

“Forced Ripe!”

How Youth of Three Selected Working-class Communities in Jamaica Assess their Identity, Support, and Authority Systems, including their Relationship with the Police

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Abstract

This report presents the findings of a participatory ethnographic evaluation and research (PEER) study carried out among youth in three selected working-class communities in Jamaica. Participants were aged between 15 and 29. Specifically, the study examines how the relationship between agency and opportunity structure is played out in the three communities and underpins service provider-user relations between young people and the police.

The working hypothesis of the research was that everyday dysfunctional social relations between service providers and users, or between government officials and citizens, are symptomatic of deeper, embedded sociocultural institutional norms that reflect inequalities in power. These deep social structures perpetuate and are in turn reinforced by everyday interactions and negotiations around service delivery and policy implementation.

The study revealed that very few adults in the three communities provide young people with any kind of support, whether out of sheer duty or respect for their right to a healthy life. Young people perceived almost all support provided by

adults as a form of barter. Many decide that they are better off without adult economic and emotional support, go out on their own prematurely and are thus “forced ripe.”

Youth in all three communities viewed the police as the institution that has failed them most. Very few males could identify situations in which they felt protected by the police. Instead, they spoke of a war between the police and youth. Female respondents expressed sympathy for the plight of their male counterparts. They acknowledged that they were more likely to be protected by the police, but fervently wished that policemen would stop sexually harassing them.

The study concludes that improving youth-police relations requires policies that tackle deeper structural social norms. It recommends in particular that more interventions target young men, assisting them to stay in school and access welfare support, second-chance education programs, and livelihood training. It also suggests demanding transparency and accountability of the police.

This paper—a product of the Poverty Reduction Group, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network of the World Bank—is part of a larger effort in the network to conceptualize, operationalize, and measure empowerment. Copies of the paper are available free of charge from the World Bank, 1818 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20433. Policy Research Working Papers are also posted on the Web at: <http://econ.worldbank.org/research>. The manager of the study may also be contacted at ndudwick@worldbank.org.

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Acronyms

CBO	community-based organization
CSC	Citizen Score Card
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HEART	Human Employment and Resource Training, Jamaica
JASPEV	Jamaica Social Policy Evaluation Unit, Jamaica Cabinet Office
JSIF	Jamaica Social Investment Fund
MOEY	Ministry of Education and Youth, Jamaica
NCYD	National Centre for Youth Development, Jamaica
NYP	National Youth Policy
NGO	nongovernmental organization
PATH	Programme for Advancement through Health and Education, Jamaica
PEER	peer ethnographic evaluation and research
PER	peer researcher
PIOJ	Planning Institute of Jamaica
PLA	participatory learning and action
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SDC	Social Development Commission, Jamaica
STATIN	Statistical Institute of Jamaica
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
UWI	University of the West Indies
YOU	Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Jamaica
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development

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Introduction

The focus of this research paper is on young people in Jamaica—described here as “forced ripe”—and their relationship with the institutions and services on which they depend. In Jamaica the term “forced ripe” or *fouce ripe* (Creole) is used most commonly to describe fruits, especially mangoes, that have been over-exposed to sunlight but lack nutritional content and taste. Forced ripe fruits are deficient: they are poor tasting and therefore easily discarded. When viewed from the ground, a forced ripe mango may seem appealing, but is a disappointment when plucked from the branches.

Many adults use the metaphor *fouce ripe* to describe youth, but do so without fully assessing its implications. In other words, many adults make an assumption of agency, suggesting that young people are largely responsible for their development or graduation into adulthood and therefore to blame for the problems or challenges associated with their decisions. This position of adults seems to ignore the fact that young people in Jamaica depend on several social services and institutions to develop, or at least, to survive. Many adults ignore the social structures of Jamaican society and the lack of opportunities and various forms of abuse that youth endure, and which force them to become adults prematurely. The social institutions on which working-class youth depend must provide far more nurture and protection if young people are to become “properly ripe fruit,” that is, if they are to become young adults who can make a positive contribution to themselves, their families, their communities, and Jamaican society.

This report is divided into four sections. This introduction sets out the background and policy context of the study. Chapter 1 addresses the research methodology. It outlines the objectives of the study, explains the selection of the three communities, and discusses the peer ethnographic evaluation and research (PEER) method and how it was employed. Chapter 2 presents the core of the study and its findings. The conclusion makes suggestions for strengthening agency and transforming social institutions in Jamaica in ways that would empower young people, especially those of the working class.

Policy context of this report

The policy context of this report was the monitoring and evaluation process of the Social Policy Framework of the Government of Jamaica.¹ The JASPEV project is part of the government's Public Sector Reform Programme, which is led by the Cabinet Office. A primary aim of JASPEV is to improve social policy design and delivery. A great deal of research has been done on poverty in Jamaica, which has varied in analytical focus, but includes work on youth poverty and social exclusion.² Different threads of public policy have to date tackled youth poverty and social exclusion, as well as youth development and reproductive health (see annex 2). Nonetheless, youth poverty remains endemic in inner-city communities in Jamaica, where physical and social infrastructure is in a bad state.³

The situation for youth in some isolated rural communities is almost as bad. Part of the problem for rural youth is that urban centers remain the focus of development policies. Consequently the vast majority of people living below the national poverty line reside in rural communities.⁴ There has also been growing concern in the literature about male poverty and social exclusion. Some scholars have suggested that the opportunity structure of female youth is now more robust than that of male youth; they have accordingly appealed for a greater balance in the provision of services to all youth.⁵ Finally, youth-police relations have become the topic of a central policy discussion in Jamaica⁶ and, not surprisingly, represent an important part of this research. (See annex 2 for a fuller discussion of the literature.)

¹ See annex 1 for the government's social policy goals.

² See Fox and Gordon-Strachan (2007); Robotham (2006); Samms-Vaughn (2006); Government of Jamaica (2005); Gayle et al, (2004); ILO/Children First (2001); Blank (2000); and Crawford-Brown (1999).

³ See Gayle et al (2004); Chevannes and Gayle (1998); and Levy (1996).

⁴ See Government of Jamaica (2005) and Gordon (1989).

⁵ See Gayle et al (2004); Gayle (2002, 2001, 1996); Anderson (2001); Chevannes (2001); Evans (1999); Brown and Chevannes (1998); Bailey et al. (1996); and Michelmores and Clarke (1993).

⁶ See Kerr-Brown, Gregory, and Brown (2004); and Harriott (2000).

Chapter 1. Methodology

The World Bank has undertaken a four-country project (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Jamaica) to develop and pilot diagnostic tools that measure and analyze how specific country programs have impacted empowerment. These tools go beyond simply looking at access to services and/or satisfaction levels to measuring changes in the capacity of citizens to effectively demand service improvements, as well as the capacity of service providers to actually provide these services, using process indicators that measure changes in people's behavior.

The present research initiative did not seek to provide a single "one-size-fits-all" diagnostic tool or set of indicators. Rather, based on the experience and process of developing and piloting tools, the aim was to produce a practical approach to operationalize "empowerment" in the monitoring and evaluation of specific programs and/or social policies, and to synthesize the experience to help design and evaluate **future** such programs and policies.

The objective of this ethnographic study is to provide more in-depth social and policy analysis of the structural causes of poorly functioning local institutions and their impact on the poverty of young people in Jamaica. Research for the paper was one aspect of a JASPEV community-based policy monitoring exercise on youth inclusion. Through consultations with youth in 46 communities across Jamaica, JASPEV has been testing new ways to address three main policy areas that affect youth: entrepreneurship, continuing education, and youth-police relations. The latter component involved youth and adult community members in a policy monitoring process that used a Community Score Card⁷ to rate the police as a service provider. The ethnographic aspect of the research was designed to complement this larger, community-based longitudinal monitoring and evaluation process. The three communities selected for the ethnographic research were therefore a sub-sample of the communities participating in the larger policy monitoring project.

⁷ See annex 2.

The working hypothesis of the ethnographic research was that everyday dysfunctional social relations between service providers and users or between government officials and citizens are symptomatic of deeper, embedded sociocultural institutional norms that reflect inequalities in power. These deep social structures perpetuate and are in turn reinforced by everyday interactions and negotiations around service delivery and policy implementation. The result is that improvements in social policy outcomes are hard to achieve and sustain without policy interventions that attempt to tackle deeper structural norms. Empowerment and social change require a level of transformation in critical consciousness that challenges habitual interaction and decision making.⁸ Social policy will need to respond to this challenge by building individual and group capabilities and by finding ways to influence and change the formal and informal institutional structures that govern people's behavior and thus, the success or failure of the choices that they make.⁹

World Bank empowerment framework

The World Bank uses a conceptual framework of empowerment that moves away from treating people primarily as beneficiaries towards viewing them as agents capable of effecting institutional change.¹⁰ The degree to which capacity is increased, that is, to which people are empowered, depends on two sets of interrelated factors: their asset base ("agency") and the institutional context ("opportunity structure") in which they exist. Assets are taken to include not just physical, material, and financial resources, but also skills, information, education, organizational capacity, and psychological resources (e.g., self-confidence and self-perception or self-esteem). The institutional context or opportunity structure refers to the existence and operation of formal and informal rules (including laws, regulations, norms, and customs) that determine whether individuals have access to different assets and can use those assets to achieve desired outcomes. It is important to remember that agency (the ability to make purposeful choices) is only half

⁸ See Bourdieu (1977).

⁹ See Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland (2006).

¹⁰ "Empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (Overview, World Bank Empowerment Web page, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTEMPowerment/0,,contentMDK:20272299~menuPK:546167~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:486411,00.html> [accessed December 2008]).

of the empowerment equation. Even if youth have the capacity to choose more beneficial options, they be unable to use those options effectively when constrained by their opportunity structure. In other words, agency cannot be transformed into action without the support of an opportunity structure.¹¹

Score card instrument

The ground-breaking score card methodology piloted by JASPEV used focus groups to rate different aspects (i.e., indicators) of the relationship between the police and youth on a scale of 1 to 10. The indicators, which highlight the mutual distrust and suspicion between policemen and young people, were: trust, courtesy and respect, fairness, responsiveness, and interaction with youth.

Ideally the scores produced by these focus groups were later validated by community forums. Community interface meetings subsequently followed. These meetings, facilitated by the Dispute Resolution Foundation of Jamaica, were labeled “Mek We Reason” and involved dialogue and role-switching exercises between the police and youth, with the intention of having both parties commit to mending the broken bridges between them. Score card activities thus kick-started a process of reflection, relation, and action intended to begin a transformation of institutions and processes at the social service delivery end of social policy.

Participatory ethnographic evaluation research (PEER)

Findings from the score card activities provided the starting point for more in-depth ethnographic research with young people in three working-class communities. PEER is a participatory research method new to social scientists in Jamaica.¹² It was piloted in the country both to widen the knowledge and practice of different participatory research methods in the public sector and to try a method especially suited to dealing with sensitive, deep-seated issues. Participatory research methods have been used for several decades in Jamaica. The most popular research on this subject published to date is a study of poverty, youth, and violence undertaken by the Department of Sociology, Psychology, and Social Work at the University of the West Indies (UWI), in partnership with the

¹¹ See Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland (2006).

¹² For more information on the method, visit the Web site of PEER, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.options.co.uk/te-peer-unit.htm> (accessed December 2008).

World Bank in 1995.¹³ More recently a social assessment research method has begun to be utilized in the country, not only by academia and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but also by the public sector. The Ministry of Education and Youth, supported by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), led this research with a pioneering study on the school cost-sharing system. In the last few years the UWI has undertaken its own social assessment research and has been teaching both PLA and social assessment as part of its course offerings.

PEER has been used successfully to conduct impact assessments within a range of project and program contexts. As the name implies, the method involves using researchers who are peers of the participants in the research:

The most important issue in selecting the [peer researchers] is that they are members of the community and of the target group. The assumption is that [they] will already have an established relationship of trust with the people they select to interview. The peer researchers must have a basic level of literacy in order to be able to record key words and phrases in data collection. (Hawkins and Price 2007).

PEER methodology can be described as a successful combination of ethnography and participatory learning and action (PLA). It benefits from the advantages of ethnographic research, especially in-depth understanding of social phenomena achieved through one-on-one interviews instead of group sessions. It also benefits from the key advantages of PLA, such as speedy, inexpensive data collection and giving voice to poor, socially excluded people. PEER is also quicker and less expensive to implement than traditional anthropological methods without losing too much of the thick description associated with ethnography. It is as participatory and quick as PLA, but produces more than “surface” data.

The main methodological disadvantages of PEER are related to the ability of individual peer researchers, but this is common among all qualitative methods, in which the researcher with better social skills collects the better-quality data. It is also important to note that some data can get lost in the process because local consultants meet with the peer researchers once a week to collect their data and field notes. Depending on the

¹³ See Levy (1996) and Moser and Holland (1997).

quality of the notes and the cognitive state of the peer researcher, varying degrees of information can miss being recorded.

The ethnographic research drilled down beneath traditional interactions and discourses to examine the following research questions:

- How do young people understand and interpret the power relations that underpin their everyday lives?
- How do social norms affect young people's everyday interactions within their communities and with people from outside their communities?
- In what ways do power relations impact their perceived choices and actions, as well as their poverty?
- What are the obstacles to challenging and transforming these deep-rooted social institutions?
- What are the policy implications for empowering young people in these communities?

Selection of three working-class communities

As noted earlier, the ethnographic research was conducted in a sub-sample of the communities selected for the JAPSEV community-based policy monitoring project, allowing for methodological continuity with the larger study. Three communities were purposively selected to gather comparative data regarding youth relations with and support from community institutions: two were located in the inner city of the Kingston Metropolitan Region, and the third, in a farming community located in the Blue Mountains.

Harasson Gardens is the pseudonym for an inner-city community known for its high homicide rate and poor community-police relations. Information from the 2001 national census and the SDC suggested that the population has fluctuated around the level of 11,000 residents for the past two decades. The area has several community-based organizations (CBOs); however, their operations are often restricted by gang wars. Harasson Gardens is located in one of the most violent police districts in Jamaica. The area has a history of numerous small, drug-related and political gangs that constantly fight for turf. In the most violent years, homicide rates have exceeded 200 per 100,000 residents in some communities. Roughly 80 percent of all homicides in this police district

are said to result from gang wars. “Harasson” is derived from “harassment,” which amply describes residents’ perception of police strategy over several decades. Consequently, the community has a reputation for the graphic murder of police officers. Not surprisingly, youth in Harasson Gardens rates the various indicators of youth-police relations on the score cards as poor (3–4) and very poor (1–2) on a rating scale of 1 through 10.

Poyuton Terrace contrasts with Harasson Gardens; its selection was guided by the need to capture diversity among Jamaican inner-city communities. Poyuton is a pseudonym for a relatively peaceful inner-city community with an active police youth club. Score card activities there rated youth-police relations as ranging from fairly good (5–6) to excellent (9–10). The community is located in a police district that witnesses half the homicides witnessed in Harasson. There are fewer gang wars and a greater sense of social order. According to the 2001 national census, Poyuton Terrace has a population of about 4,000. Information from the SDC suggests that CBOs in the community are active.

Coolblue Gap is located in the parish of St. Thomas in the cool foothills of the central spine of the Blue Mountains, Jamaica’s largest mountain range. The very small community is located about 40 miles from Kingston and has a population of just over 500. Everyone is known to everyone in rich detail. There is a single youth club through which most youth make a contribution to the life of the community. Coolblue was selected because of the importance of rural development, which has to be driven by youth. Coolblue is particularly interesting because despite extremely low levels of crime, score card ratings in the community revealed problems in youth-police relations.

There is very little information available on Coolblue apart from that provided by the SDC and confirmed by the PEER research, which is that Coolblue is a working-class farming community where most adults own the land that they farm. Most landholdings are less than an acre and are “family lands,” meaning they are passed down through generations. Most youth (i.e., young people below the age of 30) do not own property; they either farm that of members of their extended family or work on larger farms as laborers. Like most farming communities, there are more men than women in Coolblue Gap, and it is estimated by the SDC that half the men are illiterate.

Study implementation

This study is ground breaking because it represents the first time that PEER has been tested both in Jamaica *and* in a policy rather than program or project context. Both local consultants and the peer researchers were trained by an international consultant, Dr. Kirstan Hawkins of the University of Wales, Swansea. Local consultants were trained first, over the course of two days. With the guidance of the international consultant, they then trained the peer researchers over a period of four days. The first three days involved training in data collection techniques within the framework of PEER, as well as discussion of the key issues and the construction of themes and sub-themes by the researchers, both of which were facilitated by the training team.

The peer researchers were allowed three days to field test the methodology and interview questions. They then returned for one day to refine the questions tool by adjusting the themes and sub-themes to suit the context of their communities. It is part of PEER methodology to have the peer researchers themselves develop the detailed research questions and prompts for individual interviews in the language most appropriate to them. Interview data gathered by the researchers was collected by the research supervisors on a weekly basis. At the end of the data collection period, the peer researchers came together to share what they learned. The supervisors also shared what they learned and the researchers helped them clarify aspects of their notes or interpretations of data that did not represent the reality of the communities studied.

The study was conducted between January and April 2007. Eighteen young people between the ages of 16 and 30 were recruited as peer researchers to collect data from young people of similar ages. Selected with the assistance of the Social Development Commission of Jamaica, the researchers consisted of 9 males and 9 females to ensure balance in gender and perspective. Each peer researcher was expected to interview four of their peers in three separate interviews, for a total of 216 interviews with 72 respondents. The project met 90 percent of this target, or 194 interviews. The peer researchers decided that each should interview two males and two females, rather than have male researchers interview male respondents and females interview females. They were convinced that this approach would yield better-quality data. They also claimed that they would learn more from this approach, as they already understood much of the

gender situation of youth; they also thought that it would be less boring. Interviewees consisted of the neighbors, best friends (or “bredrin” and “sistrin”), and even relatives (although not of the same household) of the peer researchers.

The method was perfectly suited to Jamaican culture, especially the inner city, in that the peer researchers were trained to use the third person throughout the interviews as part of the methodology. In the training sessions, they decided to brand the error of using the first person or respondents’ names as “informer language.” Male researchers were happy to use language to show their peers in the community that the research was “not an informer ting.”¹⁴ The third-person interviewing approach has another methodological advantage. Male and female respondents were asked to speak generally about males and females in their communities, guided by the research themes. Interestingly most respondents spoke about the plight of males. The peer researchers collected detailed ethnographic reports by asking respondents to give examples to illustrate points that they made. In a few cases respondents asked the researchers to write down their personal stories with their names omitted.

The findings of this study reflect the perspectives of working-class youth.—how they perceive (or “pree”) their own situation in a setting in which adults’ perceptions of young people impacts the quality of services that they receive. Because no attempt was made to triangulate study findings by interviewing adults, a detailed discussion of the literature on youth issues in Jamaica (together a review of Jamaican youth policy) is provided in annex 2, against which the statements of the young people interviewed can be assessed.

¹⁴ Due to a history of attacks by the state, from slavery to the contemporary period, people in Jamaica who provide information to “outsiders” can be branded as informers. In the most severe instance, doing so can be punishable by death. Research is sometimes seen as taking information out of a community to people who have the power to harm residents.

Chapter 2. Findings

In the most general sense, this study is about the relationship between working-class young people in Jamaica and the institutions that serve them. It examines how the interaction between agency and opportunity structure is played out in the communities studied. This interaction underpins the types of everyday relationships—including service provider-user relations—that policy makers address. A range of institutions are common to all communities in Jamaica, yet the influence of these institutions varies in terms of their impact on behavior and empowerment outcomes. Five of the traditional institutions are the family, school, church, politics, and the police. Most of these institutions operated effectively at some level in the rural community in the study, providing a supportive, albeit hierarchical, frame of existence for youth. In contrast, young people living in the inner city said that they had lost faith in traditional institutions and had turned to self-reliance and alternative social institutions, including gangs, which offered other kinds of social and economic opportunity structures. These alternative opportunity structures have a major impact on the life choices of youth, with gender playing an important role in mediating these choices.

The relationship between youth and traditional social institutions is characterized by disappointment and abuse. Community-level institutions and/or service providers function poorly, a situation that has tremendous impact on the poverty, prospects, and ability of young people to determine their own lives. Much of the problem is cultural: norms and practices characterized by immense power inequalities render youth the property of their parents and community (or possibly, as outcasts or dead when they rebel or act outside of expected behavior patterns).

Working-class youth living in poor urban and rural communities in Jamaica lack agency in their relationships with adults. Young people are not encouraged to participate in decision-making processes in the home or at the community level. They also struggle in their power relations with the adults who have the resources to provide for them. Despite high expectations, adults do not invest (emotionally, psychologically, or materially) sufficiently in young people to allow them to realize these expectations.

In rural communities, parents have a lot of power. However, in the inner city parents are weak. *Overall, the peer interviews indicated that the power struggle is greatest between boys and parents and that often parents lose, especially because their input is not strong enough to compete with the street* (see Chevannes 2001). Inner-city parents also lack the economic resources to compete with criminals. For boys, the battle is virtually lost before the fighting begins. For girls, the fear is singular—pregnancy—and parents achieve greater success in guiding them. In the end, many working-class parents allow their children to make their own career and life choices, but some put pressure on their children to make the kinds of decisions that the parents want.

Youth spoke of caregivers as agents who wanted to support them, but were constrained by numerous opportunity structures. Participants referred to genuine poverty and lack among adults. Some caregivers were described as so poor that they had very little to give and very little was expected of them, as youth recognized their inability to provide or meet their needs. Some caregivers also seemed to have very little idea of how to treat youth. As the data show, working-class adults wanted more (and in some cases needed more) from youth than they wished to (or could) give, precisely at a time when the opposite was required in the lives of these young people. The consequence of the poverty of caregivers, combined with hierarchical power relations between youth and adults, represents the failure of traditional social institutions on which youth depend. Young people are consequently “forced ripe but not fit” to make a positive contribution to society—a condition that is both the result of, and a response to, the lack of nurture and protection.

The research exposed a cultural dilemma described in detail by Brown (2002). *On one hand, adults expect youth to serve rather than be served. Youth, on the other hand, expect certain services from adults,* which they claim is their right and should not be attached to any prior act or performance. Young people lose in this struggle because they lack the power to make adults respect and honor their rights. Adults, however, can force youth to comply with many of their expectations or punish them for not complying, both of which have implications for the nurture of young people.

The paragraphs below present a series of assessments by young people of the various local institutions that form their opportunity structure and hence foster or hinder their

choices and life chances as agents *While rural youth could find traditional institutions that remained intact and on which they could largely depend, inner-city youth expressed an immense loss of faith, many even in their parents.*

How youth feel about parents and adults and vice-versa

Youth in the rural community expressed a greater sense of reliance on their parents and adults. Overall, these young people described getting support for livelihood needs from their parents up to the age of eighteen and for education, up to the primary and, in some cases, secondary level. They also said they received some degree of moral guidance, but not much else. There was no support, for example, for job opportunities and making their way forward in life. In the city, however, “Every man haffi mek it on im own,” said a 23-year-old male of Harasson Gardens, who had stopped school to learn a trade and now holds down a job spraying cars and supports his parents. The central problem is that many adults in poor communities do not have the resources to help their children. One young male in Poyuton Terrace asked: “How can they help when they need opportunities, too?”

The degree of support youth receive from parents, family, and neighbors often depends on how these adults assess (“pree”) a young person. Youth perceive that adults value them for their utility, noting that adults describe them as strong and helpful—“their han’ an’ foot” (see Brown 2002). Many young people are convinced that their parents see them as their property. As an adolescent female from Poyuton Terrace explained, when a young person says they are tired, their parents shout, “Do what me say for is me piss you out.” Youth complained that at times, their very meals are tied to work performed. A youth from Harasson Gardens said, “Youth have to show an effort for them to get it for it scarce. You have to show it. They [parents] say that in their time they never had the chances, so they cannot afford to waste it on worthless youth.”

Parents and adults also generally tend “to talk down to youth,” using such words to describe them as “crof” (failure), “crosses” (problems), “plague,” “viper,” “loud,” “having no discipline,” and most popular of all, “fouce ripe.” Only very obedient youth hear that they will “come to anything good.” When parents are in bad moods or when youth do something wrong, they say even worse things. Mothers often tell boys that they

“are worthless like dem puppa (father).” Fathers tell girls that they are “going to sell pussy in New Kingston just like you mumma (mother).” One popular proverb that every peer researcher remembered hearing is repeated to adolescent females who have had a sexual relationship, or “talked to boys:”: “What sweet nanny goat going to run dem belly” (“Something is out there waiting for them—like pregnancy”). A peer researcher observed that parents are quicker to say this “if the man is poor or older.”

Youth say that adults often assess and support them based on how they dress. If boys pierce their ears, their underpants are showing, or if they have corn rolls, adults see them as gangsters or call them homosexuals and are prejudiced against them. They do not even take the time to find out anything about such a young person before they write him or her off. “It’s all about judging them without knowing them,” says a 19-year-old male from Poyuton Terrace. In the case of girls, many get written off because they have male friends and or dress in close-fitting, short clothes. Parents and other adults brand such girls as “sketel” and “whores.” Overall, adults see adolescent clothing as “disgusting and inappropriate.”

Many young women who lack parental support depend on men for money and emotional support. “[They] sometimes decide to take man early. Some do not even reach sixteen, but want man,” remarked a 15 -year-old female respondent from Harasson. When girls do not do well or get pregnant, parents have to make the decision to send them back to school. Repeat pregnancies are a sure road into a cycle of poverty (see Samms-Vauhgan 2006, and Gayle 2004). In Coolblue Gap, there were two cases of a mother and daughter who became pregnant as early as age 13, each having three or four children by age 22. One female respondent lamented that they kept on having children, with the result that “Mother (now grandmother) and daughter have *pikni* [children] the same age, sometimes in the same house and even by the same man.” Such young women may see their mistake, but do not have a way out of their misery, given the absence of opportunity structure.

Box 1. The absence of opportunity structures: Case study 1

Shotta is a 22-year-old of Harasson Gardens whose profession is killing. Shotta is not working. He dropped out of school in grade 10 when his father died. He identifies himself as a badman, but is not a member of any gang. He has a “part-time” girlfriend who visits him, but he lives by himself and has no children. He has a younger

brother in the same occupation of killing people, but his brother works. He is from a large family and has four other brothers. His mother was described as “kind of crazy,” meaning the boys grew up on their own.

Shotta has been on his own for a long time. Today he gets support from selling drugs [cocaine] and using his gun to hustle. “My only support now is mi gun—as long as it ‘ave bullet an it nah stick, everyting cris [as long as it has bullets and it doesn’t stick, everything is fine] an mi good to go. But if yuh have a gun, yuh will always be tempted to use it. An’ sometimes yuh get yuhself in unwanted trouble.” Shotta supports his mother, makes sure she has her medication and as long as she takes it, she is alright. He also supports his girlfriend. Speaking about the prospects of youth in the community he stated, “If you have no support, look to di street—either yuh tief [steal], turn battyman [homosexual], turn prostitute, turn go-go [stripper].” Those with a bit of support can “go to one a di free institute—HEART^a or anodda [another].”

Without an opportunity structure, youth in his community have few legal avenues to find food for themselves and their families. “You need a better level of education, better facilities, more after-school programs, skills training, more work. The only skill youth have inna di ghetto is to fire gun or construction work. Getting a gun is di quickest thing—man will gi yuh a gun an tell yuh kill a man.”

“Mi pree [assess] myself as a badman, a man who have faith in God and himself. Every morning mi wake, mi read a psalm, and at night before mi go bed. Mi have no fren [I have no friend], only mi piece [gun]. Enemy want have yuh head on silver plate a walk roun wid.”

Shotta noted that he has a problem with adults. Parents have power, but they abuse it. “They insist on youth following rules. Good. But frustrating because some don’t mek sense. On di street, yuh have to learn whe go on [what goes on], adapt, or yuh dead.” Speaking about pastors, he said, “Church pastors are pussy, only want collect di offering, breed off di likkle [little] sexy church sister, den turn round preach pon dem bout di likkle dilemma dem in [preach to them about the little dilemma they are in].”

The authority figures he hates most are the police. “I don’t trust police because they just can’t be ‘tamed.’ You can buy them only for a time. They are greedy corrupt people, only caring about themselves. . . . You can’t feel protected by those who are out to kill you. It is a 50-50 chance who will be dead first. . . .” What upsets him most about the police is the extreme corruption of some officers.

Like many inner-city males, Shotta lost his father, who was his role model, to violence. While his father was alive, he taught him right from wrong and showed him the facts of life. “I know it is wrong to kill. But I have no choice. I have no one to talk to. Those I could trust have migrated or got too old. And I don’t want to burden them with my problem. So I just keep to myself. I know my father would be disappointed with me that I walk this road, but circumstances push me that way.”

Shotta wants to change. He acknowledged that he had made a lot of bad choices in his life. He wants to “grow up and not kill people fi a living, but get something in mi head. My hope is to change mi life, go back a school.” The sad reality is that he is aware that society may never afford him and many others (including those who have not yet killed) a chance to choose alternative paths to violence and murder.

Note: ^a Jamaica’s premier “second-chance” education and skills-training program.

How youth perceive adult expectations

For many youth, adult family members have high expectations of them and wish to see them “come to something,” as supported by the findings of Fox and Gordon-Strachan (2007). The majority of adults in the rural community wish all youth well. “[They] always want the youth to stay on track and to focus on their dreams,” explained a female respondent in her early twenties. The same could not be said for many adults in the inner city, who youth felt did not want their neighbor’s children to outdo their own children and therefore would not help the former, or would do so only reluctantly.

There are several problems with the expectations of parents and adults. First, having failed to achieve many of their own the goals and dreams when they were young, many adults expect their children to “complete” their lives. Often they do not take into account the factor of support. As an adolescent male peer researcher from Poyuton noted, “Sometimes a man may see a youth not going forward and he really do not know how much weight he is carrying.” Second, people in the community often judge young people based on their parents’ achievements or character, and gauge their support accordingly. “They expect the child to become like their parents. If the mother [is] selling [her body] in New Kingston, then they expect same from the daughter,” says a young woman from Harasson Gardens. She explained, “Some parents try hard and make sure that their children do not become like them, but many do end up like the parents.” Consequently community members are “quick to withdraw their support from youth as soon as they blunder,” said an adolescent male of Harasson.

The third and most critical problem is the gap between expectations and support. As noted earlier, adults have high expectations of young people, but these adults do very little to invest in young people’s dreams. As a male peer researcher in Coolblue Gap commented, “Adults expect youth to do better than them, but lands are not handed down—few do this. They sell their lands rather, so their children have to work for new property owners and may reach forty and still [be] working for another.” Youth in Harasson Gardens spoke of what Gayle (2002) described as “premature harvesting.” One young male noted that some parents are happy for their sons to reach “working age, so they can collect.”

Young people noted that sometimes power relations with their parents, combined with poverty, weaken their agency. As a male peer researcher from Harasson Gardens explained the dilemma of some older youth, “It’s not that you cannot make it sometimes, but you are the bigger one and you are kind of bound by parents to stick around and help.” A young woman from Harasson suggested that some parents expect children to support them. As she explained, “[They] expect the daughter to tek man, especially the don, to mind her. Wuk di money bring it come” (i.e., encourage their daughters to prostitute themselves). Other young people suggested that some parents encourage their

sons to engage in illegal activities, findings supported by the ILO/ Children First (2001) baseline study.

Respondents blamed teenage pregnancy on exposure to “irresponsible” media and the poor example of some parents. “Some parents do not live clean lives and their children see them or hear them having sex and want to do the same. There are a few one-room situations and these are a problem among the poorest people in the community,” noted a respondent in Coolblue Gap. “Down here mother and daughter even compete for the same man,” remarked a respondent from Harasson Gardens. Another problem is that some parents do not speak to their children frankly and honestly about sex. Some parents are not educated themselves and so are not equipped to inform their children about sex or family life.

Box 2. The absence of opportunity structure: Case study 2

“Annie” resides in the rural community of Coolblue Gap, but refused to do an interview with a peer researcher due to extreme embarrassment over her life situation. Nonetheless, her life story is well known to the residents of the small, close-knit community. Annie is illiterate and has two children. The first child was fathered by her mother’s partner (her stepfather). Annie was only an adolescent (16 years old) when she became pregnant. The triangular affair caused conflict between the mother and daughter. Due to this conflict and the constant interference and ridicule of community members, the stepfather relocated but maintained a visiting relationship with the mother. During this latter period, the mother became pregnant by him and they had the first child of their union. The conflict between mother and daughter continued, and Annie left home because of it. Not educated or employable, she soon became pregnant by another man. After he disappeared, she had to return home with a second child to live with her mother and visiting stepfather. The guess of community observers is that the triangular relationship continues, as both mother and daughter need the support of the man.

Both mother and daughter live in extreme poverty and are isolated from the community. Their isolation is largely due to the fact that they are illiterate and their life is an embarrassment to the community. Their situation is compounded by their hostile reaction to most intrusions by community members, probably due to their experience of ridicule. For these two women, both agency and opportunity structure is problematic. They are illiterate, unemployed, and vulnerable. Being powerless, they have been abused, but do not expect to be rescued by either the community or state agencies.

Youth expressed that quite often, the high expectations of parents and adult relatives and friends are in parallel with their own personal aspirations: to be educated and/or own a home and a car, and to travel abroad or leave their poor community. The problem is that many respondents could not explain how they would achieve these goals. Throughout the study there seemed to be a gap between the aspirations of youth, on the one hand, and the reality of poverty, neglect, and lack of opportunity, on the other. Many young people noted that it required “hard work, sweat and tears, perseverance, determination, and some serious sacrifice, of course” to achieve their aspirations. However, the real hopes of poor young people are very low.

How youth perceive their involvement in decision making

Youth commented that they did not feel they were an important part of their communities because most were not allowed to participate in any critical decision-making process. Only the three most mature peer researchers (older than 20 years) were executive members of community citizen’s associations or other decision-making groups that involved adults, even though almost all these researchers were among the “recommended” youth of their communities. It seemed that even in cases where young people had information or skills that could help the leadership of community groups, they were often treated with scant regard. For many youth who join community groups dominated by adults, their main role is to carry out menial tasks. “Many youth get into a

group and find they have to run errands. That's what they are good for," said a female respondent from Coolblue Gap. Youth therefore conclude that they have very little power in the presence of adults, a perception that varied little among the three communities. In Coolblue Gap, they have a voice only in the youth club. As a result, they regard their club as a critical vehicle. A male peer researcher compared individual young people in the community to the islands of the Caribbean: "Together we are small, so much more [when standing] alone. It's all about what parents want to see done."

A 19-year-old male of Poyuton Terrace summed up the situation in the following manner:

Adults think [youth] are too young and irresponsible. Adults feel that they know it all because they are big and are here for a long time. They dictate rather than listen. They do not allow younger people to anticipate likely questions and give feedback. Decision making for youth is about their own space and when they are away from parents—on the street, that is when they are fully human beings."

In other words, many youth could only garner respect from their peers.

Many peer researchers and respondents acknowledged that some youth choose not to participate in anything. Some had become so preoccupied with surviving and had been so disappointed with adults that they refused to participate even when invited to do so. "There are cases where they could make an input, but they want a money for that. Even if you keep [arrange] a party, they have to get something special," said a 16-year-old high school male of Harasson Gardens.

Whoever provides resources to youth has power over them

Youth seemed to categorize the support they received from adults into two kinds: good and problematic. They described parents, school, and to some extent, church, as good sources of support—especially young people from the rural community. "Good" sources were defined as those on which a youth could depend somewhat and "won't make them into criminals or take their lives." Some parents and teachers encourage them to strive to their utmost. Such support is emotional, financial, and spiritual on a daily basis and lasts as long as they want it or as long as the source of the support can help. In the rural setting, noted one respondent, "[T]here is no rush to turn loose a youth or send them on

their own.” The good thing about parental support for rural youth is that “the support is nearly always in abundance,” said a young woman of Coolblue Gap.

Problematic sources of support were identified mainly in the inner city: gunmen, dons, or politicians who manipulate youth to defend their interests or turf. Youth are used, for example, to protect a don’s drugs or an MP’s pooled garrisoned votes. Interviewees commented that these adults do not care if “youth die in the process.”

In the discussions of role models or institutions that had power to influence the behavior of youth, the difference between rural and urban communities was extreme. Rural youth said they looked to God and parents first, and entertainers and politicians last. In the inner city females looked to entertainers first. “Its like dem addicted to the quick success,” said a female peer interviewer from Poyuton Terrace. Male youth looked up to gunmen, entertainers, dons, politicians, and a few parents. As a Poyuton Terrace male youth noted,

Male youth look up to bad men because they have nuff woman, do not have a steady job but have money; have gun pon waist, nuh tek no talk [Do not take backtalk]. So they have power and independence. They are surviving. These are the best examples of a person surviving in style and with little effort. I am not saying that this is the only role model, but this is the most popular.

This statement and many similar statements seemed to suggest that in the inner city, gang leaders (i.e., criminals) have more power over male youth than do their parents, and have largely replaced the latter as providers and guides. Some young males depend on support from a don—selling weed for him or “mashing a work,” which may mean killing or robbing someone. One male youth noted that a don, “Makes them eat bread [helps them make money].” The don is the one with authority on the corner. He tells youth what to do, when to do it, how to do it. He has the last word because of the punishment he can inflict. Many inner-city males seemed to have given up trying to survive by non-criminal means. In the words of one respondent from Poyuton Terrace,

[They] are turning to the gun, feeling that this is the only solution to their poverty and other financial and social problems they are facing. Most of these youth are on their own from very early and their parents are unemployed. They see any chance to make a living as a way out and do not calculate fully the long term consequences. The gun also provides them with the power necessary to command respect.

In Coolblue Gap, politicians were the only problem source of support mentioned. The support of politicians was described as “one-sided, for example, if they have a piece of work, it is always given to a favored individual, usually older, through whom the work trickles to others.” Work given in this manner often creates conflict among friends and neighbors. In this rural community, certain youth who lacked support went to the extreme. “Some will simply prey on the gardens of their neighbors and sell the produce. These would be young men,” said one respondent from Coolblue Gap. Others, explained a 19-year-old female from the community, “[Try] to escape from the community and start a life—if they can.”

Youth give each other immense support, with reservations

Youth identify with each other and tend to lump themselves into pools of victims. No gender or geosocial differences were observed on this score. Youth simply described themselves as a group of “outcasts,” “victims,” and “the forgotten.” “The community doesn’t look to our needs,” claimed an adolescent male from Coolblue Gap. A young man from Poyuton Terrace concurred; “They act as if we are not there.” Youth said that they often had only each other. “Youths feel for each other,” said an adolescent female from Poyuton. “We have ourselves,” said a male peer researcher from Harasson Gardens. In rural settings youth may turn to older peers who tend to be more experienced: “You turn to the older bredrin.” Most of this support is emotional, but it can also be financial. Speaking of the support youth receive from older peers, one male respondent in Coolblue Gap explained, “They have nowhere else to turn—unless it is the church, and then they have to listen to the sermon that comes with the support from church members.” Recognizing the economic shortcomings of adults, youth rely largely on themselves and try to help each other. In Coolblue Gap, noted a female peer researcher,

The streets are active in the matter of opportunities. Youth will meet under the light in the square and discuss jobs and so forth. In this way a youth will learn about something that is available and get the contacts and get the job. Youth are very supportive of each other.

Inner-city youth expressed that they often felt as if they were on their own; consequently they form “protective groups” and look out for and defend each other. In both inner-city communities in the study, young women spoke about their group or crew, and male youth

spoke about their crew or gang.¹⁵ Youth assess each other based on such associations, with the group to which he or she belongs identifying a young person. They gave high ratings to the support they received from other youth. No youth, however, wants to be in a group in which he is the odd person. If a young person is poor, most of his or her friends will be poor by choice, not only by compulsion.

Young people mostly spoke of other youth and themselves in a positive light, using such words as “young,” “strong,” and “creative” for males; and “smart,” “sexy,” and “hot” for females. Both sexes described youth as ambitious and persevering, some struggling to the very end. However, they complained that some youth are parasitic, and only become part of a group because they want something: “When something going on for me, everybody know me; when nothing, I have no frens,” said a 19-year-old male from Harasson Gardens. Youth also complained that some young people lead others astray because they become vulnerable and “dependent on the group.” One 17-year-old Poyuton male who was preparing to take an Advanced Level GCE examination was thankful that he was not easily influenced by peer pressure, but listened to his instinct and if it felt right, went ahead.

The problem with relying on other young people is that not all friends are genuine. Youth noted that they needed to distinguish hypocritical or fair-weather friends from real friends. Particularly in the inner city, young people described certain other youth with whom they had to relate as “enemies,” meaning those who wished them death and failure, rather than survival and success. In both inner-city communities that were part of the study, respondents also spoke about the possibility of friends becoming enemies because they joined competing crews. In the inner city, envy was described as “always alive.” Both male and female respondents seemed to agree that women were more likely to experience envy. A female respondent from Harasson Gardens commented,

Some girls tend to be positive. They will congratulate others if they are close and genuine friends. But most times the women have to say that the other women are whoring to get whatever they have... The competition is

¹⁵ Levy, Gayle, and Stultz (2001) make a distinction between corner crews and criminal gangs. In the former, youth bond together for the purpose of supporting each other. They are not organized and are not together for the purpose of committing crime.

harsh. Women watch each other a lot and they talk. Plenty bad mind. Try not to step up in life and not expect the women to speak.

One adolescent male youth suggested that males were more likely to prey on a successful peer, saying, “What’s up boss, you can’t put on a round [of drink]? Mek we smoke something.” Parasitic males do, however, offer protection to a “target,” that is, “If a man violate mek we know.” One young man concluded, “[O]nce you move ordinary, then other guys just leave or ignore you,” implying that quite often, a “target” attracts “hustler” males by showing off his achievement.

Lack of support means youth are in a hurry to leave

One of the first indications that young people perceived local institutions as failing them is that very few “preed” (i.e., assessed) that there was any logic to remaining in their respective communities. When the peer researchers were asked to speak about their communities, they, like their respondents, gave mostly negative comments. The two inner-city communities were described as too “poor and violent, and full of bad-minded people;” the rural community, as “lacking in vibrancy, leadership, and educated people that you can talk to properly.” A few peer researchers from the inner-city communities thought of their communities as “full of life, youth, and passa passa.” They described their communities as “one big movie. Trust me, things happen here that is better than a comedy on big screen [cinema].” They also boasted of non-stop music and vibes. In Poyuton Terrace there is a dance hall session every night of the week except Monday. Yet the problem is that quite often, the fun is cut short. “Shots start to beat and people dead. You have to stay inside and not go anywhere,” explained a male peer researcher from Harasson Gardens.

It was clear that coffee farming is viable in Coolblue Gap, yet young people complained that there were no alternatives to farming (i.e., no alternatives that they might want to choose). “What is the value of going to school and doing well if you know you are going to do farming anyway?” young men asked. A 19-year-old female who had completed secondary school and was seeking work asked, “And suppose you really do not want to do farming of any sort?” Both sexes also complained that there was a shortage of partners in Coolblue Gap. Peer researchers and other community members estimated that only 30 percent of the population was female. One male researcher explained that women come

into the community during harvest time to help reap the coffee (the community's primary crop), an occasion when single farmers have a chance to meet women.

Both peer researchers and respondents tried to convince the consultants (and themselves) that farming was a good career. One male peer researcher explained, "Five acres of coffee at present price can make you a millionaire in three years. Five hundred roots of coffee per acre, or more if on a hilly slope." He boasted that there were even a few young women who owned their own farms, mentioning a 27-year-old woman who had gone to the Cayman Islands to earn money, returned home, and bought five acres. "That is a plantation, one-and-a-half to five acres; above that is an estate." She drives a CRV Honda SUV. He stated that he was also doing well, having invested in two acres of coffee. Nevertheless, peer researchers and respondents argued that these were the few positive stories in the community.

Youth in the inner city were also able to identify a few young people who had done well. One female peer researcher and one respondent from Poyuton Terrace spoke of a very brilliant young man who became a medical doctor. They noted, "We can't get him to leave here." While both agreed that it was safe for him to live there—"Nobody would harm him"—they still questioned his choice, as "He should go and live his life." Implied in this statement is the questionable quality of life in a socially isolated, inner-city community.

In all the success stories recounted by respondents, youth had earned the money to start their business or farm, or had earned all their money, outside the home community. Young people therefore spoke of leaving the community as the recipe for doing well. The youth of Coolblue Gap, however, had an advantage in that it was easier for them to return to their community and invest what they had earned outside. Inner-city youth were not as lucky. Those living in Harasson Gardens were particularly unenthusiastic about returning to live in their community: "You mad, you ever hear of bad mind?" In Harasson, said one respondent, "Once you make it, you leave. These people you must only visit and make sure that you have money to give them," said a 16-year-old female respondent. In other words, they feared someone would harm them because they had succeeded.

The youth described the input of community-based organizations (CBOs) as very limited and argued that there were few opportunities for youth in working-class communities. In

the inner city, youth can expect some adults who work with CBOs to “[invite them to] workshops to learn about stuff or to get involved in positive things,” said one adolescent male. “Some examples in Poyuton Terrace are YOU (Youth Opportunities Unlimited),” he continued, “where they find you jobs or help sort you out, RISE (same as YOU but for kids 9–15). They send to the school to see their reports to ensure the children do well.” A few churches also help by directing young people to programs that are available, some of which provide skills training. In Harasson Gardens, noted one respondent, “One church helps the parents to pay school fees and to find jobs, but complains that after they [the youth] get through, they leave the church.” One youth from Harasson Gardens also acknowledged, “Few business people give scholarships: they pay 60,000 per year to help pay school fees.” The rural community did not seem different from the inner-city communities in this respect. The few activities geared towards youth development in these areas were organized by the Social Development Commission or by the youth themselves through their youth club.

How youth feel businesspeople assess them

Numerous studies, including those of Chevannes (2001) and Levy (1996), have detailed the immense pain endured by inner-city youth, especially males, when they attempt to acquire a job, due mainly to the bad reputation of their area of residence. Respondents in the inner city said that businesspeople perceive them negatively. While businessmen stigmatize them and are reluctant to offer them jobs, they give jobs to “uptown” and rural youth. “The mentality of businesspeople is that the youth of the garrison are gunmen, thieves, and criminals,” explained a 21-year-old female from Poyuton Terrace. One’s living address is always a problem for inner-city males seeking jobs. “Businesspeople are genuinely scared of [male] youths from communities with [a] reputation,” said a 19-year-old male from Poyuton. Others simply abuse garrison youth, sometimes with negative consequences. A peer researcher from Harasson Gardens noted,

Sometimes youth have real bad experiences. A youth who is a known gunman tried to get a construction work and got through, but the foreman fired him over a woman. He was looking the girl and the girl was

boopsing him out, but she was showing a liking for the male youth. So now the youth saying he is waiting to see him off the air and pluck him.¹⁶

The youth explained that inner-city females also experienced problems getting jobs, but not to the same degree as males. A male respondent from Poyuton Terrace explained that this was because young women “are less aggressive and the boss can get to ask favors.” Girls do, however, experience prejudice based on how they speak and their skin color. A 15-year-old female from Harasson explained, “They open dem mouth and it sound ghetto, they have problems.” Addressing the problem of color prejudice, a female peer researcher from the same community recalled, “Just recently the first girl to get sponsored in the modeling group was light-skinned. This causes the girls to bleach. Colorism is terribly against the girls.”

Rural youth think that businesspeople perceive youth as having potential, but they are sometimes too fussy in selecting a worker. Often some expect youth to have work experience that is impossible to have, given their age and training. According to rural respondents, some businesspeople work with youth and help them master a job; others are not so patient. It is important here to point out that the emphasis on experience as a job requirement can discourage youth from completing school. If work experience is viewed more favorably than school training, then youth will make the rational choice to drop out of school.

How youth feel church people assess them

Youth had very few good points to make about church. Five female respondents and one male peer researcher acknowledged that a few church people could be confidants and friends and would counsel youth without telling them too much about hell and damnation. The youth of Coolblue Gap were more likely to form a relationship with church members and say something positive about church. Three of the young women in this community said the church had a role to guide youth along the Christian path and that church was a vehicle to develop the creative skills of youth.

¹⁶ The girl was taking the foreman’s money repeatedly without having sexual intercourse with him (“boopsing him”). The youth decided to kill (“pluck”) the foreman when he caught the man alone (“off the air”). See glossary at the end of this paper.

The majority of statements made about church were, however, negative. Inner-city respondents said that some church people view youth as vipers. They said church members see them as people who dance and party all night and do not seem to have a purpose in life. When they assess youth in this manner, they pressure youth to join a church and then become a burden or nag. This behavior often drives youth away instead of helping them. One male youth from Harasson Gardens related, “They use Bible knowledge to frighten them. One youth was passing a church and the pastor say that if he passed by he will die and the youth was afraid and got baptized, but left soon afterwards.” A female peer researcher cited her personal experience in support of the young man’s criticism, explaining that she went to church and a woman said, “Pray to God, little girl, and not man [do not have a boyfriend].” Other youth complained that they usually need recommendations from a church and that churches use this to bait them. Interestingly, youth claimed that when church people use the term “poor and needy,” it is usually to describe the elderly—they see youth as too strong to be needy. “All they want from us is our souls and offering.”

Gender plays a large role in school attendance and completion

All youth agreed that the greatest opportunities provided by society are through school. Schools provide education and direction towards their goals and dreams. Yet school is not available to all; neither is it always the first choice of some male youth. Both males and females in all three communities in the study held the view that girls receive educational opportunities that are denied some boys. Many scholars in Jamaica have detailed the crisis of boys in the education system,¹⁷ concluding that there is an institutional bias in favor of girls.

Several authors have shown that the relationship between opportunity structure and the agency of male youth creates the problem. According to Chevannes (1999), schooling is not a critical part of the definition of masculinity for the urban poor—hustling for the survival of self and family is. Chevannes expressed no surprise that boys made the decision to sacrifice their education and worked to send their sisters to school. Gayle (2004) has documented that boys complain that a family in economic crisis sacrifices a

¹⁷ See, for example, Gayle (2004); Chevannes (1999, 2001); ILO/Children First (2001); Evans (1999); Brown and Chevannes (1998); Bailey (1997); Bailey et al. (1996); and Figueroa and Handa (1996).

boy's future first. Boys said this made them happy, but also sad—happy that they were asked to act as “men” early, but sad because their lives were jeopardized.

Male illiteracy was found to be common in all three communities, but worst in Coolblue Gap. As one respondent there noted, “Many males end up illiterate and can’t even get a driver’s license.” Such young men either have to “go a bush” (i.e., farm coffee), or leave the area for alternative work. In the city, there is more opportunity for skills training, but school dropouts and illiteracy are commonplace. Many young men who have acquired a skill or a high school diploma are still jobless, dependent on their families, and forced into “hustling” of one kind or another. Because the socialization of females in Jamaica encourages a good work ethic from a very early age, it is not surprising that females are seen as a better school investment by parents. In many working-class families, parents decide that it is more profitable to send a girl to school at the expense of a boy if the family can only afford to send one (Figueroa and Sudhanshu 1996).¹⁸ “Boys do not show this kind of effort they are talking about, especially when it comes to school,” observed a male peer researcher from Poyuton Terrace.

The educational choices made by youth depend on their structure and agency. Those with an effective support system choose education. As one young male from Poyuton Terrace observed, “Any male youth who stay in school getting help from parents, relatives abroad, church, or community.” This is the same conclusion drawn by Gayle (2004) and Chevannes (2001): attrition from school is often forced on youth. It is very unlikely that boys will remain in school if they are hungry and doing poorly academically. It is easy for boys to drop out of school. If they do, the decision of their parents also makes a world of difference. They often send the boy to learn a trade, but a few parents just give up on male youth and they become a menace to the community.

For many youth who lack family support, education comes last. They are too preoccupied with finding food to focus on education. “It seems that school pull a gun on them,” one male peer researcher joked. Throughout the research for this study, the most desperate males spoke out against school (“Leggo school: waste of time”) for the simple reason that they were not given support to attend. This was common among male youth of Harasson

¹⁸ These authors note that parents with very little income feel they get greater return on their investment when they send girls to school as, barring pregnancy, they will remain in school.

and Poyuton, whose fathers had died or were in prison, or who simply lacked support. As one young man concluded, “Some turn extortionist and gunman. Some struggling youth will really try to get an education, but that is mostly for females.”

Finally, a disincentive exists for male youth of working-class backgrounds to attend and complete school:¹⁹ an abundance of entry-level jobs for males (as unskilled physical labor), but not for females. According to Chevannes (1999), this problem is worsened by the stigma attached to inner-city communities. The evidence and experience of many respondents point to education being overrated, as many young people with an education in these communities are unemployed. “There is this girl who have eight CXC’s [ordinary-level subjects] and she unemployed, so that is only good to discourage the youth,” complained one female peer researcher. Youth also complained that even with qualifications, they still needed to have contacts to get a job. Many young people find that it is better to learn a trade, as an education does not guarantee them a job. As one respondent noted, “If you have subjects, you need experience, and then there is the problem of your address.”

*Lack of education affects male agency, reduces self-esteem,
and weakens power relations with females*

One of the debates among respondents and peer researchers related to the fact that many females refuse to form relationships with their male peers. Throughout the study, young females expressed disappointment in and sorrow for male youth of their communities. They described some young men as “lost,” “not going anywhere,” “careless,” and “irresponsible and illiterate.” The young women said young men in their communities were not fit for the females, who were more likely to progress in life. One female peer researcher from Poyuton Terrace expressed surprise that illiterate and “careless” men “. . . get offended when girls go and look outside man.” Female peer researchers held the view that if the young men “watched the women move ahead, they should not expect us to have much use for them.”

Respondents recognized that lack of education had an immense negative impact on male youth. Some young men suggested that due to lack of education, “Most males have low

¹⁹ See Anderson (2001, 1997).

self-esteem. . . and don't expect to make it in life.” While females agreed, a few maintained that “[Some] boys idled at school, smoke ganja, even though parents expect better of them.” They all agreed that “females are more ambitious—even after the ‘mistake’ of a first pregnancy, they will go back to school.” In fact, girls are more likely to complete high school and even college.

Respondents from all three communities agreed that males received considerably less support than females, whose femininity and sexuality gave them an advantage in negotiating support. Both males and females suggested that women, not men, were “lucky.” “Luck? It’s only for battyman [i.e., only males who sell themselves to other males can use their sexuality in the same way as females do],” said one respondent. One youth of Harasson Gardens compared the luck of females and males in the following manner, “She go on the road and look depressed and get man for the day or long term. If a man does that, a woman walks pass and pat him on the shoulder.”

Chevannes and Gayle (2000) found inner-city males who wished they were born females for this reason. The only disagreements seem to rest on the extent to which working-class women’s sexuality gave them an edge over men in Jamaica. Many respondents argued, “Women can rely on men but not the other way around.” In Harasson Gardens, young people noted, “[Young people] make a contract that the male send the girl to school and she is supposed to help him now and she tell him that she needs new friends and that it cannot work.” Even in the debriefing sessions, the peer researchers mentioned how males were abused by aggressive and selfish females who know that sex is a man’s weakness. Male youth spoke about sex as a curse. “Everything for men surrounds sex. They buy car that they cannot maintain to get sex,” noted a male peer researcher from Harasson Gardens.

A great deal of the literature on gender and power relations that shows that women’s sexuality can disempower them because they get into deeply dependent relationships with men, locked in through pregnancy. In fact, both male and female respondents highlighted early pregnancy and dependency on men as the main problems faced by young women, due to their lack of opportunity structure. It is not surprising that some female respondents challenged the female “luck” argument and concluded that such luck was overrated. “Sometimes it is bad luck the way the women get abused,” said a female peer

researcher from Poyuton Terrace. In debriefing sessions, male peer researchers acknowledged that not all females were “lucky” due to their sexuality. As a young man from Harasson Gardens explained, “Sometimes the women get abused for depending on men. Women get beaten with hammer and shovel and belt in our community. That is rhyme with luck, not luck.” Overall, study data challenged the usual gender-studies position that a working-class woman’s sexuality is more likely to be disempowering. Youth in this study drew the conclusion that, added to the institutional bias towards women in poor communities, many (not all) young women are imbued with agency in a way that lets them use their sexuality to negotiate support from males who live outside those communities.

Youth-police relations are problematic but not intractable

Police-youth relations were the most critical issue for youth. Both the score card activities and the PEER research pointed to a problematic relationship between police and youth. One single word amply described how youth assessed the police: **“The OTHER!”** Very few youth saw the police and themselves on the same side. Discussions about the police always jolted the emotions, which flared when peer researchers collected the data and again as they, having experienced the same harsh treatment from the police, related interviewee stories again. Nonetheless, there were noticeable seeds of hope in all three communities and young people made suggestions on to how to develop a better police-youth relationship.

Deep malaise lies beneath the “feel-good” factor of Poyuton police youth club

Throughout the score card exercise, youth gave low score to police services and the relationship they have with youth. Poyuton Terrace was an exception; it was included in the PEER exercise for the purpose of subjecting the claims of good youth-police relations to more rigorous, in-depth analysis. Unlike other group sessions, focus group sessions held in Poyuton rated these relations favorably on all five empowerment indicators (see table 1 below). These scores were largely supported by the qualitative discussions associated with the score card exercise, suggesting an exceptional youth-police relationship in the community. Only one score, the 6 for responsiveness, was marginal. The rationale for this score was that Poyuton police officers were sometimes slow in responding to people who needed their protection. One male youth related that he got

caught in a shootout on his way home from work one evening and ran to the Poyuton Police Station for protection, but no one would open the grill to let him in. He concluded that the officers were afraid.

The first score card in Poyuton was completed in January 2006. The second was completed in April 2007, when a repeat score card exercise was held in all three communities selected for the PEER research. A number of reasons can be given for Poyuton’s unique high scores over the period:

- The scores emerged from small focus groups of about 10 to 12 youth. Unlike in certain other communities, these scores were not “validated,” that is, there was no validation exercise with the larger community.²⁰
- The majority of youth in these focus groups were members of the police youth club who enjoyed good relations with the police—not the experience of the average young person in Poyuton Terrace. Peer researchers also pointed out that roughly one out of five young people in the community was associated with the youth club. This estimate was triangulated by sources checked after the PEER exercise.
- The youth involved in the score card activity in Poyuton were constrained by the fact that the scoring took place at a community center operated and managed by the local police youth club. The center was also located next door to the police station. Additionally, unknown to the moderator, a police officer attended the score card discussion session held in April 2007.

Table 1. Ratings of youth-police relations in three communities in Jamaica, 2008

Community	<i>Characteristic of youth-police relations^a</i>									
	Courtesy		Fairness		Responsiveness		Interaction		Trust	
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 1	Period 2	Period 1	Period 2	Period 1	Period 2	Period 1	Period 2
Poyuton Terrace	9	10	9	8	8	6	10	10	9	8
Coolblue Gap	3	10	1	8	1	2	3	6	1	8
Harasson Gardens	2	4	1	2	No Score	6	5	4	3	2

Note: Scale: 1–2 = Very Poor; 3–4 = poor; 5–6 = fair; 7–8 = good; 9–10 = very good.

²⁰ It has been noted in the literature that scores tend to fall when validated. The methodology used by JASPEV requires scores to be redone every three months, as well as for them to be validated, a process that would cancel out suspicious fluctuating and outlying scores.

In the second score card session held in Poyuton Terrace, a few young males hinted that youth-police relations were not as good as suggested by the majority of respondents. There was a complaint that police officers were not respectful to all youth; that they sometimes deliberately disrupted the football games of young men and treated them with disregard. Nonetheless, the hint in the score card discussion about police being too friendly (friendliness was seen as a tool for obtaining information) seemed to threaten the claim of near perfect youth-police relations in Poyuton. This comment was made repeatedly in the PEER research, the one-to-one interview environment of which uncovered a deep-seated structural imbalance in power relations between youth and the police. Youth, for example, described membership in the police youth club as a possible threat to life. Any membership meant the end of neutrality, and thus could make one a target of an opposing party. Youth were clear about the fact that the police were doing their job, which is opposed to that of the criminal element in the community. Young people's primary concern was that the youth club was part of a police strategy of crime detection (specifically, information gathering).

Power imbalances with the police have gender dimensions

Peer ethnographers reported that mentioning the phrase "trust the police" was usually met with the response, "NO WAY!" In no community did young men trust the police to any great extent. Police do not, however, use their power against females the way they do against males in working-class communities. In Coolblue Gap the difference was obvious: while females rated the courtesy of the local police as a perfect 10 in the score card session held in April 2007, the facilitator of the session carefully noted that young men (although a minority in the session) disagreed: "Young officers tend to be disrespectful and use expletives to [male] youth. Reports made by young men only." One frequent comment throughout the study was that women can afford to say they trust the police because "mostly the police just looking them." Although young women were more likely to trust the police, the trade-off was that male police officers used their power to compete with local male youth for sexual relations with females, which offended their male peers. One male peer researcher analyzed the situation as followings, "Police and

youth are at war and the women are the spoils of war, for as soon as they land in a community, they feel every woman belong to them.”

It is therefore logical that PEER research in Poyuton Terrace found that the average young male did not believe the score card finding that police anywhere could be trusted. Rather, there lack of trust and suspicion of police motives. As a 19-year-old male remarked:

Youth do not trust police. The police use the youth because we are kind of closer than in most inner city. The youth tell of cases where they friend up the youth and there is a murder and a youth bus [inform] and soon afterwards, he dies, and if you do the math, it makes sense to conclude that the police investigates and rats at the same time. Hence, only fools trust them. We see that happen more than once here.

Even in Poyuton Terrace, where the best relationship existed between police and youth, the power of the police was still perceived as corrupt. Boys concluded that the police would always maintain the dual capacity to do their jobs professionally *and* give up a young male informant to criminals for execution. Some youth acknowledged that most of their peers who distrusted the police were not innocent, noting, “It is mostly those who are involved in crime and the police must do their jobs.” Other males who disagreed this view noted,

If it is a police, it is “trigger happy” and corrupt. It would be stupid for a youth to trust the police. They claim they have a police youth club here and that bit is great, but those people are my enemies and it is not because I am any criminal. They have not changed their spots, they are police.

In the rural setting, young males are harassed for possessing marijuana. The police there are a bit friendlier than those in Kingston, but young men complained that they could not trust the friendship of the police because they were not seeking friends but informers—they wanted to know where marijuana was planted.

Trust between youth and the police was lowest in Harasson Gardens. Here a male youth stated, “Crime cannot cease in Jamaica because youth know that the police are criminals just like gunman. Yes, they love sweets. They corrupt. They get away because they are the law, but they are no less guilty.” Young men in this community asked, “Can you give me one reason to trust the person who you are certain have killed your relatives and just

waiting for a reason to kill you?” One youth went to the extreme of saying: “If you have a girl and the police say ‘hi,’²¹ it better you leave her. Yes, I trust them to kill people and take their woman or property.” A young woman from Harasson Gardens suggested that female police officers could not be trusted either. Added to the cruelty displayed by police officers, “Female police, dem tief. Dem come on a search and I had to stop her from stealing my hamster pet. Now if I cannot trust you with my pet, how can I trust you with my life?”

Level of power exerted by police depends on their own fear and hatred

The amount of respect youth get from the police depends on the community. Youth pointed to a pattern well known to scholars: the aggression of the police depends on the degree of violence in the community.²² The more violent the community, the more the police fear and hate young male residents. Frontline officers feel more secure attacking communities where youth are feared to be armed with high-powered rifles. According to Kerr-Brown, Gregory, and Brown (2004), this fear cripples the efforts of officers who want to attempt community policing in inner-city communities.

Police fear and prejudice are manifested in physical and verbal abuse of male youth. Males are seen as the ones carrying guns, although a few females do the same. A 17-year-old male from Poyuton Terrace suggested,

If a youth wants to be treated differently he will have to dress differently and try to just be different and look like he is just a visitor, for *residential* [suburban] youth do not endure any lowering of self-esteem like “Hey, bwoy” or “Batty bwoy.”

“Police do not trust the [male] youth. . . They see them as thieves and gunmen. They hate especially the bleachers [young people who bleach their skin], for they bleach and change and the police cannot find them,”²³ remarked another a male respondent from Poyuton Terrace. Male respondents explained, “[Inner-city youth] get box and kick up and abused in every way imaginable. This cannot happen uptown.” One young man from Poyuton told the following story: “One day they corral the place and one was singing, ‘Shoot them

²¹ To say “Hi!” in this context means to show sexual interest.

²² See, for example, Gayle (2007); Gray (2004), Kerr-Brown, Gregory, and Brown (2004); and Harriott (2000).

²³ Harris (2007) documented the same use of bleaching products in her study.

when they team up, bout them a gangster. So we going to deal wid them.” Another male youth from the community supported the first speaker, noting, “They line up the youth and ask them many questions and if they are wrong, they get box and kick way foot.” Most of these stories were about “special squads” that had invaded the community on numerous occasions.

The worst stories of police behavior came from Harasson Gardens, but this is not surprising, given the community’s high rate of violence and history of attacking and killing police officers. According to young men interviewed there, police officers have been known to:

- kick young males;
- kill them in their sleep and pin a gun on them;
- board a bus, use an M16 to beat up a young man, then go back to their car and take off;
- try to kill young males dressed in tight pants; and
- make young males eat a marijuana spliff while it is still lit.

Youth do not believe police either can or will protect them

The most striking response to the question of whether youth felt protected by the police came from a rural female: “**Not a bombo!**” The expletive was used epigrammatically to suggest that it would be ridiculous to think so. A rural respondent said, “Youth do not feel protected by the police. It is God who protects the youth. All the police do is idle. They always have an excuse not to address any problem that they are called to address.” In the rural setting of Coolblue Gap, police often sit and play dominoes and are irritated by youth disturbing them with complaints. It is not surprising that in both score card sessions in Coolblue, youth rated the responsiveness of their local police as very poor (see table 1). They stated that in cases of emergency, it was more prudent to call police from a larger station located over ten miles away than to call local police.

The police seemed handicapped by their fear of youth. Even in the rural community, said a 21-year-old female, “The police do not feel safe around youth as they think of youth here as just youth—dangerous, even though this is country.” Another common complaint was that the police never allowed youth a fair chance in the case of a conflict with an adult. They always perceived youth as the perpetrator and hence believed that the adult

needed protection. One young woman related a story of a young person and an elder in a dispute, “[O]nly the latter’s side is heard, while the young man is told to shut up, both by the police and the judge.” It is common in Jamaican culture for a young person to be robbed of voice. He can be accused, but is often not allowed to defend his actions.

Expectations of changed relations

The study found negative expectations and hopelessness with respect to the police, but also obvious seeds of hope. Some youth wished the police would do better, that is act professionally, but stressed that experience had taught them that very little would change. (Females were more hopeful.) Some youth did not expect anything but brutality from the police. Others believed the police felt just as hopeless about change as they did, that they expected male youth to continue hating them. A 16-year-old male from Harasson Gardens summarized the situation, “Yes, we expect them to shoot us and we defend ourselves” [i.e., shoot back or attack the police].” Yet even in that community, there were noticeable signs of hope. As one respondent explained, “A new set of police has arrived and most are young. They play football sometimes and smoke ganja with certain youth. The older ones take the rum bar. The older ones treat the youth worse than the younger ones. We hope it is a new direction.”

Youth in all communities felt that dialogue could create change. As a young man in Harasson Gardens noted:

Police and youth need to meet and come up with a plan to get the youth involved and active in their community. Hold sessions on how they can improve the relationship between police and the youth. For example, through the police youth clubs. Through this an understanding will develop after communicating and listening to both parties’ views.

The case of Poyuton Terrace suggests that youth-police interactions and improved communication have an impact on mutual perceptions, as evidenced in the community-based policy monitoring (score card) activity.

Conclusion

Prior to the formation of JASPEV, social policy in Jamaica had never been designed to focus on the poor or their participation in social policy. A primary aim of JASPEV is to improve social policy design and delivery (see annex 1 for program goals). Its youth inclusion prototype experiment focused on finding new ways to address the three main policy areas affecting youth—entrepreneurship, continuing education, and youth-police relations—all of which are problematic for the young people who participated in the pilot.

The reality of youth studied in the pilot is characterized by lack of protection and shelter due to the failure of the government and its agencies, especially the police, as well as the failure of local institutions, including the home, church, and political life, and the power of criminal organizations. As an institution, school functioned best, but accessing education was not always simple for boys. It also seems that Jamaican culture distributes power in such a manner as to allow youth to be abused in various ways. Even to parents, young people are at times mere property. The result is that many youth trust only themselves and their peers. Service providers in many cases became “others” who take from, rather than give to youth and who disrespect their right to life and prospects for the future. Many youth, especially in inner-city communities, are “forced ripe”—they become adults prematurely because they are on their own. Some live with their parents, but emotionally, they feel separate from their families. Throughout the study the one “provider” young people trusted was a friend, and in doing so, a youth had to calculate carefully if such a friend (or crew) was genuine.

The present unsatisfactory treatment of working-class youth by government and local institutions in Jamaica is caused by structures that are embedded in local culture that render young people secondary or less important citizens than adults. These structures are almost invisible and too close for Jamaicans to examine critically. While harmful structures must be changed in the long run, youth must be equipped now with opportunities that allow them to fully maximize their free will and energies, as it is agency that eventually changes structure.

The political will to empower working-class youth in Jamaica is presently unsatisfactory, but not totally lacking. All Jamaican governments have achieved some measure of success in youth development. One of the critical errors has been methodological: rather than construct and support programs with long life spans, governments have almost always built efficient projects, such as the recent “Youth.now.” Such programs, however, end on a crest, leaving youth hanging. At the end of a successful project, the government begins a new project that does not always continue along the same path.

The reality for many developing countries is that governments do not treat youth development as a priority. Rather, they treat formal education as the sum total of youth needs and ignore their major social needs, especially those of survival—the central concern of all youth who have been socially excluded from birth by virtue of where they were born. Governments often provide the best education system they can afford and leave other areas of youth development to international and local nongovernmental agencies. The result is a flow or non-flow of projects guided by the specific emphases and agendas of these agencies.

The present study was based on the premise that dysfunctional social relations between service providers and users, or between government officials and citizens, are symptomatic of deeper, sociocultural institutional norms. These norms are characterized by inequalities in power which are perpetuated and reinforced by everyday interactions and negotiations around service delivery and policy implementation (Bourdieu 1977). Consequently, policy interventions must tackle deep structural norms. Social change must aim to build individual and group capabilities and find ways to change the formal and informal institutional structures that govern people’s behavior and influence the success or failure of the choices that they make. The question is then: What can be done to provide a more youth-friendly environment in Jamaica that enables young people (including those of the poorest households) to access the social and psychological assets they need to survive and, in turn, contribute positively to their family, community, and society?

Young Jamaicans are agents capable of effecting institutional change, but they must first be empowered to spur this change. Two sets of interrelated factors are critical in the drive

to increase the capacity of youth: their agency, or asset base, and their opportunity structure, or the institutional context in which they must act to effect change.

Increasing the asset base of Jamaican youth: Recommendations

Building the capacity of youth goes beyond formal education to include access to information and entitlements, participation in the formation of policies to change harmful power relationships with authority figures, and tackling gender dimensions of agency (and thus strengthening the psychological assets of young men and women). It also includes building their self-esteem and capacity to aspire to a different kind of life than that of violent crime and the commoditization of sex.

Given that physical and material resources form the foundation of any asset base, it makes sense to expand Jamaica's "infant" welfare system—the Programme for Advancement through Health and Education (PATH)—to cover all members of households below the poverty line, with a focus on youth under 24. The country needs a fully developed welfare system; program coverage could gradually be expanded by, say, one percent per year (or every two years) until all citizens living below the poverty line—just over 14 percent of the population—are covered. At present less than 10 percent of the population is covered by PATH. In the 2007 budget presentation of the prime minister, children under 18 years of age were offered free health care . This offer should be followed by full, compulsory, state-supported education through the secondary level. Such a program should be designed to support all “needy” students, such as those forced to engage in economic activities at the expense of attending school. Such students should be selected based on the recommendation of guidance counselors and/or needs-assessment programs in the schools.

At present youth need to attend school 80 percent of the time in order to receive assistance from PATH. This is problematic for the neediest youth, whose parents are forced to send them to “hustle.” This rule should be revised so that social workers can work with troubled families to assess what is needed to keep both boys and girls from the most destitute homes in school. The ILO (2001) and Gayle (2004) studies, among others, have shown that the destitution of households cripples boys first, as they are the first to be sacrificed by the family to keep females out of prostitution and avoid an embarrassing disintegration of the family. Programs such as Children First have succeeded in helping

male youth get an education by combining education and skills training with income generation. More interventions of this nature need to be established and/or existing programs expanded and supported. Under PATH the government could introduce or provide incentives to companies to offer young males work in an apprenticeship system that would allow them to “learn and earn.” There is no doubt that if welfare programs were expanded, male youth would be included, a policy change with implications for reducing social violence and social disorder, as well as the risk of young men’s death at the hands of gangs and the police. It is expected that the vulnerability of female youth to sexual abuse would also be reduced. Finally, PATH could develop “welfare-to-work” for the breadwinners of households, enabling families to graduate from the dependency on welfare, a change with implications for the empowerment of youth.

To increase the asset base of its young people, Jamaica needs a strong youth development program. All needed departments and administrations to effect youth development exist on paper. The Ministry of Education and Youth has a youth division called the National Centre for Youth Development. However, inefficiencies and structural weaknesses hinder it from being effective. It is recommended that the National Centre be given human and material resources independent of the control of the Ministry of Education to:

- guide and monitor youth organizations in communities, ensuring, for example, that youth clubs are led by youth and adults act in only a facilitating role;
- establish strong programs suitable to young people’s needs. One such program appears to be information centers, which have been set up in two municipalities and to which youth have flocked. These centers are, however, under-resourced and more should be set up; and
- assist youth organization projects run by NGOs. Some NGOs/CBOs are struggling to sustain youth programs. The greatest challenge seems to be that of paying administrative staff, largely because donors are more willing to fund projects than staff. Many organizations would achieve much more if they had government support to at least maintain their staff.

Alternatively, with the same mandate, resources, and arrangements, the responsibility for youth development could be returned to the Social Development Commission of the Ministry of Local Government. The SDC has a long history of responsibility for youth

issues and will in any case need to integrate youth clubs and other organizations into the broader community and area councils which are its current portfolio.

Expand the country's "second-chance" education and skills-training program to address the growing needs of the many youth who never completed basic schooling. At present the HEART (Human Employment and Resource Training) agency provides second-chance education and skills training. However, it needs to be expanded to provide a greater second-chance net for disadvantaged youth. The program also needs to be continuously monitored to ensure that it meets the shifting needs of the country's youth. Some respondents in the study, particularly males, did not even have the basic qualification to benefit from the HEART program because they were illiterate. Literacy training centers are thus needed for out-of-school youth, both in rural areas (where distance affects school attendance and post-secondary school training) and urban areas (where illiteracy is an absolute block to obtaining work and moving forward in life). With the help of special software programs, literacy can be acquired while simultaneously imparting computer competence, an approach designed to attract most youth, including those too ashamed to attend conventional literacy classes. Five such centers (four in Kingston and one in Montego Bay) have been already set up by the Violence Prevention Alliance, but this number is small compared to the dimension of the problem.

Youth in the study also said that they did not feel empowered in the area of reproductive health. Access to information has always been a problem for youth in Jamaica, not because of a lack of effort on the part of organizers, but largely due to methodology. To date the peer-educator method has proven most effective. ***Open wellness centers run by youth where young people can learn from peer educators and friends about themselves in an environment where there are no threats from authority figures.*** The Youth Information Centre in Portmore is one such example. The Children First Wellness Centre in Spanish Town is another success story. The recommendation here is to provide other communities with similar resources to deal with the information deficit that robs youth of options when faced with decision-making challenges, including those in the area of reproductive health.

Lack of rural development and the plight of rural youth are two sides of the same coin. Rural development is an easier task in Jamaica than changing social life in the inner

cities. This is true because there are no remote rural villages left in Jamaica—a major town is always within a 10-mile radius to serve as a source of training, employment, and entertainment. Equally important is the fact that rural communities are stable and peaceful and therefore attractive. Rural development involves two core goals and a splinter of minor ones. The key goals are the development of human resources (or attracting and sustaining youth) and the maintenance of the physical environment. (see Kellogg 2004). **[Nora:found the article, it is not about a road: <http://www.aasa.org/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?ItemNumber=1137&snItemNumber=950&tnItemNumber=>** A rural community can, for example, die or be reborn by the mere closure or construction of a road. In Eastern Jamaica many communities have died because neither the national government nor any other agency repaired the roads that serve as the vein of cultural and economic exchange between those communities and Kingston. Undoubtedly the work of SDC in rural communities must be encouraged. The ideas of eco- or rural community tourism promoted by the SDC and some NGOs are particularly relevant. Nonetheless, such programs will require some degree of maintenance and external support, as rural communities often lack managerial resources.

Changing the institutions that hinder youth empowerment

Enhancing youth empowerment in Jamaica will mean challenging existing hierarchical forms of social institutions, including the family, church, and school, through intervention policies. It will also mean transforming the interface of outsider-insider contacts, particularly changing the rules that govern the interaction of the police and male youth, as well as transforming the rules governing gender relations, via interaction and mediation.

Strengthen the legal framework to ensure that every youth has the right to life and prospects for a future. Much work is needed to establish and monitor policies to protect the rights of youth in Jamaica. Programs that bring legal frameworks out of the books to the violent streets of the inner city and the quiet, deserted streets of the hills need to be supported. This requires activating all child protection legislation and equipping the Child Development Agency with the resources to be efficient.

Many Jamaican parents do not even know the rights of their children. Severe weakness in parenting is recognized by inner-city residents themselves, as well as by external city social workers and education specialists, as a primary source of the problems of Jamaican youth. ***Urgent attention to this problem is needed, including the expansion and intensification of parental training and guidance programs offered by nongovernmental organizations, schools, and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs).*** The Coalition for Better Parenting is an NGO deserving of assistance in this area. The Change from Within program out of the University of the West Indies, a revolutionary approach to teaching in primary and secondary schools, also draws strongly on parental involvement and is equally deserving of support.

Police-youth relations will not get better overnight, but the dialogue requested by youth can help start a process of change. Police youth clubs have been the most successful engine of change in inner-city communities, but problems must be addressed if they are to succeed in meeting their community policing objectives. First, police need to respect youth's right to privacy. The fact that young people become members of a police youth club does not automatically make them "informers." Somehow the police needs to help the community see the distinction between a youth club member and a police informer, given that the latter is likely to be sentenced to death and killed in communities with organized violence. It is not surprising that police youth clubs do not thrive in communities with high levels of social violence. Second, greater support must be given to community policing overall. Kerr-Brown, Gregory, and Brown (2004) found that there is strong support for community policing in the region among both community residents and police officers. However, efforts to implement this type of policing are hampered by continued reliance on a "command leadership" style and lack of commitment to a more integrated approach on the part of police officers.

Demand transparency and accountability from the police. There is no evidence to show that youth cannot change. Studies have shown that youth distinguish good from bad police officers and while they attack the bad, they will protect the good from attacks by other young people (see Levy, Gayle, and Stultz 2001; Levy 1996). This fact is reassuring. It suggests that youth will treat the police differently if they are first treated with respect. The focus of transparency and accountability must be on helping policemen

find creative ways to interact with the youth as human beings. Undoubtedly, the Conflict Resolution Foundation and other mediation agencies could set up programs that foster interaction between male youth and the police. In order to effect this change among police, training in community policing must be extended to the Jamaica Constabulary Force and carried beyond formal and preliminary training to on-the-job training, with adequate monitoring and reward mechanisms. It is, in fact, a timely moment for such training, as the Ministry of Justice is undergoing a reform of the courts and the general system of justice.

Keep boys in school by correcting the female bias in intake, placement, and teaching methodology in the education system. Jamaica is one of the few countries in the world where demands for gender equity are increasingly coming from the traditionally “stronger sex.” Formal education, skills training, and even second-chance programs are dominated by females in Jamaica, as they receive greater support from parents and other local institutions than do boys. The data show that compared to females, male youth are disproportionately entering the labor force prematurely and finding it difficult to access educational assets to make positive life-changing decisions. This was one of the critical findings of the present study—that males were often an embarrassment to their female counterparts in working-class communities and could not compete with “outside” men for the attention of these females.

The female bias in the education system is compounded by a lack of support for male education and the socialization of boys in the country, which encourages them to view education as secondary to providing for their families—a mark of manhood that many seek at too early an age. Chevannes (1999) has made an association between the poor education of males, violence, and poor sexual behavior; he has consequently appealed for policy and community intervention to ensure that boys stay in school. One way keep young males in school might be to give incentives to secondary schools that find creative means to maintain balanced male-female enrollment and attendance ratios. Another might be to enforce child labor laws that forbid parents to push their sons prematurely into the labor force, while concurrently helping these desperate families break the cycle of poverty that disempowers working-class males.

Annex 1. Jamaica 2015: Social Policy Goals

To realize the vision of a better Jamaica, the Government commits itself to achieving progress towards the following key goals, constantly assessing our progress, reformulating our policies and strategies according to the best analysis and information available, and reporting back to the Jamaican people on the progress that has been achieved.

Jamaica 2015:

*A framework and action plan for improving effectiveness,
collaboration, and accountability in the delivery of social policy*

Government of Jamaica (2002)

Key Outcome Goals of *Jamaica 2015*

1. Human security

A peaceful and mutually respectful society with increased safety, security, and freedom from fear in the home and in public spaces.

2. Social integration

An inclusive and non-discriminatory society which respects group and individual rights, promotes social justice, accepts diversity, builds trust and communication between all groups.

3. Governance

More effective, complementary, accountable, and transparent government structures, seeking to move decision making closer to the people.

4. Secure and sustainable livelihoods

Widened, higher-quality livelihood and employment opportunities for all Jamaicans, with particular reference to those disadvantaged in the labor market.

5. Environment

Improved environment for quality of life, for Jamaicans living and as yet unborn.

6. Education and skills

An education that facilitates life-long learning and acquisition of social and life skills for all.

7. Health and physical well-being

Enhance the broadly defined health status of the population.

Key Process Goals of *Jamaica 2015*

1. Policy process

Strengthening coherence, timeliness, ownership, participation, and quality in the formulation of social policy.

2. Strategic planning and resource allocation

Strengthening the integration and effectiveness of planning and budget processes through enhanced prioritization, collaboration across ministerial and other boundaries, realism about available resources, reliability of delivery of budget allocations, and flexibility of resource allocation.

3. Responsiveness and institutional learning

Promote the development of a more responsive, people-oriented, and innovative culture in Jamaican social policy institutions.

4. Monitoring of social trends and outcomes

Promote enhanced effectiveness of social information systems in shaping the development of policy through improved timeliness, relevance, richness, presentation, and participation.

Annex 2. Literature and Policy Review

Psychologists have explained many of the dilemmas associated with youth under the age of thirty, as well as the depth of support that they need to wrestle with problems of identity and insecurity. Blank (2000) rightly claims that Jamaican young people are at immense risk—most lack the support and guidance needed from family, schools, and society to ensure a smooth passage through adolescence and early adulthood. Blank describes youth at risk as one of the most pressing concerns of government, civil society, and the international community working in Jamaica. In her view, the problem is complex, caused by a multitude of underlying factors that affect Jamaican youth at various developmental stages. She presents five interrelated issues worth noting (see also box 3):

1. poor quality of education and high rates of school attrition
2. lack of employment opportunities
3. poor reproductive health and high rates of teenage pregnancy
4. unstable home environments, poor parenting, lack of supervision and guidance
5. high levels of crime and violence, including domestic violence and sexual abuse

Box 3. Fact sheet on Jamaican youth at risk

- 25 percent of all Jamaicans are between the ages of 12 and 24
- 26 percent of Jamaicans living in poverty are between the ages of 12 and 24
- over one-third of all young people between the ages of 15 and 16 are no longer enrolled in school; over 60 percent are out of school by age 18
- 46 percent of youth between the ages of 14 and 19, and 30 percent between the ages of 20 and 24, are unemployed
- 30 percent of all births in Jamaica are to teenage girls; every year more than 14,000 babies are born to teenagers, with the teenage fertility rate on the rise
- reported new HIV infections in adolescents have doubled (or nearly so) each year since 1995
- over half of all major crimes are committed by young males, and 30 percent of inmates sentenced to adult correctional facilities are between the ages of 17 and 24

Source: Blank (2000).

Results from a recent study (Fox and Gordon-Strachan 2007) are no less alarming; presenting a picture of Jamaican adolescents of an earlier age group exposed to extreme

violence, sexual abuse and isolation. These youth lack the degree of nurture, protection, and social provision due them from their family, the community, and the state. The result is high-risk behavior and few prospects, especially among boys (see box 4).

Box 4. Risk and resiliency of Jamaican adolescents, aged 10–15 years

- 1 out of 4 (25 percent) adolescents were reported being hungry due to lack of food
- 13 percent reported a lifetime of physical abuse
- 1 out of 3 was a victim of a physical attack
- 4 percent carried weapons (boys were 5 times more likely to do so than girls)
- 2 percent were in a gang at time of the study; 4 percent used to be in a gang
- 5 percent had been shot or stabbed in their lifetimes
- 48 percent had seen a dead body; 39 percent reported that the death was due to a gunshot
- 37 percent of boys and 11 percent of girls consumed alcohol
- 21 percent of boys and 6 percent of girls reported having sexual intercourse
- 9 percent of boys and 24 percent of girls were forced to have sex during their first sexual encounter
- boys were 3 times more likely to work (“hustle”) than girls
- 45 percent of boys and 25 percent of girls had trouble reading
- 52 percent of boys and 67 percent of were girls numerate
- 70 percent had someone in the household with high expectations of them; but only 58 percent of adults would listen to their problems

Source: Fox and Gordon-Strachan (2007).

National youth development

Successive Jamaican governments have attempted to address youth development since independence (1962). Prior to independence, youth development activities were situated within churches and nongovernmental and/or charity groups, such as the Boys Scouts and Girl Guides, Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), and Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). The Jamaica Youth Clubs Council, formed in 1955 out of Jamaica Welfare, is probably the only indication that the government recognized the need for a national youth program in the pre-independence era.

In 1965, soon after independence, legislation was passed to create the Youth Development Agency. In 1973 a Youth and Community Services Division was established and given responsibility for all matters related to youth and community

organizations. In 1994 the government formally set out a National Youth Policy (NYP), which was revised, detailed and given long-term plans for youth development in 2004 (Government of Jamaica 2004). The National Centre for Youth Development (NCYD) was established in 2000 to enable effective coordination of youth-related programs and research, as well as to act as an information clearinghouse. The NCYD is the Youth Division of the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY).²⁴

The evidence shows that the Government of Jamaica has recognized the significance of addressing youth development. Nonetheless, it has failed to provide the physical and financial resources needed to sustain youth programs. According to the Violence Prevention Alliance and Ministry of Health (2006), several hurdles need to be cleared before the NYCD can become fully effective:

- The government's focus is on formal education. Hence "about 90 percent" of the budget allocated to the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture is given to its education division, leaving approximately 10 percent for youth programming. Without question, the funding allotted to youth development is insufficient to meet the needs of youth programs.
- The NCYD's operating status does not allow it to address youth institutions or programs directly. Resources are therefore "not readily accessible," and can be delayed, or "caught up," in the ministry bureaucracy.
- The NCYD acts mainly as a policy maker for youth initiatives and programs; it neither oversees nor monitors their development.
- There are problems in effectively coordinating youth initiatives and programs. The division's small staff and role confusion with the SDC, which also has a number of activities geared towards youth development, have led to duplication of activities and wasted manpower and funds.

Youth, poverty, and social exclusion in Jamaica

There is consensus among experts that, although it may be a contributory factor, individual action or inaction is not the major cause of poverty. The chief causes of poverty are the dynamics of social and economic structures that affect the production and

²⁴ "[The NYCD] plays a limited service delivery role but works closely with other government ministries and agencies. . . to develop and implement programs to address the issues affecting youth in Jamaica" (NYP 2004).

distribution of resources. In developing countries such as Jamaica, welfare systems are poorly developed and a large proportion of the population is exposed to severe exploitation and economic subjugation.

Blank (2000) was correct in recognizing that the most vulnerable persons in Jamaica are youth. Even among the poor, the largest group of those at risk are below age 30. Thirty percent of people in the 15—29-year-old age group (150,000 youth) are unemployed (making allowance for those pursuing education and other activities). Moreover, there are probably another 100,000 youth who, although employed, receive very low wages (the majority of whom are female). Of all unemployed youth, 74 percent have no educational certification of any kind. In the words of Dr. Maureen Samms-Vaughn (Samms-Vaughn 2006)

Children are indeed poor because the adults with whom they live are poor, but the story continues. Poor children are likely to become poor youth and poor adults who have homes with poor children. Children may, therefore, not only be caught in the crossfire of poverty, but may also be caught in the cycle of poverty. One of the primary ways to support youth is to provide their households with employment or skills training or to reduce national poverty. Since the 1990s the Government of Jamaica has increased the momentum of poverty eradication. The establishment of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) in 1996 was a major catalyst, with immediate implications for the amelioration of youth vulnerability (see Salmon 2005). The Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH), which provides support to the most destitute households, came into being in 2002 and is one of the major policy interventions worth noting. In the 2007 budget debate, the Jamaican prime minister stated that she would increase the coverage of this welfare program from 236,000 to 252,000 people, or just under 10 percent of the population (*The Daily Gleaner* 2007).

As a recent survey of living conditions (Government of Jamaica 2005b) showed, despite the significant reduction in national poverty from 35.2 percent of the population in 1992 to 14.8 percent in 2005, the age structure of poor citizens in the country remains unchanged, with the vast majority of poor Jamaicans below age 30. It would seem that in order to address youth poverty, not only must the poverty of households at risk be addressed, but programs must be constructed to directly expand the social safety net for

youth at risk. The impact of this lack of a safety net on youth is most graphic in terms of HIV infection and violence, the leading causes of death of female and male youth, respectively. Robotham (2006) argues that the most socially excluded Jamaicans are poorly educated youth who live primarily in rural areas, where unemployment, underemployment, and poverty rates are highest, as well as those living in the inner cities.

Chevannes and Gayle (1998), with the support of the SDC, outlined the following harsh socioecological conditions typical of inner-city communities in Jamaica:

- ***dense population:*** over 60 percent of the population of these communities are under the age of 30 (more mature residents leave as the communities become battlefields);
- ***unemployment rate of over 30 percent:*** a rate twice the national average (attributable to lack of skills and area stigma, as people fear employing inner-city youth);
- ***low education levels:*** up to 50 percent of residents have not completed secondary school;
- ***poor housing:*** over 40 percent of residents live in tenements and one-third live in one-bedroom dwellings;
- ***poor sanitation:*** one-third of residents share toilet facilities with other families, and more than one-third do not have piped water;
- ***poor physical infrastructure:*** no telephone service, poor roads, and pathways; and
- ***few, if any, active social institutions:*** the most severely deprived communities are socially isolated.

Because urban centers are very visible and the violence in the inner cities of developing countries is so graphic, they force policy makers and donors to look in their direction. Nonetheless, it is also critical to address rural institutions that impact youth to create a geosocial balance. Rural communities have a “feeder” relationship with neighboring towns, producing produce both human and natural resources that enable towns to survive (UNDP 2003). Gordon (1989) was among the first scholars to highlight that 70 percent of the most destitute people living below the poverty line resided in rural farming communities.

Need for comprehensive reproductive health programs

The importance of reproductive health education for youth has been widely acknowledged and such education is increasingly being offered **in Jamaica**. However, the quality of information and, especially, the methodology and mechanism of delivery still need improving. Many parents fail to effectively guide their children through the life-changing passage of adolescence and youth (Gayle et al. 2004). The effectiveness of parents in guiding youth is often affected by their level of education, socioeconomic status, and relationship with their children (Chevannes and Gayle 2000).

Providing information to youth is not, however, enough. Information is only the first step in empowerment. For many young working-class youth, information is useless without comprehensive programs that address their overall needs, especially the root problems that deny their power of choice. In this context the following quote from the Jamaica Family Planning Board (see Gayle et al 2004) is noteworthy:

Although many women are aware of the risks associated with childbearing and want to control their fertility, knowledge of and access to contraceptives do not always translate into effective contraceptive use.

Many programs in Jamaica attend to the reproductive needs of young women, but few really address the problem from all angles. The most obvious weakness has been the victim approach taken by many development agencies. Towards the end of the 1990s, the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation²⁵ recognized the uselessness of this approach. It made the discovery that many girls who had repeat pregnancies in spite of Foundation efforts became pregnant because no work had been done with the baby's fathers, who were often illiterate, unemployed, and unemployable. The Foundation consequently began a program for young men—once labeled “perpetrators”—who were involved with the adolescent mothers, with laudable results. Known as “Men at Risk,” the program remains a flagship of the Foundation.

Lack of a social safety net also makes young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Recent studies (see in particular Gayle et al. 2004; and Williams 2002) have found that many poor female-headed households in Jamaica sacrifice their daughters to older men as

²⁵ Jamaica's premier center for young women who get pregnant during their teenage years.

the last measure to save the family from painful hunger.²⁶ These adolescents become more vulnerable to HIV than full-time prostitutes, as they are less informed and have less negotiating power. This finding has been strongly supported by information from the *Jamaica AIDS Report* (Government of Jamaica 2002):

Adolescent females in the age groups 10–14 and 15–19 years had twice and three times higher risk of HIV infection, respectively, than boys of the same age groups. This is a result of social factors whereby young girls are having sexual relations with HIV-infected older men.

The steady increase in the number of males in commercial sex work is another growing concern in Jamaica, with many articles written about the young age of boys seen on the streets at night (see *Jamaica Observer* 2005). Many have asked why this number has been increasing at such an obvious rate and why male prostitutes have become visible in Kingston, despite strong anti-gay feelings in Jamaican culture. Two studies hint at the answer. Gayle and Chevannes (2000) note that inner-city males (who were the quickest to defend their masculinity in the study) stated that they would have preferred to have been born females because “nothing is happening for young males.” The second study found that a large proportion of unemployed inner city males bleached their skin to seek older, employed females and concluded that the new “metrosexual” wave in the inner city was an appeal to policy makers for help (Harris 2007).

Male youth: Dying but ignored

Everyone acknowledges the power and potential of young men in Jamaica, but very few civic and development groups target them as agents of change. Groups such as Children First, Area Youth Foundation, Fathers Incorporated, the Women’s Centre of Jamaica, and the Peace Management Initiative are more the exception than the rule. The Jamaican government has also tended to focus more on young women and to neglect young men (Anderson 2001).

The paradox is that the lack of support facilities seems to suggest that young males are without needs, whereas they are, in fact, more vulnerable than their female counterparts to the challenges of adolescence and youth (see Chevannes 2001; Levy et al. 2001; and

²⁶ As many as 43 percent of girls involved in commercial sex in the ILO/Children First (2001) study of adolescents in Spanish Town acted with their mothers’ consent.

Brown and Chevannes 1998). In Jamaica working-class males receive considerably less support through adolescence and early adulthood than their female counterparts. It is not surprising that the *Jamaican Youth Risk and Resiliency Behaviour Survey* of 2005 found that boys demonstrated more negative behavior and faced graver survival challenges. The result is that three young males die violently each day in Jamaica.²⁷

Compared to teenage girls, adolescent males are more likely to:

- be outnumbered and outperformed in school;
- be physically abused at school and home;
- be on the street and out of school;
- experience domestic accidents, violence, and other trauma;
- use harmful drugs;
- commit suicide—not just attempt to do so;
- not be adopted, but remain in “safe houses;”
- not receive support from parents, relatives, educators, or NGO/government agency personnel; and
- live below the radar—unseen, unnoticed, and unattended (Lewis 2001).

The situation of black adolescent males in London (many of whom are of Jamaican parentage) seems to be quite similar to that of the Jamaican working-class male youth,²⁸ as one observation makes clear: “[O]nly in the cases of sexual abuse and overwork in the domestic sphere are black adolescent females in this city [London] more vulnerable than adolescent males.”

Evans (1999) found twice as many girls as boys in the high-performing track of the Jamaican schools she studied. Of note, placement into the low-performing track had a greater negative impact on girls’ sense of belonging. Several studies (Evans 1999; Chevannes 1999; and Bailey et al. 1996) found that boys were more likely to accept placement in low-performing tracks due to the low expectations their female teachers had of them. Regardless of enrollment levels, girls attend school more regularly and have more school supplies than boys (Gayle et al. 2004, Mitchelmore and Clarke 1993). The

²⁷ Estimates based on 2005 and 2006 data of the National Intelligence Bureau of Jamaica. See Government of Jamaica (2005a and 2006).

²⁸ See Gayle et al. (2004), Gayle (2002), Chevannes (2001), Evans (1999), Bailey et al. (1996), and Mitchelmore and Clarke (1993).

pattern of attrition from school for males in Jamaica is very dramatic. In primary schools, enrollment is similar for boys and girls. By age 14, however, boys from families in the lower economic strata begin to drop out in large numbers. By the end of secondary school, the attrition rate of males is significantly higher than that of females (see Chevannes 1999). And at the tertiary level, males are drastically outnumbered: in recent years only one in five graduates of the University of the West Indies has been a male. The problem is largely lack of support for the education of males.

But for the attention of a few caring agencies, many youth who drop out of school would go unnoticed in Jamaica. Thousands of children in Jamaica fall into a variety of “out-of-place” categories, including the street, at home, working in agriculture, and sexually exploited. Much can be learned about the situation of child laborers in Jamaica—with implications for urban and, to a lesser extent, rural Jamaica—from the ILO/Children First (2001) *Baseline Survey on Child Labour: Spanish Town*. In some communities, an estimated 60 percent of school-age children (mainly boys) were not in school in 2001. One in five youth absent from school was on the street hustling (i.e., trying to make money). The large majority (87 percent) of working children were doing so with their parents’ consent, even insistence. Working children were found to suffer from a number of illnesses, including frequent flu and fever (77.4 percent), respiratory problems (11.3 percent), eye and ear infections (3.5 percent) and sexually transmitted diseases (2.6 percent). Overall 20 percent of the sample could be described as “high-risk” children, as they were:

- habitual users of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine
- sexually active with multiple partners and engaging in unprotected sex
- the recipients of either physical, sexual, or psychological abuse
- sometimes carrying a weapon

Anderson (1997) stated that in Jamaica, there is greater a demand for low-skilled male labor than low-skilled female labor. This fact serves as a disincentive for boys to continue school. It therefore makes sense that in the past decade, males aged 14–19 have comprised 25 to 30 percent of the male labor force, compared to teenage females, who have comprised less than 20 percent of the female labor force during the same period. The reality is that the labor market in Jamaica is structured to “pre-harvest” males. The

result is a less skilled and less educated male labor force, as premature entry jeopardizes their possibilities for future career paths. Labor force data show that young males among the unemployed of Jamaica have very little support outside of their parents and themselves. Unemployed young women have two additional sources of financial support: partners and “friends,” a category one assumes is associated with their sexuality.

Labor data for the past decade show that on average, unemployed males “hustle” 10 percent of the money they spend, compared to 3 percent for females (Government of Jamaica 2006). Some studies (see Gayle et al. 2004; and Gayle 1996) have detailed the “hustling” activities of young unemployed men, much of which is illegal. The implications of these findings must be seen not only in terms of crime, but also violence, as many hustling youth are beaten and shot by both civilians and the police, and have to use aggression in order to survive (Levy 1996).

Unsurprisingly, males account for over 80 percent of all hospital admissions for violence-related injuries in Jamaica; over two-thirds of these males are under the age of 30. Data from the National Intelligence Bureau (Government of Jamaica 2006) show that three-quarters of all homicides in the country are committed by males under age thirty against males of the same age group. Additionally, the police kill over a hundred young males each year and youth are responsible for the death of ten police officers yearly.

Youth-police relations

According to Harriott (2000), there is a popular notion that the Jamaican police socially cleanse and oppress the poor; this role has not changed since 1865, when the police was created by the British planter class to crush the resistance of the natives. The many police forces formed in the British colonies in the nineteenth century were not modeled on the “new” police in England; but on the Irish or Ulster police model. They were distinct from the former in that they were organized along military lines and therefore always armed. They were also centrally controlled as a national or territorial force, and thus indistinguishable from a military garrison (Anderson and Killingray 1991). Of critical importance is the fact that this colonial police force—which was designed to protect the propertied class and maintain social order, not prevent or detect crime—remains intact in Jamaica (Harriott 2000).

In post-independent Jamaica, the authorities established a strong police force to ensure social order in the face of growing violence. Twelve “special squads” of the Jamaica Constabulary Force have been formed since 1990. Operated as semi-autonomous entities, these squads have often been accused of using the most brutal tactics (including alleged extrajudicial killings) in their operations against male youth of the inner city (Jamaicans for Justice 2001).

Youth-police relations are usually a reflection of the degree of social violence in a given community. Community policing or the application of the “new” police model, in whatever form, is an indicator of some degree of stability in an enduring community. The more violent a community, the more likely police strategy will be to attack (Kerr-Brown, Gregory, and Brown 2004). And the more the police attack inner-city youth, the more youth prepare for war with the police, which means the more they build their arsenal (Gayle 2007).

There is one enduring tool of community policing: the police youth club. Of the 1,138 youth clubs in Jamaica, 387 are police youth clubs. The Community Relations Division of the Jamaica Constabulary Force reports that 210 (54 percent) of these clubs are active. Many police youth clubs have well-developed youth programs; the clubs often serve as centers where youth gain various income-generating and social skills and develop a sense of self. Equally important is the fact that police youth clubs develop good youth-police relations (Violence Prevention Alliance and Ministry of Health 2006).

Rights of the child

One of the primary concerns raised by this study is the need to encourage the rights of youth in Jamaica. According to Brown (2002), children’s rights are a foreign concept in Jamaica, perceived by parents as something that is practiced in the North. Jamaica’s undeveloped public welfare system places the onus on children to act as the pension funds of their parents (Gayle et al. 2004). Brown (2002) notes that although parents do not consider their children “slaves,” they do view them as economic property—an investment in whom they invest, as they do in chickens.

There have been a number of significant developments in the policy framework for protecting and upholding children’s rights since Brown (2002) published her observation. These include the establishment of the Child Development Agency in 2003, passage of

the Child Care and Child Protection Act in 2004, and the establishment of the Office of Children's Advocate in 2005. While these efforts are commendable, it must be remembered that damaging social structures take years to form and are not changed overnight.

Annex 3. Community Score Card on Youth-Police Relations used in Selected Communities

JASPEV Community Score Card on Youth-Police Relations*		
Name of Community:	Code: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Name of Parish Code <input type="checkbox"/><input type="checkbox"/>
Sex <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	Age <input type="checkbox"/> 15-19 <input type="checkbox"/> 20-24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25-29	
Standard service indicators	Level of satisfaction with services ^a	
Level of trust youth have in police		
Level of respect and courtesy displayed by police		
Level of fairness displayed by police		
Level of effort made by police to interact with youth		
Additional empowerment indicators		
Level of youth access to information about police activities and services		
Level of youth willingness to use police services (e.g., reporting incidents)		
Ability of youth to officially complain about inappropriate police behavior and/or actions		
Level of youth willingness to officially complain about inappropriate police behavior and/or actions		
Level of youth hope that youth-police relations can improve		

Note: * Adjusted for empowerment research on youth-police relations.

Annex 4. Themes and Sub-Themes Explored in PEER Interviews

Theme 1: Identity

What do your brethrin/friends say about:

Perception: How young people see themselves (other young people/ enemies/ friends/ badman/ go thru people)? How do others see young people (adults/ church people/ teachers/ adults in family/ businesspeople)? How do adults see young people's dress (i.e., different types of dress)?

Expectations: What expectations do adults have of young people?

Opportunity: What opportunities do adults give young people? What kind of opportunities do young people have in the community (the church/ home/ workplace/ school / street/ other young people/ peers)?

Hopes/aspirations: What are the hopes and aspirations of young people? How do they achieve their goals?

Choices: What choices do they (young people) make? What choices do adults make for them (why and how)? How do these affect them (brethren)? What do they say about teenage pregnancy and unprotected sex?

Participation and belonging: How do they participate in decision making in their community? Who are their friends and how do they select them? How do they show loyalty and trust to each other? How do they cooperate with one another? How does influence affect belonging to a crew? What do they do to belong?

Theme 2: Support and authority

What do your brethrin/friends say about:

Support: How do young people get support (in the inner city/ IN rural areas)? Where / from whom? What kind of support? When? For how long? What is good and what is bad about the support they get? What do they (young people) have to give back? If there is no support, what do they do? Where do they turn? What kind of support do they need? Why?

Role models: Who do they look up to and why? What influence do entertainers/ artistes have and why?

Authority: Who has authority over young people (over which youth? different types of youth)? Why? What kind of authority do these different people have and how do they use

it? How do young people respond to rules set by family/ work/ the law/ school/ the street? How are these rules set? What happens to young people if they don't follow the rules (of the family/ law/ teachers/ pastors/ gang/ work)? How and why? What do they have to do to get respect from adults (how and why)?

Theme 3: Youth-police relations

What do your brethren/friends say about:

Trust: Do they trust the police? Is it safe to trust the police? Why/ why not? Do police trust youth? Why/ why not? What needs to be done to build trust between youth and police?

Protection: Do young people feel protected by the police/ the community? Do police feel safe with youth? Why/ Why not? Who provides protection for youth? How?

Treatment: What techniques do police use in dealing with youth (different types of youth—males/females)? How does dress affect this? Area stigma? Are young people treated differently (than adults) by police? Why? How?

Expectations: What should be expected of police by young people? What should police expect of youth?

Changing relations: What are police doing to stop crime in the community? What should they do? How do police add to and/or reduce crime and violence in the community? What's behind the bad/good relations between police and youth in your community? What are the stories? What can young people do to reduce crime and violence in the community and how?

Glossary

badman. An inner-city Jamaican male who presents a metrosexual and even homosexual image concurrently with that of a gangster (badman). A badman battyman may bleach his face, pierce his body, wear tight-fitting clothing, braid his hair, and wear earrings that are traditionally worn by females, but also be a member of a gang.

battyman. Homosexual male.

bleachers. People who bleach their epidermis, either as part of a fad or a disguise.

bombo. Strong Jamaican expletive.

boops. Verb – The act of a woman taking a man’s money repeatedly, often without having sexual intercourse with him as contracted or agreed. Noun – the victim of this type of scam.

box. Noun and verb – A smack or to be smacked, especially in the face. The harm intended is physical, especially to show disrespect or power.

bredrin. An adaptation of the word “brethren” used to refer to a male friend who is as close as a brother. Unlike brethren, it is a singular noun. The plural form is “bredrin dem.”

Coolblue Gap. Pseudonym for a rural community located in the Blue Mountains, Jamaica.

crof. An unproductive person—someone considered a failure or embarrassment to his/her parents or community.

crosses. A person who is considered to be a problem.

dem. Them.

don. Head of a gang or local executive of a political garrison or pool of voters.

forced ripe or “fouce ripe.” A Jamaican metaphor for fruits or children that seem to mature too quickly and thus lack quality. As used in this paper, *forced ripe* is intended to allow non-Creole speakers to understand the connotation regarding Jamaican youth, but also to highlight the impact of the country’s social structure on young people.

garrison. Communities of voters designed to allow a Member of Parliament in Jamaica to win repeat victories. A garrison is created when a building in a large-scale housing development is allocated to supporters of a specific political party. Political homogenization is then maintained party activists, who push out the minority from

within and guard against invasion from without. A hard-core garrison community exhibits an element of autonomy—it is a state within a state—and is usually characterized by a drug economy and a high level of violence.

go-go. A stripper or striptease.

Harasson Gardens. Pseudonym for an inner-city community of Kingston, Jamaica, known for poor community-police relations.

love sweets. To take a bribe or participate in drug smuggling.

lash work or mash a work. To carry out a task or contract that is criminal, including robbery or even murder.

mek. Make.

nuff. Many.

nuh. No.

pon. On.

pree. This term is used in several contexts. The most popular connotation is to stare at someone absorbedly, often with the intent to do harm (e.g., “I see de enemies a pree me.”). The term can also have the positive connotation of assessing someone or a situation. In this context, one can pree oneself or a friend.

passa passa. Gossip or excitement about the misfortune of someone.

pikni/pikini. Child.

piss you out. Give birth.

Poyuton Terrace. Pseudonym for an inner-city community of Kingston, Jamaica, with an active police youth club and evidence of good police relations with some youth.

residential. A play on words used to describe someone who lives in a middle-class community. It hints at social exclusion in Jamaica and how inner-city residents feel about themselves. The inner city is not residential, even though people there reside in houses.

sistrin. A female friend who is as close as a sister. The plural form is “sistrin dem.”

shots beat. Shots fired like beats of a drum. Refers to gang violence.

shotta. A gunman who works alone or as part of a gang.

sketel. Part-time prostitute or loose young female.

smaddie. Somebody or someone.

spliff. Cigarette, usually made of marijuana.

tek. Take.

trigger happy: Someone who loves to pull the trigger of his gun or loves to kill.

what sweet nanny goat going to run dem belly. A colloquial expression meaning that resent joy will turn into sorrow later; it usually refers to sex and the possibility of pregnancy as a consequence.

wuk di money. To earn money; when used with reference to women, it suggests prostitution.

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