or accountable. The two principal public institutions delivering housing at scale—the National Housing Trust

and the Housing Agency of Jamaica—sit outside the central government Estimates and outside the formal boundary of this analysis.

Commitments

The commitments identified below are assessed only where the available evidence permitted a substantive finding.

Three items were identified in the Estimates as potentially relevant to children in this category. The Social Housing Programme, administered through the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, provides indigent housing and relocates vulnerable communities. Annual allocations have remained broadly stable in nominal terms since 2020/21, ranging from J\$554 million to J\$624 million—which means they have been contracting in real terms. The programme is not child-specific; no portion of its allocation can be attributed to children under an apportionment framework. It is noted because the households most likely to qualify are also those in which children face the greatest housing-driven developmental risks. A programme contracting in real terms reduces the state's reach precisely into the housing conditions most consequential for child outcomes, but without child-specific targeting or beneficiary reporting, no assessment of what proportion reaches households with children is possible.

The BNTF9 project—a Caribbean Development Bank-funded community infrastructure initiative administered through the Office of the Prime Minister—included school rehabilitation works across six parishes and the construction of a CPFSA Child Therapeutic Centre in its 2021/22 targets. The child-relevant components were not separately costed in published budget documents. WASH-related activity appears intermittently in the Estimates as a physical target, with teachers and community members certified in WASH techniques in 2024/25 and 2025/26, but without an expenditure value and without constituting a dedicated infrastructure line.

The NHT and HAJ

The National Housing Trust operates at a scale that shapes the physical environments of a significant share of Jamaica's population, though its funding flows entirely through mandatory employer and employee contributions outside the Estimates. Direct child-relevant NHT investments identified for this report include the Parent Overnight Facility at the Bustamante Hospital for Children (J\$140 million contributed), a Music for Transformation Programme delivering homework assistance and psychosocial support in vulnerable communities at approximately J\$7 million annually, and social intervention programmes through its Social Services division. Expenditure is not disaggregated by

JSIF implemented a child and youth-relevant project portfolio worth approximately **J1.74 billion** between 2019 and 2025. None of it appears in the Estimates as a child-specific commitment.

beneficiary age group; outcomes attributable to these activities have not been evaluated.⁵² None of these investments appear in the Estimates and none are subject to parliamentary scrutiny focused on children's needs. The Housing Agency of Jamaica, a self-financing executive agency, does not appear in the Estimates. Its settlement upgrading and regularisation activities have documented associations with reduced child labour and improved household stability, but those consequences are neither disaggregated nor assessed within current programme design.⁵³

Expenditure

No expenditure table is presented for this category: no child-specific housing line is identifiable in the central government Estimates that would support a meaningful nine-year series. The absence of a table is itself a finding—one that the report's analytical framework treats as structurally significant rather than as a data gap to be managed around.

Jamaica does not currently structure, track, or report its housing investment in ways that make its consequences for children visible. That invisibility is not evidence of low investment, given that the NHT and HAJ operate at material scale. It is evidence that children are not a discrete constituency within Jamaica's housing finance architecture, and that no mechanism exists through which Parliament or the public can assess whether housing investment reaches children in adequate quantity or quality.

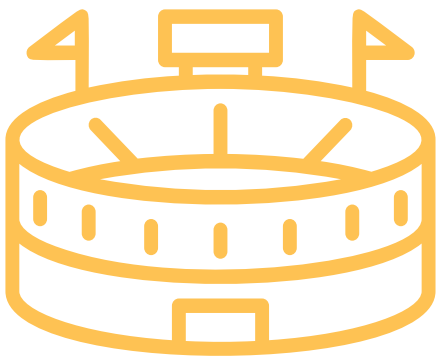






9

Recreation, Culture and Sport



Real child-focused programmatic spend in 2024/25 is **11%** below its 2018/19 level.

Recreation, culture and sport is the weakest category in this review across commitment, expenditure, and accountability dimensions. The fiscal record shows compensation of employees rising from 37 to 57 percent of total staffed-line expenditure between 2017/18 and 2025/26, compressing the programmatic envelope through which child-focused cultural and sporting activities are delivered. Real child-focused programmatic spend in 2024/25 remains approximately 11 percent below its 2018/19 level. No outcome data disaggregated by age are available in published sources; it is not possible to determine whether expenditure is reaching children equitably or producing the development outcomes it is designed to generate.

Commitments

The assessment is limited to those commitments for which the available evidence supported a reasoned conclusion.

A commitment to establish a safeguarding framework for children in sport was identified in the Vision 2030 sector plan. Seven years after it was made, no publicly verifiable output exists. No dedicated budget line for child safeguarding in sport appears in the Estimates across the review period. The Inter-Ministerial Task Force established to coordinate the safeguarding programme has no operational budget in the voted estimates and has produced no



publicly documented output.

The ISSA/GraceKennedy Boys and Girls Championships—Jamaica's primary school-based competitive pathway for track and field—was similarly identified in Vision 2030 as a commitment to develop and promote as a premier global secondary track event. The Championships have expanded their international media profile across the review period. No dedicated state budget line for the Championships has been identified in the Estimates. The state's fiscal contribution to the event's trajectory cannot be established from published budget documents; its success is attributable to private sponsorship and ISSA rather than to a traceable government fiscal commitment.

Expenditure

The principal sources of traceable child-focused expenditure are activities within the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC, Head 46000, Programme 265) and Activity 11605 (Art Forms Knowledge and Skills Development). The JCDC budget is partially attributed to child-focused expenditure using an activity-level apportionment formula. INSPORTS and the CHASE Fund were identified during the systematic review but are excluded on methodological grounds: neither publishes age-disaggregated beneficiary or expenditure data in a form that permits defensible apportionment.

The wage bill in recreation, culture, and sport rose from **37%** to **57%** of expenditure between 2017/18 and 2025/26.



Recreation, culture and sport—expenditure composition and child-focused programmatic spend, 2017/18–2025/26 (J\$ million)

Fiscal year	CoE	CoE share	Other recurrent	Total	Child-focused†
2017/18	J\$953m	40%	J\$1,343m	J\$2,359m	n/a‡
2018/19	J\$904m	37%	J\$1,441m	J\$2,430m	J\$349m
2019/20	J\$962m	38%	J\$1,524m	J\$2,564m	J\$325m
2020/21	J\$973m	37%	J\$1,595m	J\$2,621m	J\$340m
2021/22	J\$907m	39%	J\$1,297m	J\$2,313m	J\$470m§
2022/23	J\$1,035m	51%	J\$908m	J\$2,015m	J\$232m
2023/24	—	—	—	—*	J\$234m
2024/25	J\$1,294m	56%	J\$989m	J\$2,321m	J\$313m
2025/26	J\$1,601m	57%	J\$1,129m	J\$2,794m	J\$384m

Source: Jamaica Estimates of Expenditure, various years, real terms. † Child-focused spend = JCDC programmatic allocations (Activities 11610 and 11611 apportioned) plus Activity 11605; floor estimates for all years except 2021/22. ‡ 2017/18 activity-level data not available. § 2021/22 applies full JCDC apportionment formula including overhead attribution. * 2023/24 total staffed-line data incomplete; child-focused spend derived from activity-level data only.

Child-focused programmatic spend peaked at J\$470 million in 2021/22 when the full JCDC apportionment formula was applied, fell sharply to J\$232 million in 2022/23, and has partially recovered but remains below its 2018/19 level. The absence of a monitoring and evaluation framework for this category is itself a finding: without output metrics or beneficiary data, whether programme expenditure reaches children equitably or produces development outcomes cannot be determined from any published source.







10

Conclusions and Recommendations



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.

This study comprises the first systematic examination of child-focused public expenditure in Jamaica since 2003/4 to 2005/6. In the intervening two decades, Jamaica has sustained and in most categories grown its nominal and real financial commitment to children. The key finding of this report, however, is not about how much is spent but about composition, institutional design, and accountability. Jamaica's public financial management system does not require the identification of what is spent on children, and therefore cannot support the correction of the gap that this report identifies between what is committed and what children actually receive.

The report does not produce a headline figure of what Jamaica spends per child, or in total across the eight categories. The conditions for a defensible calculation do not exist: budget lines are not disaggregated by beneficiary age, substantial child-relevant activity is financed through mechanisms outside the central government Estimates, and filling those gaps would require assumptions that the underlying data cannot reasonably support. More fundamentally, even a complete and accurate total would not answer the question that matters where money is allocated but outcomes are indeterminate, which is: where did the money go? The link between what goes in and what children receive depends on implementation,

institutional capacity, and accountability, the conditions that this report finds to be deficient across most categories. The number would not indicate whether Jamaica is doing enough for its children; the pattern of spending, and the distance between that pattern and the outcomes children experience, is what would.

What the record shows

Across the eight categories assessed, 34 specific government commitments were evaluated against a four-point scale measuring the distance between commitment and delivery: aligned, where a commitment was made and delivery confirmed with a traceable budget; partially aligned, where delivery was incomplete or the budget untraceable; not aligned, where commitment was made but no delivery or budget evidence was found; and reversed, where spending declined after a commitment to increase it. Four commitments are aligned: the Lyssons Centre upgrade in education, the Special Education Intervention Unit in education, the Back-to-School and Post-Secondary Grants in social protection, and the abolition of user fees for children under 18 in health. Twenty-two are partially aligned—the dominant finding across the report. Nine are not aligned: three in child protection, three in health, one in social protection, and two in recreation, culture and sport. The reversed cat-

egory applies to no commitment, though the real per-child value of the foster care subvention follows a sustained declining trajectory that comes closest to meeting such a threshold. Housing and infrastructure yields no assessable commitment: no child-specific commitment with a traceable central government budget line was identified across the nine-year review period.

The pattern across aligned commitments is consistent: each has a named institutional home, a traceable and sustained budget line, and a reporting mechanism. Partially aligned commitments typically have one or two of these features but not all three. Commitments assessed as not aligned have none. That pattern is itself a finding: within Jamaica's current public financial management architecture, the presence or absence of an institutional home, a discrete budget line, and a reporting requirement is the primary determinant of whether a commitment produces a traceable fiscal response.

The structural plan

Beneath the category findings lie three distinct but interrelated forms of misalignment that cut across all eight sectors.

Fiscal misalignment refers to the absence or opacity of funding relative to stated commitments. In Jamaica's labour-inten-

Of 34 government commitments assessed, four are aligned — each with a named institutional home, a traceable budget line, and a confirmed delivery mechanism. Twenty-two are partially aligned. Nine are not aligned.

sive social sectors, a substantial and in several categories growing share 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 service delivery. Education shows the highest compensation share at 86 percent of recurrent expenditure in 2024/25, up from 83 percent in 2017/18, with virtually the entire real increase in the category absorbed by the wage bill over nine years. Child protection rose from 34 percent to 48 percent. Public safety stands at 82 percent by 2025/26. Recreation, culture, and sport rose from 37 to 57 percent. The 2022 public sector compensation restructuring, a rational response to uncompetitive public sector pay, accelerated this trend without a commensurate increase in the operational resources within which that labour functions, nor without the performance frameworks or accountability mechanisms that would be required to establish whether better-compensated public servants are producing better outcomes for children.

Institutional misalignment refers to the gap between the design of commitments and the institutional infrastructure available to implement them. The child mental health system commits to awareness and access whilst the clinical service gap runs at 92 percent. The CCPA Amendment 2023 was passed without the infrastructure required for the new law to come into force. A Cabinet decision to merge the NPSC and CPFSA remains unexecuted after five years. The most significant expansion of child protection services in the review period was entirely donor-financed with no domestic sustainability mechanism. These are characteristic of the form that commitment takes in the absence of indigenous institutional capacity to sustain and follow-through.

Outcome misalignment refers to the limited evidence of observable improvement in child outcomes relative to the level of expenditure. Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling stand at 7.1 against the expected 11.4. The Human Capital Index places Jamaica at 0.53. More than 75 percent

of children and youth have experienced lifetime violence. Foundational literacy stands at 62 percent and numeracy at 50 percent, with wealth quintile gaps of 36 and 34 percentage points respectively. The foster care subvention has contracted to below its 2017/18 per-child real value. These outcomes have not measurably improved across the review period, and certainly not in proportion to the investment made.

The compositional skew

There is a structural dimension to the outcome gap 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 concentrated at the stage where they are highest. The cognitive foundations that determine whether a child can benefit from schooling are set in the first three years of life. An education system, however well-resourced, cannot fully compensate for what those early years fail to provide. The categories that serve children in the first thousand days—health, nutrition, housing, child protection—are the categories where Jamaica's spending is thinnest, least protected, and most opaque. Jamaica is investing heavily at the wrong end of the developmental timeline.

The pattern is consistent across the categories serving the first thousand days. Child protection's budget grew in real terms across the review period, but that growth was absorbed almost entirely by the wage bill; the residential care estate receives less maintenance in real terms than at the start of the period, the preferred care model is progressively defunded in real per-child terms, and the most significant service expansion of the period was financed entirely by a donor programme with no domestic sustainability mechanism. Health's child-focused capital expenditure was dominated by a single hospital that remains unopened; child mental health — the area of most acute documented need — carries no discrete budget line and its expenditure cannot be quantified from any





public source. Food and nutrition sustains a school feeding programme at material scale, but the programme's own nutritional standard has never been evaluated for adequacy, and the expansion committed in March 2025 carries no new appropriation. Housing investment at the scale that shapes children's physical environments flows almost entirely through entities outside the central government estimates, rendering it invisible to parliamentary scrutiny as a child-focused commitment. Across these four categories, the fiscal architecture shares three features: spending is thin relative to documented need, accountability mechanisms are absent or inadequate, and the budget envelope is unprotected — meaning that when fiscal pressure arrives, these are the lines that will likely contract. Education, by contrast, has a protected and growing wage bill, near-universal attendance as a confirmed output, and a 30-year record of sustained political priority. The developmental returns to that concentration of investment are not commensurate with its scale, and the evidence points clearly to why. More investment in education, absent that foundation, will not produce proportionately better outcomes.

The consequences extend beyond childhood. A 20-year longitudinal study tracking Jamaican children who received structured early stimulation found that participants' earnings as adults were 43 percent higher than those of a comparison group who received no stimulation.⁵⁴ The implication is straightforward: underinvestment in the earliest years does not merely harm the children who experience it, it reproduces itself in the labour market. Jamaica's persistently low labour productivity, is in part the adult expression of earlier developmental deficits. According to the ILO, output per hour worked stands at approximately US\$8.8, less than half the Caribbean regional average of US\$20.50, and less than a quarter of the figure for high-income economies in the region.⁵⁵ An education system receiving 86 percent of its recurrent budget in compensation of employees, serving children whose developmental foundations were not adequately supported, cannot be expected to close that gap alone.

The accountability gap

Cutting across all eight categories is a structural absence: Jamaica's public financial management system does not require the disaggregation of child-related expenditure, the tracking of beneficiary reach, or the reporting of child-level outcomes against allocations. Budget templates do not require it and no legislative mandate compels it. Most agencies consulted during the preparation of this report confirmed they had never previously been asked to account for what they spend on children. Without disaggregated expenditure data, it is not possible to determine whether child-focused allocations are reaching the children who need them most, or where they are going at all. Without a reporting mechanism linked to the budget cycle, neither legislators nor the public have a basis on which to hold agencies accountable for the distance between what is committed and what is delivered, and to correct where a gap exists.

In closing

Jamaica has solved harder problems than this. The fiscal consolidation of the past 15 years—the restructuring of public debt, the restoration of macroeconomic stability, the rebuilding of fiscal space—required political will, institutional discipline, and a willingness to make difficult decisions across successive administrations. This was done successfully. As a result, 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 to the children themselves, and ultimately to national development.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow address accountability and transparency, investment reorientation, and institutional and legislative reform. They are presented without indicative costings. The report's analytical scope is limited to approved budget allocations, and deriving credible cost estimates for structural reforms would require a dedicated costing exercise beyond the study's terms of reference. Where a recommendation has bounded and estimable fiscal implications, such as establishing a dedicated programme monitoring unit or mandating disaggregated reporting in the Estimates, this is noted. Where costs are structurally contingent on design choices not yet made, this is noted instead. Recommendations carrying legislative implications are characterised as such, and will carry a fiscal cost, but that is also not calculated.



1

Introduce child-disaggregated reporting requirements into Jamaica's public financial management framework. In the short term, the Ministry of Finance should direct all ministries and agencies with child-focused mandates to include, in their annual budget submissions, a statement of child-specific programme targets, output indicators, and prior-year reported outturn against those targets; this requires no new legislation. In the longer term, the requirement should be embedded in statute through amendments to the Financial Administration and Audit Act, the Public Bodies Management and Accountability Act, and the Fiscal Responsibility Framework, to ensure continuity across administrations.

Rebalance Jamaica's child investment toward the earliest years of the life cycle. The categories that serve children in the first thousand days must be treated with the same fiscal seriousness as education by growing the budgets for early childhood health, nutrition, housing stability, child protection, and family support at a rate commensurate with the evidence on where the returns are highest.

The fiscal implications are significant and structurally contingent on design choices about which programmes to expand and to what scale.

2



Recommendations



3

Require the CPFSA when it resumes annual reporting to establish a minimum reporting standard that includes caseload, social worker complement, foster care beneficiary numbers, and per-child subvention values against inflation. This is a reporting requirement, not a legislative measure.

Establish a permanency planning framework for children in state care, underpinned by a revised adoption statute, a domestic foster care financing model that tracks per-child real value against an adequacy standard, and a case management protocol that makes family-based placement the operational default rather than the stated aspiration, with a stated intention and strategic plan to move away from institutional care completely. This carries both legislative and fiscal implications.

4



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. The seed funding of J\$200 million is already committed; the enabling legislative and institutional framework is the outstanding requirement.

Appendix 1: Methodology

Framework and approach

This report draws on the analytical principles of the Child Public Expenditure Management (C-PEM) framework and UNICEF's Public Finance for Children (PF4C) methodology to identify, categorise, and assess child-focused public expenditure across Jamaica's national budget. It was commissioned by UNICEF Jamaica and produced by CAPRI as an independent research exercise using publicly available budget documents. The government was not the initiating actor and has not adopted or institutionalised the methodology.

A formal C-PEM initiative, as defined in the literature, is characterised by two essential features: a methodology that explicitly measures child-specific spending, and government ownership of that methodology. In every country where C-PEM has been successfully established, government ownership has been the enabling condition. It is government ownership that gives the methodology access to disaggregated budget data, ensures continuity of reporting, and produces the accountability that child-focused expenditure tracking is designed to create. In Jamaica, none of those conditions currently exist. No government agency has been mandated to track child-focused expenditure, no methodology has been adopted by the Ministry of Finance or any planning body, and child-related data is not systematically collected, reported, or prioritised within Jamaica's public financial management architecture. The absence of a government-owned C-PEM framework is not merely a methodological limitation of this report; it is one of its findings.

Within those constraints, this analysis applied a structured analytical approach consistent with C-PEM principles, covering nine fiscal years from 2017/18 to 2025/26 across eight thematic sectors: education, child protection, social protection, health, food and nutrition, public safety and security, housing and infrastructure, and recreation, culture and sport. The commitment record was assembled through a systematic review of ministerial sectoral presentations, Throne Speech addresses, post-Cabinet press briefings, official policy documents, and publicly available statements by ministers and senior officials. Thirty-four identifiable government commitments across the eight sectors were recorded, noting the budget specification if any. Identified budget items were organised into thematic categories consistent with the PF4C analytical framework and assessed against the alignment scale described below. Findings were corroborated through structured engagement with stakeholders across child-focused government institutions and civil society.

A full technical report—substantially longer than this document and containing detailed expenditure tables, SDG assessments, the complete commitment summary tables for each sector, and additional appendices on the impact of COVID-19 on child-focused spending, classification exceptions, the JCDC apportionment methodology, and the JSIF off-budget portfolio—is available from CAPRI and from UNICEF.

Classification of child-focused expenditure

Direct child-focused expenditure refers to financial commitments made with the primary objective of benefiting children, including the institutional operating costs and workforce costs of agencies whose entire mandate is child-focused. Indirect child-focused expenditure refers to financial commitments that contribute to child welfare but are not primarily or exclusively designed for children.

Where expenditure lines straddle more than one thematic category, classification decisions were made by weighting the primary purpose of the specific budget line against the administering institution. Where a programme's beneficiary population includes both children and adults and no age-disaggregated breakdown is publicly available, the allocation was excluded from the analysis in its entirety rather than partially estimated. This conservative approach is consistent with a commitment to producing a credible lower-bound estimate of child-focused expenditure rather than risk overstating investment through speculative attribution. All programmes excluded on this basis are documented in Appendix 3 of this report.

Data source and budget year selection

All expenditure figures are drawn from the Approved Estimates of Expenditure—the central government budget as presented and approved by Parliament each year. Revised estimates and actual outturn figures are not used. This is a deliberate choice: approved estimates are the most comprehensive, consistent, and publicly verifiable fiscal record available across the full nine-year review period, and they represent the government's stated financial intentions and policy priorities at the point of budget approval. Where significant and documentable variances between approved and actual spending are known from public sources—for example, where mid-year programme suspensions are a matter of public record—these are noted in the relevant sectoral sections.

Off-budget flows fall outside the scope of the expenditure analysis. This includes externally financed programmes whose funding originates from loans and grants channelled through entities such as the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, World Bank-funded projects, and CDB-funded community infrastructure; and statutory body expenditure not routed through the central government Estimates, including the National Housing Trust and the Housing Agency of Jamaica. This scope limitation reflects the structure of Jamaica's expenditure reporting, not a judgement about the importance of those flows. Where significant child-relevant investment is invisible to the Estimates, it is also invisible to parliamentary scrutiny and public accountability, and that invisibility is treated as a finding in its own right.

Real expenditure conversion

All expenditure trends are expressed in real terms using a purchasing power equivalent (PPE) deflator index, with 2025/26 as the base year. To convert a nominal figure from any given year to its real equivalent, the nominal amount is divided by the deflator index value for that year. The deflator values applied across the review period are:

Fiscal Year	Deflator Index
2017/18	0.6473
2018/19	0.6630
2019/20	0.7043
2020/21	0.7411
2021/22	0.7954
2022/23	0.8696

The deflator series is sourced from the Bank of Jamaica. All real figures in this report are expressed in 2025/26 Jamaican dollar terms.

Compositional analysis

In addition to tracking expenditure levels, this analysis examines the composition of child-focused spending across three components: compensation of employees (Object 21), other recurrent expenditure covering goods, services, and transfers (Objects 22–27), and capital expenditure (Objects 31 and above). This disaggregation is analytically significant because headline expenditure figures do not distinguish between resources that reach children in the form of services and resources absorbed by the wage bill before any service is delivered. In Jamaica's fiscal context, recurrent expenditure in labour-intensive social sectors is substantially dominated by compensation of employees. Tracking the compositional shift across the review period allows this report to assess not only whether Jamaica is spending more or less on children in aggregate, but whether the resources committed to children are increasingly or decreasingly likely to reach them in the form of services.

Alignment scale

Each commitment is evaluated against a four-point scale. A commitment is assessed as aligned where a public commitment and a plausibly scaled budget line both exist and delivery is confirmed. It is assessed as partially aligned where a budget line exists but is insufficient in scale, has been restructured in ways that make ongoing tracking impossible, or where delivery is confirmed but adequacy cannot be independently verified. It is assessed as not aligned where a public commitment was made with no traceable budget evidence and no delivery is confirmed. It is assessed as reversed where spending in an area actively declined after a commitment to increase it was made. The reversed category does not appear in the findings of this report, though the real per-child value of the foster care subvention comes closest to meeting its threshold.

Limitations

The most fundamental limitation is the structural condition described above: Jamaica does not maintain a formal system for tracking public spending on children across sectors, and this is not an administrative oversight. Budget templates do not require child-disaggregated reporting, nor is there any legislative mandate compelling it. The fiscal picture of childhood in Jamaica therefore had to be constructed from commitments, estimates, and inferences rather than from any government-validated account of child-focused spending.

The use of approved estimates rather than outturn figures means this analysis tracks the government's stated financial commitments to children rather than verified expenditure. In Jamaica, divergence between what is approved and what is ultimately disbursed and spent does occur. Where material variances are known from public sources, they are noted in the relevant sectoral sections; a comprehensive outturn analysis was not possible within the scope of this work.

Several commitments were made in public forums without corresponding budget specifications, preventing alignment assessments based on fiscal evidence alone. Where co-financing arrangements with international partners—including the European Union, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, and UNICEF—partially fund child-focused programmes, the government's direct financial contribution cannot always be isolated, and the sustainability of outputs beyond the financing period cannot be assessed from budget evidence alone.

The Child Protection and Family Services Agency has not published an annual report since 2018. Claims about its operational activities during the review period rely in part on agency communications and press statements that cannot be independently corroborated against institutional records.

Classification decisions—which expenditure lines belong in which thematic category, how to treat institutional operating costs, and how indirect budgets were apportioned—represent the research team's best judgement applied consistently against a stated framework. Reasonable practitioners might classify certain borderline items differently; the decisions are documented to make them visible and contestable. A full technical report containing detailed documentation of all classification decisions, exceptions, and apportionment methodology is available from CAPRI.

Ethical considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with CAPRI's standard ethical framework for policy research involving sensitive data and vulnerable populations. All stakeholders who participated in structured consultations were provided with informed consent documentation; no individual is identified by name. Children were not involved directly in data collection at any stage; the study relied on administrative data, published budget documents, and interviews with professionals working within child-serving institutions. No personal or identifying information about individual children appears in this report. All data is stored on CAPRI's secure drive with access restricted to researchers directly involved in the project.

Appendix 2: Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals

The technical report assesses Jamaica's progress toward the child-relevant Sustainable Development Goals within each of the eight sectoral chapters. This appendix consolidates those assessments. The SDG targets are abbreviated throughout; full target text is available at sdgs.un.org.

Education — SDG 4

Jamaica's education commitments show meaningful but uneven alignment with SDG 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Jamaica's obligations under Article 28 of the CRC, which requires states parties to make primary education compulsory and available free to all and to take measures to encourage regular school attendance, establish a legal and fiscal baseline against which the expenditure record must be read.

On SDG 4.a (safe, inclusive, and effective learning environments), the infrastructure dimensions—disability-sensitive learning environments, school accessibility, and electrical upgrades—have been substantively addressed, with delivery confirmed across multiple years and regions. This is the commitment area with the clearest evidence of delivery. On SDG 4.2 (early childhood development), real investment has increased and verified outputs have been delivered, but the target trained practitioner-to-student ratio of 1:10 for children aged 3–6 remains unmet, and the consolidation of the dedicated early childhood budget line in 2020 has weakened the accountability architecture. On SDG 4.1 (primary and secondary learning proficiency), progress is limited: MICS 2022 records foundational literacy at 62 percent and numeracy at 50 percent among children aged 7–14, and the shift system continues to limit instructional time in under-resourced communities. On SDG 4.5 (educational equity), outcome-level inequalities persist. The wealth parity index for foundational reading skills stands at 0.57 (poorest/richest) and for numeracy at 0.49, meaning children in the poorest households are roughly half as likely to demonstrate these skills as children in the richest. On SDG 4.b and 4.c, which address scholarship opportunities and the supply of qualified teachers respectively, the commitment record is weaker and the migration of qualified teachers remains an identified constraint on learning outcomes.

Child Protection — SDG 16

SDG Target 16.2 calls for an end to abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children. SDG Target 16.3 requires promotion of the rule of law and equal access to justice. Target 8.7 requires governments to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and eliminate the worst forms of child labour. Under the CRC—Articles 19, 20, 37, and 40—these SDG commitments carry the character of legal obligations.

Confirmed outputs over the review period—an upgraded and more accessible hotline, six I-Care Centres, two state-run shelters, trained police and healthcare workforces—represent an expansion of infrastructure relevant to SDG 16.2 and 8.7. Alignment is constrained by three analytically distinct factors. The most significant service expansion of the period was financed from donor sources without a domestic sustainability mechanism, indicating a structural gap in domestic child protection financing. The absence of annual reporting from the CPFSA since 2018 means it is not possible to determine from public sources whether allocations are reaching their intended beneficiaries or in what volume. And the VAC 2023 finding that over 75 percent of children and youth have experienced lifetime violence situates the child protection investment against a pattern of harm that the available fiscal and institutional evidence cannot show has been substantially reduced. For SDG Targets 16.2, 16.3, and 8.7 to be meaningfully approached by 2030, all three constraints require attention.

Social Protection — SDG 1

SDG Goal 1 calls for the eradication of poverty in all its forms; Target 1.3 requires countries to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems covering the poor and vulnerable, including floors, and to achieve substantial coverage by 2030. PATH directly operationalises Target 1.3, delivering bi-monthly cash transfers with consistent funding growth across the assessment period and demonstrating, through the COVID-19 response, the system's capacity to extend coverage in response to acute shocks.

Alignment is assessed as partially aligned. The primary constraint is not coverage architecture but adequacy and accountability: the Back-to-School grant has been fixed at J\$3,500 since 2018 and has lost substantial real value without any published adequacy assessment, and 57 percent of households in the poorest quintile experienced moderate to severe food insecurity in October–November 2024. The HOPE Trust Fund—the commitment with the greatest structural potential for SDG Goal 1—has not progressed beyond announcement.

Health — SDG 3

Jamaica's child health commitments map onto four targets within SDG 3.

On SDG 3.2 (prevention of child and neonatal mortality), the survival rate to age five of 0.99 is the clearest positive finding, reflecting sustained investment in vaccination, primary care, and neonatal services. Set against this, full immunisation coverage of 56 percent for children aged 24–35 months—with an anomalous distribution that does not follow conventional socioeconomic gradients—indicates that the immunisation system does not reach all children with equal reliability. Alignment is assessed as partially aligned. On SDG 3.8 (universal health coverage), the abolition of user fees for children under 18 is the most direct policy expression of the target's financial risk protection requirement. MICS 2022 confirms, however, that financial access does not yet translate into equitable service utilisation: 44 percent of children in the poorest wealth quintile received no advice or treatment during fever episodes, against 29 percent in the richest. Alignment is assessed as partially aligned. On SDG 3.1 (maternal mortality), MICS 2022 data on antenatal care and skilled birth attendance were not disaggregated in a form that permits a reliable trend assessment; alignment cannot be assessed from available data. On SDG 3.4 (mental health and wellbeing), available baseline data establish acute unmet need among children and adolescents: only 8 percent of children requiring mental health services receive them, and no dedicated or adequately scaled child mental health budget line was identified in the Estimates across the review period. Alignment is assessed as not aligned.

Food and Nutrition — SDG 2

SDG 2 calls for an end to hunger and food insecurity for all; Target 2.1 requires year-round access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food, including for infants and people in vulnerable situations. Jamaica has made feeding children a visible and growing fiscal commitment. The National School Feeding Programme reaches 180,171 students across every level of the education system, is backed by a J\$9.4 billion allocation for 2025/26, and per-meal subsidy rates were substantially raised from April 2023. Food and nutrition commitments are assessed as partially aligned with SDG Goal 2 and Target 2.1. SDG 2.2 (elimination of all forms of malnutrition including stunting and wasting) cannot be assessed for this period: stunting and wasting data were not collected in MICS 2022, leaving a gap in the national evidence base for SDG monitoring. The country is feeding its children; whether it is nourishing them in the sense that Goal 2 requires is a question the current expenditure framework cannot answer.

Public Safety and Security — SDG 16

The public safety commitments assessed in this chapter speak directly to SDG 16.1 (significant reduction in all forms of violence and related death rates) and SDG 16.1.4 (the proportion of people who feel safe walking alone in their communities). The ONRTIP commitment brings SDG 16.2 into scope. Confirmed outputs between 2017 and 2023—physical security installations, psychosocial and diversion programmes, and operational anti-trafficking oversight—demonstrate credible delivery against SDG 16.1 and 16.2. The MICS 2022 neighbourhood safety data (only 64 percent of women feeling safe walking alone after dark) provides the SDG 16.1.4 baseline; that baseline has not improved in nationally measurable terms across the review period. On SDG 16.2, the finding that children

apprehended for gang-related activity are processed through the justice system without screening for trafficking indicators documents the gap between Jamaica's legal obligations and operational delivery most clearly. The SDG alignment is assessed as partial: real programmatic progress, against a violence and safety environment that has not yet shifted.

Housing and Infrastructure — SDG 11 and CRC Article 27

SDG Target 11.1 calls for universal access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services, and the upgrading of informal settlements. CRC Article 27 further establishes a state obligation to ensure conditions of living adequate for children's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development—an obligation with fiscal implications, not merely normative ones.

No child-specific housing commitment with a traceable budget line was identified in the Estimates across the review period that would allow a formal alignment assessment against these targets. The Social Housing Programme is directionally consistent with SDG 11.1 in that it addresses housing need among vulnerable households, but its child-specific impact cannot be assessed from available budget evidence, and its real-terms trajectory is contracting. Against SDG Target 11.1 and the fiscal obligations implied by CRC Article 27, the assessment is not aligned. The misalignment is primarily institutional: it reflects the absence of sub-programme reporting lines, beneficiary-level data, and evaluation mechanisms through which child-specific housing investment could be tracked, rather than a determination that no such investment is occurring.

Recreation, Culture and Sport — SDG 4 and 8

SDG 4.a calls for the provision of safe, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all, encompassing the physical education and sporting infrastructure through which school-based athletic development occurs. SDG 4.7 addresses education for sustainable development and global citizenship, and is the most directly relevant target for the cultural identity and arts education functions that the JCDC and the broader Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport mandate are intended to serve. SDG 8.6 aims to reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training—a target to which competitive athletics contributes by creating economic pathways for young Jamaicans whose ability would otherwise go unsupported.

Against each of these targets, state fiscal ownership of outcomes cannot be established from available evidence. No programme-specific budget line for the Championships has been identified. No child-focused investment in culture or the creative industries appears in the spending record independently of the JCDC apportionment documented in Appendix 3. The monitoring architecture that would permit assessment of whether school-based arts and sporting programmes are producing development outcomes does not exist in a form accessible from published budget documents. Against SDG 4.a, 4.7, and 8.6, the assessment is not aligned.

Appendix 3: Expenditure Reviewed but Excluded from the Main Analysis

This appendix documents budget allocations that were identified during the systematic review of the Estimates of Expenditure as potentially or explicitly child-focused, but which could not be included in the main expenditure analysis due to insufficient disaggregation in published budget documents. In each case the allocation was examined, the available information was assessed against the classification and apportionment framework described in Appendix 1, and a determination was made that the evidentiary basis for inclusion was insufficient. These entries are recorded here in the interest of transparency and to illustrate a broader finding of this report: Jamaica's current budget classification architecture does not consistently make child-focused spending visible, even where it exists and even where it is substantial.

A full account of these exclusions, including additional documentation of the apportionment decisions that governed the JCDC (the one partially child-attributed institution in the recreation, culture and sport category) and the institutional and off-budget position of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, is contained in the appendices to the full technical report, which is available from CAPRI and from UNICEF.

Jamaica 4-H Clubs Head 51000 — Ministry of Agriculture | Activity 10005: Entrepreneurial training of rural youth in agriculture, leadership, home economics and technology

The Jamaica 4-H Clubs programme delivers training in agriculture, entrepreneurship, home economics, leadership, and technology to rural youth. The programme has clear developmental value for children and adolescents. However, 4-H membership in Jamaica spans from approximately age 5 to age 25, meaning a significant portion of programme beneficiaries and expenditure may relate to young adults over 18. No breakdown of beneficiaries or expenditure by age group is available in the Estimates of Expenditure or in publicly available programme documentation. In the absence of a reliable basis for apportioning the allocation to the under-18 population, and consistent with the decision rule set out in Appendix 1—where a programme serves a population straddling the under-18 threshold and no age breakdown is available, the allocation is excluded rather than partially estimated—this allocation was excluded from the analysis in its entirety.

CHASE Fund Head 15000 — Office of the Prime Minister | Object 27: Grants, Contributions and Subsidies

The CHASE Fund (Culture, Health, Art, Sports and Education) is a statutory body that finances programmes across education, culture, health, and sport, with a strong orientation toward youth and communities. The fund receives an annual government grant disbursed as a single consolidated line under Object 27 in the Estimates of Expenditure. Based on information provided by a CHASE Fund official, disbursements are distributed across five programmatic areas: early childhood education (approximately 25 percent of annual disbursements), arts and culture (approximately 15 percent), sports (approximately 40 percent, directed primarily to the Sports Development Foundation), and health-related programmes and projects (approximately 20 percent). Though the early childhood allocation is earmarked to benefit children, in practice the benefit is sometimes indirect—for example, funding used to provide scholarships for early childhood teachers. Funding to benefit children routinely flows through other programme areas as well, but the proportion varies from year to year based on board decisions.

The CHASE Fund allocation could not be included in the main expenditure analysis for two compounding reasons. First, the programme-level disbursement breakdown described above does not appear in published budget documents and cannot be independently verified from the Estimates alone. Second, a complete accounting of child-focused CHASE Fund spending would require attribution not only of grant disbursements to child-specific purposes, but also of the fund's institutional overheads and staff costs—neither of

which is disaggregated in publicly available documents. In the absence of a published, audited breakdown that would allow both grant disbursements and operating costs to be reliably attributed to child-focused purposes across the full review period, the allocation has been excluded in its entirety. This exclusion is material: at J\$1,753,231,000 in 2021/22 alone, the CHASE Fund represents one of the largest single allocations reviewed but not counted. A full accounting of child-focused public expenditure in Jamaica would require the CHASE Fund to publish annual disbursement reports disaggregated by programme area, beneficiary age group, and cost category.

Police Social Assistance to Children of District Constables Head 26022 — Police Department | Recurrent | Activity 10003

This activity includes an explicitly child-targeted social assistance grant, described in the Estimates of Expenditure as assistance to children of District Constables, disbursed under Object 29 (Awards and Social Assistance). However, the Object 29 line for this activity also covers tuition refunds and scholarships for Jamaica Constabulary Force members, which are adult benefits. The child-specific portion is not separately disaggregated in the published Estimates, and the total line amount could not be reliably apportioned between child and adult beneficiaries without access to internal Jamaica Constabulary Force administrative records. This entry is categorised separately from the preceding entries because the child-focused purpose of part of this allocation is explicitly stated in the Estimates. Its exclusion therefore reflects a transparency gap in the budget rather than uncertainty about whether children benefit. This is one of several instances identified during this review where child-focused spending exists within Jamaica's public expenditure system but is rendered invisible by the way budget lines are structured and reported.

Basic Needs Trust Fund 9 (BNTF9) Head 15000C — Office of the Prime Minister | Capital | Project 29534 Implementing Agency: Jamaica Social Investment Fund | Funding Agency: Caribbean Development Bank

BNTF9 is a Caribbean Development Bank-funded community infrastructure project administered through the Office of the Prime Minister and implemented by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund. The project finances rural community infrastructure works across six parishes, including roads, irrigation, community facilities, and physical works. The 2021/22 project targets include child-relevant capital works: the rehabilitation of three schools (Mount Salem, Marlie Mount Infant, and Grange Hill) and the construction of a CPFSA Child Therapeutic Centre. Had cost disaggregation been available, the school rehabilitation components would have been attributed to education infrastructure and the Therapeutic Centre to child protection infrastructure.

The J\$684,449,000 estimate represents the total BNTF9 project budget for 2021/22 and covers the full portfolio of community infrastructure works. The child-relevant components are not separately costed in the published Estimates of Expenditure, and no publicly available document disaggregates the project budget to the sub-project level. Including the total project figure would significantly overstate child-focused capital spending. The allocation has therefore been excluded from the main expenditure analysis in its entirety. The construction of the CPFSA Child Therapeutic Centre and the rehabilitation of the three named schools are noted as child-focused capital commitments within the review period, but their costs are embedded within the BNTF9 project budget and are not independently visible in published budget documents.

Jamaica Social Investment Fund — Institutional Budget and Off-Budget Portfolio Head 15000 / Head 15000C — Office of the Prime Minister

The Jamaica Social Investment Fund occupies an unusual position within Jamaica's public expenditure architecture. As an entity whose operational costs are voted through the central government Estimates of Expenditure, JSIF is formally visible within the budget boundary that governs this analysis. The sub-projects it implements, however, are financed mostly through external loans and grants—from the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank, and the European Union—that pass through JSIF as an implementing agency but are not appropriated through the Consolidated Fund. Those sub-projects therefore appear in the Estimates as nominal capital budget lines at most in some years, and do not appear at all in others, irrespective of actual expenditure flows.

JSIF's institutional budget sits within Head 15000 as a sub-activity within the Office of the Prime Minister's Direction and Administration programme. The activity line is shared with the CHASE Fund; neither JSIF nor CHASE appears as a separately appropriated entity with its own head number, and JSIF's full institutional cost base is not independently legible from the programme summary pages of the Estimates. Compensation of employees has consistently absorbed between 55 and 70 percent of the institutional allocation across the review period, consistent with the compositional pattern documented across other categories in this report.

In January 2026, JSIF provided CAPRI with an internal spreadsheet documenting child and youth-related projects implemented between February 2019 and July 2025. The portfolio comprises 38 sub-projects with a total contracted value of approximately J\$1.74 billion, of which an estimated 66 percent is financed by external sources and the remaining 35 percent through GOJ-funded project lines, principally the Integrated Community Development Project II. None of these sub-projects appears as a discrete, child-specific line in the Approved Estimates of Expenditure. The project envelopes that finance the majority of the portfolio appear as aggregate capital lines, but the sub-project level breakdown in which schools were rehabilitated, communities received safe passage infrastructure, and children received therapeutic services, is not visible from the Estimates alone and was recoverable only through direct engagement with JSIF during the preparation of this report. This is one of the more significant structural transparency limitations identified: a child-relevant investment portfolio of J\$1.74 billion, spanning six years, that is entirely invisible to parliamentary scrutiny as a child-focused commitment.

A full institutional budget table and sub-project portfolio analysis is contained in the technical report, which is available from CAPRI and UNICEF.

INSPORTS (Institute of Sports) Head 46000 | Programme 268 — Sports Development

INSPORTS is the government agency responsible for developing sporting talent and managing sports development across Jamaica. In practice the agency is significantly child- and youth-facing: its community and parish-level programmes engage school-age children across the island, and Sub-Programme 20 (Sporting Talent Cultivation and Excellence) has a strong practical orientation toward young people. Notwithstanding this practical orientation, INSPORTS carries an explicit mandate to develop sporting talent and engage Jamaicans of all ages, and its programmes are not age-restricted. No breakdown of beneficiaries or expenditure by age group is available in the Estimates of Expenditure or in publicly available programme documentation. Sub-Programme 20 was considered as a potential basis for estimating the child-specific share of INSPORTS spending, but the sub-programme title does not restrict the beneficiary population to children, and attributing it in its entirety to child-focused expenditure would rest on an assumption that is not documentable from published sources. The allocation has been excluded from the main expenditure analysis in its entirety.

INSPORTS represents one of several youth-facing institutions in Jamaica whose child-specific expenditure is structurally invisible in the public budget because the agency's mandate is not age-restricted and its budget is not age-disaggregated. A beneficiary age breakdown from INSPORTS would provide the basis for a defensible apportionment in any future iteration of this analysis. At J\$792,178,000 in 2021/22, and given the agency's known orientation toward youth sport, this is likely a material exclusion.



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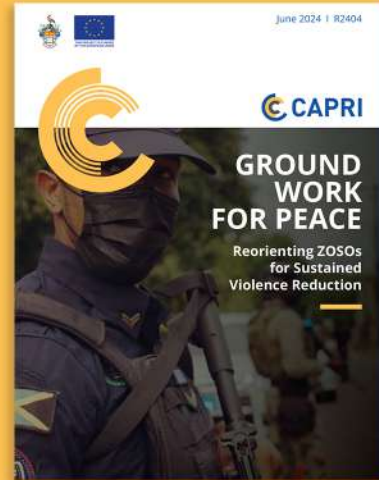
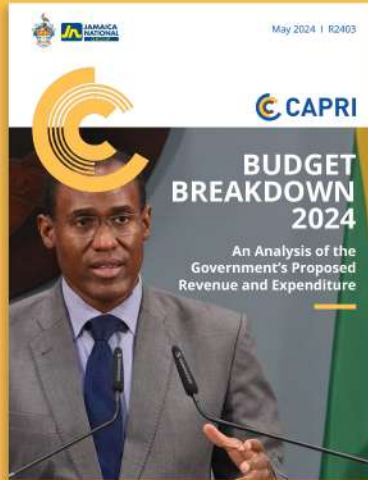
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