

Mental Health in Urban Jamaica: Road to SDG3 & SDG11

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the global roadmap for human, environmental, technological and systems development aimed at delivering maximum positive impact on human living conditions and quality of life. Goal #3 purports to “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” ⁽ⁱ⁾, while Goal # 11 aims to “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.

Research has shown the negative mental health consequences of urbanization, with the Covid-19 pandemic bringing mental health issues into sharper focus globally. Latin America and the Caribbean have faced significant growth in urban population, projected to exceed 80% by 2050 ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾. Relevant to this rise in the urban footprint are the associated challenges of urban sprawl, inadequate planning systems, a preponderance of unplanned squatter settlements, poor inter-agency coordination and weak enforcement. These issues are compounded by economic, environmental and social forces, including stagnant economic development, high unemployment rates; growing exposure to pollution; violence and insecurity and poor housing and inadequate social services, including health services. ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ As Small Island Developing States, many countries in the Caribbean region increasingly face significant environmental challenges from natural disasters under the persistent threat of climate change.

This paper will share reports on secondary analysis of the Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey, a national health and lifestyle survey with serial iterations conducted in Jamaica, a Small Island Developing State (SID) located in the Caribbean. With escalating rates of urbanization and the attendant mental health disorders, affecting women, men and adolescents, the Jamaican scenario mirrors the global experience. The paper will discuss the urban melting pot of stressors and the threats to the well-being and mental health of the Jamaican urban population, as well as the implications for sustainable development and the country's Vision 2030 ^(iv) development plan in which the SDGs have been integrated.

Promising approaches for the way forward at the policy and programmatic levels will be examined.

i. The SDGs in Action. Available at <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>

ii. IDB. The Experience of Latin America and the Caribbean in Urbanization. Knowledge Sharing Forum on Development Experiences: Comparative Experiences of Korea and Latin America and the Caribbean. Available at <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/The-Experience-of-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-in-Urbanization-Knowledge-Sharing-Forum-on-Development-Experiences-Comparative-Experiences-of-Korea-and-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean.pdf>

iii. Boswell T. Characteristics and Processes of Urbanization in the Caribbean. Available at <https://clagscholar.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/boswell6.pdf>

iv. Planning Institute of Jamaica. Vision 2030 Jamaica. Available at <https://www.pioj.gov.jm/policies/vision-2030-jamaica-the-national-development-plan/>