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Jamaica Gains Big in Business Process Outsourcing

More than cruise ships are pulling up to the Jamaica's shores and the potential of this new arrival could create more wealth for the country than Tourism. Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is the fastest growing sector and a reported US\$400 million in revenue was earned in 2015 [1].

Jamaica has been attracting BPO operations since the late 1990's but in 2011, the government made a call to establish an association to represent the industry under a unified brand. The following year a group of BPO operators answered that call and the Business Processing Industry Association of Jamaica (BPIAJ) was launched. The growth of the BPO industry since then, has been nothing short of remarkable.

Emerging as the successful project out of over 20 other contenders in 2014, the BPIAJ cluster was granted USD\$500,000 in technical assistance from Compete Caribbean. This assistance focused on strengthening the cluster to a position where it could supply near shore markets with viable and competitive BPO services.

The first module delivered a 200-seat incubator that enhanced the revenue generating capacity for the Association. The incubator has transitioned three companies to date and continues to enable the cluster to deliver more valuable and profitable services. Signaling sustainability of operations beyond the end of the project, the incubator has influenced the development of other similar incubators in Jamaica.

The second project component sought to institute a world class quality management system. Three of the cluster firms benefited from technical assistance that provided roadmaps for building their operations against global standards which will enable the cluster to bid more competitively for business.

Compete Caribbean was also instrumental in taking the product to the global market. After the conclusion of the project, the cluster:

[1] Extracted from the *Jamaica Gleaner*, Feb 12, 2017 edition.

- Gained access to 4 new export markets thereby increasing its reach from 3 to 7 markets;
- Increased the number of products sold from 1 to 5;
- Created 4500 jobs with 80% of employees being female;
- Moved up the value chain from provision of general business process outsourcing services to finance and accounting outsourcing, human resource outsourcing and IT outsourcing;
- Increased the number of firms operating by 10.

The global market for BPO is projected to reach USD\$262.2 Billion by 2022 and Jamaica is well on track to retain a sizable portion of the market share. Support for this clustering initiative was advanced through the Program's Enterprise Innovation Challenge Fund.