JOYEAUX COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Joyeaux is a very small rural community which sits in a tiny gorge on the bank of the Vieux-Fort River. This pristine settlement is placed 3km to the south of Belle Vue and approximately 3.5km north of Grace, in the southern district of Vieux-Fort. On a cool Caribbean day, the river which runs through the community can be seen gurgling over the smoothed boulders which make up the river bed. The forested land on its left banks provides the most picturesque view of what country living should be like, a glimpse of an imaginary paradise.

Residents believe that the name of the community may have originated from the French word 'joyeux' which means happy or merry. However, it is also worthy to note that one family name in the community is NOEL and 'Joyeux Noel' means Merry Christmas in French. Whatever the interpretation of the community's name may be, the recent passage of hurricane Tomas does not give the sense that there is anything "joyeux" or "happy" about life in that community.

Joyeaux's location makes it relatively isolated with little access to public transportation within the community. Residents must walk approximately 3km to Belle Vue for bus service if they need to get to Vieux-Fort for onwards travel to other parts of St. Lucia. The community is accessible year round via a main tarmac; however, due to swelling of the river during heavy rains, the connecting bridge to Belle Vue is usually impassible.

According to residents, Joyeaux was once a thriving community. There were a Catholic church and elementary school located within this settlement. However, the story is told that all this changed after the presiding priest turned his back on the community due to their non-Christian behavior. That included gambling, frivolity and disrespect for the church. This is said to have "cursed" the community, leading to its current state of poverty. The school, which had served as an educational institution to many of the older residents was also removed as its proximity to the river proved to be hazardous. On more than one occasion, students had been carried away by the water while playing in the river. Although no lives had been claimed, it was decided that Joyeaux was not a suitable location for a primary school. Residents held the view that the loss of these two significant institutions

contributed to the regression in the development of the community.

DEMOGRAPHY AND LIVING CONDITIONS

In 2010, the Population and Housing Census recorded 58 people and 16 households with an average of 3.62 individuals per house. A count by the President of the Joyeaux Community Development Committee dated November 11, 2010 revealed that a total of 75 people in 17 households were recorded. The majority of households in Joyeaux is extended in nature and is dominated by the Jorliffe and Joseph families. Most residents when asked whether the property on which they lived was owned by them said that it was “family-land”.

The composition of these households are merely made up of 49 adults and 26 children; 36 male and 39 female. The age distribution within Joyeaux is somewhat widespread. Residents range from as young as 8 months old to approximately 85 years of age. All members of the community members are of African descent.

Housing infrastructure in Joyeaux comprises mainly timber and concrete. Of the seventeen houses in the area, five of them are fully concrete, two are recorded as being made of a combination

of the two materials, and the remaining ten are fully wooden. It was also observed that most houses were in need of serious renovations, as they seemed to have been constructed from rotting wood and scrap material.

Both pit and flush toilets are present in Joyeaux, with latrines being more prevalent. The presence of the pit toilets leaves a permanent odour, an indication that sanitation habits are perhaps inadequate and improper. The community is plagued with mosquitoes which can be attributed to improper collection and storage of water by a number of residents.

There is a good enough road network connecting Joyeaux to its neighbouring communities. It includes no secondary roads, and the only road is that which comes from Belle Vue and exits to Grace. This proves to be disadvantageous during heavy rainfall as the river usually overflows its banks and renders the connecting bridge to Belle Vue, impassable. Even with its relatively good accessibility, obtaining public transport from the area is a hassle.

Residents usually have to await rides from vehicular passersby, or walk at least three kilometers to Grace or Belle Vue for transportation. For most residents, the fact that a public bus will

drive to Joyeaux at times when asked is a great achievement. Similar stories are told by both the young and the old about drivers' refusal to drive through the rocky road conditions. No number of grocery bags, babies or infirmities could sometimes sway a public bus driver to drop residents to their home. The lack of secondary roads proves to be disadvantageous during heavy rainfall as the river usually overflows its banks and renders the connecting bridge to Belle Vue, impassable.

Interestingly enough, it was discovered that an estimated 200-step flight of stairs at the center of the community, connects it directly to Grace. Although sometimes tiresome, this is the quicker option as opposed to walking the road. This transportation problem, according to residents, is the most frustrating issue that the community is faced with.

The bridge which was constructed in 1952 according to the residents can only accommodate one vehicle at a time and barely a pedestrian. The road which forms a semi – circle around the community is made up of a mixture of clay and loam and since hurricane Tomas, boulders and trees provide an obstacle track for drivers. These poor access conditions are bemoaned by both residents of Joyeaux and persons traversing through the

community, yet, many of the residents are thankful for it because they believe that it is a great improvement from what used to be. Residents are of the opinion that until the bridge is renovated or reconstructed that their community will remain underdeveloped because the river, when full, washes away everything in its path as was evident during Hurricane Tomas.

Currently, all houses in Joyeaux have pipe-borne water but the river is still widely used. All but approximately two houses have electricity and obtain light from the use of candles. The main cooking fuel used in Joyeaux is gasoline; however people still use coals and kerosene with a coal pot.

Everyone in Joyeaux owns his or her house which is built on family land. Despite their availability in the neigbouring communities of Belle Vue and Grace, cable television and internet are still unobtainable in Joyeaux. Only one or two houses have landline telephones installed, but communication is possible through mobile telephones. This is unreliable and problematic since, given Joyeaux's location in the valley between the elevated communities of Belle Vue and Grace, mobile telephone signals tend to be very weak and inconsistent.

The community has regular scheduled garbage collection. Twice weekly, Tuesdays and Fridays, the garbage truck passes and clears all rubbish. As a result, collectively, there is not an issue of pollution in Joyeaux. Nevertheless, there is the occasional exception where persons do not properly guard their garbage between collection days. The usage of inappropriate receptacles for the collection of garbage is common. This practice poses health hazards to households as the exposure to flies and rodents which subsequently roam on drying dishes and food preparation surfaces.

Community life revolves around the Joyeaux River. Residents use the river for washing clothes, dishes, bathing and also drinking. A recent Environmental Health Assessment revealed that two houses have septic tanks 30 feet from the river and that the effluent from these septic tanks is a potential source of pollution. Despite the access to pipe borne water on most premises, residents still used the river. The cost of paying for water seemed to be a major factor in not using the pipe borne water. The health assessment conducted in October, 2010 further revealed that the residents believed that the river is pathogen free. It is also perceived that washing in the river makes the clothes cleaner and

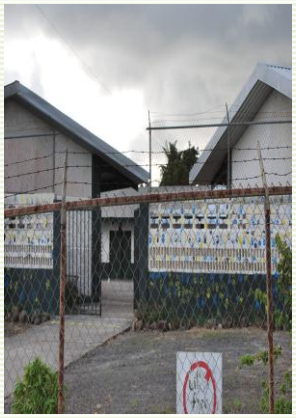
free from detergent. The study also revealed the belief that river water causes them to be relaxed and to feel clean.

The Environmental Health Assessment recommended that "preventing residents from making contact with the river is critical." The proposal of water storage tanks and a laundry facility has been made in order to deter the many practices which take place in the river. Residents confess that after *Hurricane Tomas* they had been left without pipe borne water for 5 weeks. They believed that they had no alternative to the brown flowing water as no water trucks came through the community and they could not afford to purchase purified water. In the community fabric of Joyeaux, the river is a constant reminder of survival yet a somber reminder of tragedy since lives have been lost through drowning.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Joyeaux has no community facilities. For example, there is no building to host a community meeting. Meetings are held in the neighboring community of Belle Vue. Primary school education is accessed in the neighbouring community of Belle Vue and Grace primary schools, while secondary school education is accessed at Vieux-Fort or in the surrounding districts.

Health services are provided at the Belle Vue Health Centre or the Vieux-Fort Health Centre. The community health aide located at the Belle Vue Health Centre makes routine visits to the community and nurse visits if the need arises. All other services must be sourced in neighbouring communities or in the main town of Vieux-Fort.



ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND LIVELIHOOD

Community members largely depend on agriculture for their livelihood. An elderly resident shared her experience by stating that some decades ago, the people of Joyeaux rented government land outside of the community for farming purposes. This was the main source of income for a lot of the residents. Without any warning, the annual rental cost of the plots was increased from $10/acre to $100/acre. This was too great an adjustment for a lot of the farmers and many had to give up their plots as a result.

A female resident who was also a farmer mentioned that through the introduction of the higher rental fee, she was able to hold on to her plot for a few months. Owning more than one plot, she was unable to keep up with her payments and as those before her, she surrendered her farm. These circumstances coupled with

declining banana production, have added to the enduring poverty in the community.

Banana cultivation was once a thriving practice in Joyeaux. Although still present on a small scale since after *Tropical Storm Debbie* in 1994 and with the downturn in the industry, banana farmers have been hard hit with low production levels and have difficulty paying debts including payment for rental of holdings. Many of the plots of land under cultivation are not owned by the residents. Some persons are employed by others outside the community while some plant on family land. Others do not own the land and have no connection to the owners but use the land anyway since the owners do not live near the community. Land tenure is quite complicated in Joyeaux. The surrounding lands, according to residents are owned by the Valmont Family. They expressed their frustrations with the aforementioned family because of their refusal to rent or sell the land. Residents feel that this refusal by the Valmont's severely hinders any development for them and their families because of their inability to grow the amount of produce that they would like to.

Apart from bananas, residents are involved in subsistence farming and growing vegetables and other crops which the women sell at

the Vieux Fort market on Saturdays. The majority of the residents are employed outside of Joyeaux; a few of the men are engaged in the construction industry, and women in the service industry.

Since there are no employment opportunities, except for agriculture, youth in the community must leave in search of jobs elsewhere in and outside the country. The remittances from these migrants provide income to their families in order to improve their standard of living. Informal income generating activity is very prevalent in Joyeaux especially among the young people who are both unemployed and those attending school. Income generating activities in Joyeaux are welcomed as unemployment proves to be a serious problem in the community. On any particular day, people can be seen sitting in balconies or in the river doing household chores because of the lack of skill coupled with very few employment opportunities. The young guys sometimes wash vehicles in the river to earn money after school and on a weekend.

There is a *"little shop"* in the community which provides soft drinks and a few household items to the residents. However, there is not a significant range of products but credit is available to

persons with good payment practices. Joyeaux's lush green vegetation has the potential to capitalize on the tourism industry by emerging as an eco-tourist destination. It is envisioned in the near future that the economy of this unique community be aptly diversified to benefit from a number of industries.

Apart from the evident issue of poverty, a few other social issues were identified within the community. Joyeaux has a low crime rate but there was evidence of the use of marijuana and excessive consumption of alcohol by the young men. Challenges facing adolescents and teenagers include issues of teenage pregnancy and juvenile delinquency.

Despite these distresses, the residents of Joyeaux are very welcoming and cooperative. The residents live somewhat peacefully with each other as can be seen from the children walking from the nearby school in Belle Vue to the north and Grace in the south. The engaging nature of most residents and the passion for which they speak with about their community is a clear indication that their spirits are not broken despite the ill fortunes of the socio-economic situations.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The Joyeaux Development Committee recently established by SSDF is the only active organization in the community. This Development Committee forms part of the Vieux Fort North District Council. There was once a Mothers and Fathers group, but it dissolved a few years ago. There are no youth clubs within the community itself, and to be part of such, the young people most likely would have to go to the neighbouring communities.

COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS

The St. Lucia Social Development Fund (SSDF) has embarked on the community-based project of organizing a proper recreational area and constructing a community resource center. The initiative began with a “Gwan Koudmein”, which was organized by residents of Joyeaux, to create a play area for the many young children in the community. During the exercise, two almond trees were planted and secured by stones in their respective circles. The occasion saw past residents coming to help with cooking, planting of trees, carrying and arranging of stones to the entrance of the river and other cleaning and clearing up of waste material around the community. The two day activity was welcomed by residents and was very successful. Unfortunately, hurricane Tomas battered Joyeaux with two days of torrential rain and succeeded in washing

SSDF
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away the plants, trees and stones which residents had worked very hard at. Despite the loss, the residents are hopeful that Joyeaux can be one of the more developed communities in St. Lucia. The community had benefitted from a few projects from the then Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) including the construction of a footpath and obtaining pipe borne water in the community.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

1. Rebuilding of the bridge
2. Construction of Bus Shelter
3. Construction of Flood Mitigation Wall
4. The road from bridge to bridge
5. Establishment of a Human Resource Development Centre
6. A playing field
7. Communications (Phone Booth, Cable etc)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

The Joyeaux Development Committee is the elected body which will carry out this plan. It is made up of six residents who are committed to fulfilling the collective aspirations and expectations of this untouched community.