

JN Foundation launches Social Enterprise Jamaica

THE JN Foundation has announced the launch of a new organisation, Social Enterprise Jamaica (SEJA), which will facilitate the growth of the social enterprise sector in the country.

Parris Lyew-Ayee Sr, chairman of the JN Foundation, made the announcement at the close-out ceremony of the Social Enterprise Boost Initiative (SEBI), a project of the JN Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), at the Terra Nova All-Suite Hotel in Kingston on Wednesday, December 12.

"With the ending of SEBI, along with the introduction of increased funding opportunities, financial instruments, and business services, as well as the ever-growing demand for social enterprises, there is a new gap in the market, and new windows are opening," he pointed out.

"Therefore, today, we at the JN Foundation are pleased to announce that there will be a new social enterprise supporting the sector, to be known as Social Enterprise Jamaica. This enterprise will be an independent, multi-sectorial, social one which will seek to create an environment to facilitate the growth of the social enterprise sector in Jamaica," he explained.

Lyew-Ayee said that SEJA will be a member-owned enterprise designed to be economically sustainable without relying on government, corporate or philanthropic assistance for its survival.

The JN Foundation chairman further disclosed that consultations have already begun with key stakeholders about SEJA. He said the enterprise will serve as a knowledge hub, establishment of the Buy Social trade mark; and, a social enterprise innovation hub.

STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY

He further explained that the innovation hub will be a state-of-the-art facility providing a space to facilitate host events, training sessions, meetings, and co-working and incubation.

"Social Enterprise Jamaica will focus on further developing the social enterprise ecosystem in Jamaica and seek to innovate and incubate, to create scalable, impactful businesses in the society," he explained.

Entities that are interested in becoming members of Social Enterprise of Jamaica are invited

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to get in touch with the foundation via email at: info@socialenterpriseja.com; or by telephone at 876 926-1344, ext. 5158.

Several social enterprises have welcomed the announcement of SEJA.

Randy McClaren, managing director of Bresheh, said that he hopes that SEJA will play an advocacy role for social enterprises. "I hope that it will take on as many social enterprises as possible to assist to pave the way for us as a sector to really expand and impact many persons, the planet ... profitability," he said.

Tishauna Mullings, founder of Nexx Stepp Educational Services, said she would like to see SEJA position social enterprises linked to social capital and to GDP to make an impact in Jamaica so that everyone can appreciate what social enterprise means.

Turning to the successes achieved by SEBI over the past six years, Opal Whyte, project manager of SEBI, stated that the project proved that social enterprises can be viable businesses. Through the project, they were able to generate more than J\$186 million in revenue and employed 500 persons on a part-time and full-time basis.

"The social enterprises introduced innovative products to the market, and some experienced phenomenal growth during a relatively short period. The impact of SEBI also reached more than 100 additional social organisations whose members participated in the open-network activities," she said.

