

COURSE: Current Event Analysis and Opinion - Public health concerns in your community

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Title: Basic Necessities Still Out of Reach: The Water and Garbage Crisis in Fort George Community

Access to clean water and proper waste management are among the most basic services that every community should enjoy in the twenty-first century. Across Jamaica, many communities have benefited from infrastructure improvement, yet there are still places where residents continue to struggle with conditions that should have been resolved years ago. One such community is Fort George, where many residents continue to live without a piped water system and without regular garbage collection.

The absence of these essential services is a serious issue socially, healthwise, environmentally, and economically. In a time when governments around the world are emphasizing sustainable development and improved quality of life, the continued neglect of communities like Fort George raises important questions about equity, development, and responsible governance.

The lack of a piped water system means that many of the residents of Fort George community rely on alternative sources such as rainwater harvesting (myself), water trucks(sometimes for me), springs, or transporting water from neighbouring communities. These methods are sometimes unreliable, especially during periods of drought or dry weather that is currently being experienced. Families are forced to store water in drums and containers, increasing the risk of contamination and mosquito breeding if the containers are not properly covered.

Water is essential for drinking, cooking, bathing, washing clothes, cleaning homes, and maintaining proper sanitation. Without consistent access to safe water, families face unnecessary hardships every day. Children have difficulty preparing for school, elderly residents struggle to carry water, and households often spend additional money purchasing water that should be available through the National Water Commission (NWC) and or Rural Water Supply.

The absence of regular garbage collection creates another significant challenge for the other residents and me. Without an organized waste disposal system, residents are forced to burn garbage, bury it, or dispose of it in gullies and other open spaces. These practices contribute to environmental pollution and increase the likelihood of blocked drains, unpleasant odours, and the spread of diseases.

Improper garbage disposal also attracts rats, flies, stray animals (dogs, rats, mongoose, cats, roaches, ants, and mosquitoes, all of which can carry diseases that threaten public health. During periods of heavy rainfall, improperly discarded waste washes into waterways, which can cause blockage, thus increasing the risk of flooding within the community.

These challenges affect more than just the physical environment. They influence the overall quality of life, discourage investment, reduce property values, and create the impression that rural communities are less important than urban areas.

Furthermore, the lack of these basic services can negatively affect education and economic productivity. Students may miss school because household responsibilities require them to help carry water, while adults may lose valuable working hours transporting water or managing waste. Businesses may also be discouraged from operating in areas where basic infrastructure is inadequate or unavailable.

The situation in Fort George highlights the continuing gap between national development goals and the everyday experiences of some Jamaican communities.

In my opinion, the continued absence of piped water and garbage collection in Fort George is unacceptable in today's society. Every Jamaican citizen deserves equal access to safe water and proper sanitation regardless of where they live.

Water is not a luxury; it is a basic human necessity. Without reliable access to clean water, it becomes extremely difficult for families to maintain good health, hygiene, and dignity. Likewise, effective waste management is essential for protecting both public health and the environment.

I believe that the Local government and relevant public agencies such as North East Parks and Market (NEPM) Waste Management System, which is the system that operates under the National Solid Waste Authority (NSWMA) in Jamaica, should work together to prioritize infrastructure improvements in underserved communities such as Fort George. Development should not be limited to towns and cities while rural communities continue to experience conditions that limit their growth and well-being.

At the same time, community members also have an important role to play. For example, we could organize community clean-up activities, educate each another about proper waste disposal, participate in environmental conservation projects, and advocate respectfully for improved services through community meetings and communication with the Councillor and Member of Parliament. Notwithstanding the work they have been doing but pressure has to be added for these elected representatives to see the urgency of the matter.

Community organizations such as schools, churches, and youth groups can also become partners in promoting environmental responsibility while continuing to lobby for permanent solutions.

The issue should not become a political debate but rather a national priority focused on improving people's lives.

Hence, I will make the following recommendations:

Several practical steps can help improve conditions in Fort George:

1. The installation of a reliable piped water distribution system to provide safe and consistent access to potable water (It will be costly but the plan can be put in place for future implementation).
2. The introduction of a scheduled garbage collection service covering every section of the community.
3. Greater collaboration between government agencies, local authorities, and community leaders to address infrastructure needs.
4. Public education programmes promoting proper waste disposal, recycling, and environmental conservation.
5. Community clean-up initiatives supported by local organizations, schools, and volunteers.
6. Increased investment in rural infrastructure to ensure that all Jamaicans benefit equally from national development.

The situation in Fort George serves as an important reminder that development should be measured not only by economic growth but also by the quality of life experienced by ordinary citizens. In an era of technological advancement and national progress, no community should still be struggling without reliable access to clean water or proper garbage collection.

Addressing these challenges would improve public health, protect the environment, enhance educational opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and restore confidence among residents. It would also demonstrate a commitment to fairness and inclusive national development.

Every citizen deserves the opportunity to live in a clean, healthy, and dignified environment. It is therefore essential that immediate attention be given to resolving the longstanding issues affecting Fort George so that future generations can enjoy the basic services that every community should have.



