

**Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on  
North Coast Development Project - Jamaica**

Dr. Michael Witter  
Senior Lecturer  
Department of Economics,  
The University of the West Indies  
Mona, Kingston, Jamaica

**Criteria-1 Relevance**

The five (5) sub-projects are very relevant to the development needs of both the citizens of the North Coast of Jamaica and the visitors who are served by the Tourism facilities. They provide infrastructure for essential services in transport, and water supply and management, all of which are critical for development in general and particularly for that part of Jamaica. Upgrading the port at Ocho Rios was essential to the particular niche of the tourism market served by that town, and the North Coast highway improved access significantly to the other two major resort areas. The water supply project was critical in light of the growth of the visitor arrivals, and the local population to serve them, in Negril. The management of sewage and flood waters in Montego Bay improved the quality of the environment for both visitors and residents, and enhanced the protection of the environment, physical infrastructure and private property.

The sub-projects addressed important objectives of public policy for both social development and the development of the tourism industry as set out in official documents such as Medium Term Socio-economic Framework, 2004-2007, and the Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development (2000-2010).

**Criteria-2 (Impact)**

I have personal experience with the reduction of travel time between two major tourism resort towns, Montego Bay and Negril, by almost 50%. While there are other factors accounting for the obvious increase in traffic flows along this section of the North Coast highway, such as more cars, the reduction in travel time has facilitated travel from Montego Bay to Negril for short visits by both tourists and residents of Montego Bay and its environs. Competition from road travel forced a reduction in air travel services between the two towns. Without exception, the ten (10) major hoteliers I spoke to said that their guests had benefited from easier travel to and from the international airport in Montego Bay.

Similarly, there are several reasons for the growth of cruise ship visitors to Jamaica. However, it is clear that the upgraded port in Ocho Rios has benefited that town with increased visitor flows to its attractions. The larger flows of cruise ship visitors have stimulated economic activity at attractions as well as in souvenir and shopping services.

I am also personally aware of the improved supply of water in the Negril-Lucea area. Direct connections to the public water supply are much more widespread, and the hotels are able to provide adequate supplies of water to their guests without relying exclusively on their own tanks as they did traditionally.

Flooding in Montego Bay has been greatly reduced as a result of the project. I have verified this by way of interviews with senior engineers from the National Works Agency (NWA) as well as residents and business persons in that city.

National Water Commission engineers also acknowledge the improvement in the sewage management capacity as a result of the project's contribution. However, the system needs further development to be able to get the full benefits from the stabilization pond built by the project. At the same time, the demand for sewage services from the growing visitor and resident population is outstripping the capacity to supply services.