



JURIST

PROJECT

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JUDICIAL REFORM
AND INSTITUTIONAL
STRENGTHENING
(JURIST) PROJECT
IN THE CARIBBEAN
- **A SUMMARY**

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THE JURIST PROJECT

The Judicial Reform and Institutional Strengthening (JURIST) Project is a regional judicial reform initiative funded under an arrangement with the Government of Canada. The Project is being implemented on behalf of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the Conference of Heads of Judiciary of CARICOM (the Conference), by the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which was appointed by the Conference as its Regional Executing Agency (REA). The Government of Canada provided Cdn\$19.4M, while the CCJ and other regional partners will contribute Cdn\$1.4M and Cdn\$2.8M respectively.

The ultimate goal of the Project is to establish a judicial system that is more responsive to the needs of women, men, youth and the poor. To achieve this goal, the Project is working with judiciaries in the region to support their respective efforts to improve court governance and administration, including the introduction of technology to expedite the management of cases from filing to disposition. Resolving cases fairly, efficiently, and in a timely manner will improve public confidence in the justice system, foster gender equality throughout the courts, reduce backlogs and delays, and make the region more attractive to foreign and domestic investment.

THE JURIST PROJECT (cont'd)

The Project has been implemented in: Barbados, Belize, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Guyana and Jamaica, and will include other territories in the region in the next few years.

OUR APPROACH

The JURIST Project organizes regular collaborative planning meetings with Chief Justices and key stakeholders in the justice system in each participating country. Such an inclusive approach allows participants to identify their respective priorities for judicial reform. By consulting stakeholders, the JURIST Project gives voice to their concerns and needs. The initiatives that are funded as a result of this process not only respond to the priorities that are identified, but also have the support and involvement of the stakeholders. These collaborative planning meetings encourage judicial leadership, and local support and buy-in of initiatives, and will continue to be a mainstay of the JURIST Project.

During recent planning meetings, three areas were identified as priorities by each jurisdiction: Public Education and Engagement, Capacity Building and Gender Equality.

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Judiciaries are committed to developing strategies and programs to inform the public about the roles and responsibilities of the courts, the services provided, and how to access these services and programs. There is also support for judicial officers to receive the necessary training to effectively and efficiently manage court administration and case disposition. The need to integrate gender equality throughout the court administration process, including sensitization training for judicial officers is also key to judicial reform efforts throughout the region.

These priorities are incorporated into a Work Plan and budget that is approved annually by the JURIST Project Steering Committee. The results of completed initiatives are shared with other participating countries; best practices are identified; and implementing similar initiatives in other judiciaries is encouraged.

The partnerships that the Project have developed with the judiciaries, Bar Associations, Police, Directors of Public Prosecutions (DPPs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through these collaborative planning meetings remain key to the success of each initiative supported by the JURIST Project and for the overall success of JURIST as a regional judicial reform Project.

Below is a list of some completed initiatives:

- Model Guidelines for Sexual Offence Cases in the Caribbean Region
- Survivor's Rights Charter
- Four regional and one national consultation on sexual offences with judiciaries, lawyers, Ministries of Health, Social Services, police, DPPs, prisons and NGOs
- Regional training needs assessment and a training plan to address learning needs of judicial officers and court staff
- Draft gender equality protocols for magistrates and judges developed for Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Belize and Guyana
- Three gender equality and access to justice training sessions for CCJ staff
- A sexual offences baseline study in five CARICOM Member States
- Gender and judicial decision-making survey developed and administered to judicial officers in 14 CARICOM Member States

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Some current initiatives that are underway include:

- Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity Planning
- Training on court administration and adjudication that is gender responsive and customer focused
- Re-engineering of business processes in selected courts to identify delays, introduce technology to eliminate backlogs and undertake training for a more efficient administration of justice
- Supporting courts to develop tools to deliver public education programs and measure customer feedback
- Establishing a Knowledge Management System (KMS) to house all information assets of the Project, as well as those of other justice reform initiatives in the region
- Implementing delay and backlog elimination mechanisms in selected courts
- Establishing a business model for regional Information and Communications Technology (ICT) solutions with a specific focus on Case Management System)
- Establishing specialised courts

The JURIST Project has a website which is accessible at www.juristproject.org. It is one of the main communications tools used to inform a wide and varied audience about the initiatives undertaken as part of the JURIST Project and other justice reform activities in the region. The website will serve as the platform for the Knowledge Management System. A quarterly Newsletter titled *JURIST News* is also produced by the Project, and is available on the website.



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