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Erika Harding

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## **Jamaica: Women's Organizations Develop Policy Agenda For Legislators**

*by Erika Harding*

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On April 10-12, over 2,000 women attended a conference to create a policy agenda for legislators. Carol Narcisse, a representative of the Association of Women's Organizations of Jamaica (AWOJA), said the event was the third such conference since 1939, and the resulting agenda had changed very little in the past 53 years. She added that women's main problems now and in 1939 are unemployment, housing and social services. According to AWOJA coordinator Claney Barnett, unemployment among young women is about twice as high as for men. About 70% of women between 14 to 19 years of age are unemployed, compared to 33% of men in the same age group. An estimated 60% of Jamaican households are headed by women. The unemployment rate among female heads of household is 20%. Barnett said, "Housing is a basic cornerstone of development and because of their already marginalized social position, women are suffering more in the housing shortage." According to official statistics, in order to begin to address the housing shortage in Jamaica, 15,000 new homes and repairs to 9,700 are required every year. (Source: Inter Press Service, 04/17/92)

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