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CHILDREN IN FOCUS

Unmasking Child Sexual Abuse



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CHILDREN IN FOCUS CONTENTS

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CHILDREN IN FOCUS

FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE'S DESK

Violence against children knows no boundaries. It cuts across race, class, religion and culture.

In every country of the world there are children who continue to fear and experience violence. No country or region is immune and indications from the legal sector in the sub region point to an ever increasing incidence of violence against children in the Eastern Caribbean.

It is against this backdrop that governments of the Eastern Caribbean and UNICEF have prioritized work against the abuse of children, and particularly that of sexual violation of children in their joint work plan for 2008-2011.

The programmes being executed to stem the tide of violence against children are in recognition that it is critical that our young citizens be provided with a safe environment if we are to create a Caribbean Fit for Children.

Even strong, healthy children can be victims of abuse. A well nourished and immunized child who is beaten is not a healthy child. A young girl in a school anywhere in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean is unlikely to fulfill her full learning potential if she is sexually abused at home.

Here in the region and globally UNICEF helps to create a protective environment for children and one that fortifies them against abuse in the same way that good nutrition and adequate health care fortify them against disease. Creating this protective environment is the best chance we have of safeguarding all boys and girls.

Abuse and exploitation can have a devastating effect on an individual child, but what is often unacknowledged is the cumulative toll that child abuse and exploitation can exert upon a society's social and economic development.

Because exploitation can keep a child out of school, in poor health and subject to physical and psychological abuse, it robs children of their chance to fulfill their potential as citizens of a strong and productive Caribbean.

When we consider that scores of children in the sub region are victims of exploitation, abuse and violence each year, multiplied many

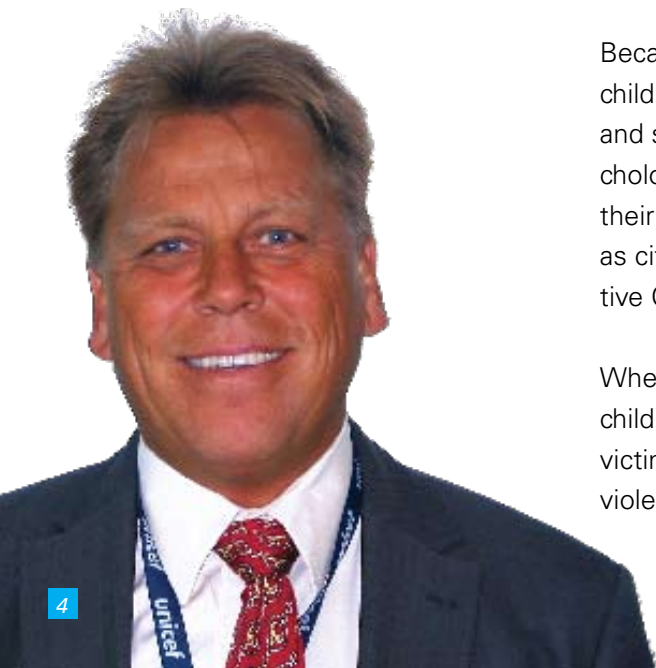
times over we begin to realize how these acts against children can rob a society of its potential for development.

All children have a right to grow up in an environment that ensures their protection. The need to protect children cuts across all areas of UNICEF's work as we seek to help our partners in government, non government organizations and societies in general to give effect to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which all Eastern Caribbean governments have signed and ratified.

It is the responsibility not only of governments, but of every member of society to work towards the attainment of this protective environment. Let us therefore collectively work to help create communities in which every child can live in safety and dignity in the Caribbean.

This issue of the Children in Focus Magazine focuses on the particularly sensitive issue of sexual abuse against children and takes a look at the developments throughout the Eastern Caribbean. It details a survivor's story and highlights the main findings of a Study on the Perceptions and Attitudes to Child Sexual Abuse in the Eastern Caribbean which this office has carried out.

As we read let us all recommit to making this sub region a safer and better place for our children.



by
TOM OLSEN
UNICEF Representative to Barbados & the Eastern Caribbean

Dear Parliamentarian:

ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: WHAT EVERY PARLIAMENTARIAN SHOULD KNOW AND DO

Honourable Member, many children - every human being under the age of 18 - are routinely exposed to physical, sexual and psychological violence in their homes and schools, care and justice institutions, and their communities. Some of this violence remains legal, state-authorised and socially approved.

As a member of your national Parliament, you are among the foremost champions for protecting children. You can legislate, oversee government activity, lobby for the allocation of financial resources, and raise awareness of these issues.

You can advocate within your constituency for an end to all forms of violence. You can challenge attitudes and beliefs that treat violence against children as inevitable or harmless. You can spread the message that violence against children is preventable. You can mobilise the political will required to end to such violence.

Following are five key messages that you should know about violence against children:-

#1 - Violence against children occurs on a large scale and in a range of settings

As many as 80-98% of children suffer from physical punishment in their homes, with a third or more experiencing severe physical punishment resulting from the use of implements.

In surveys of 21 countries, at least 7% of females (ranging up to 36%) and 3% of males (ranging up to 29%) reported sexual victimization during their childhood.

Of women who reported first sex prior to age 15, between 11-45% reported that it was forced.

#2 - Violence Against Children is often under-reported

Only a small proportion of all acts of violence against children is reported and investigated, and few perpetrators are held to account.

#3 - Violence can have a devastating impact on children

The consequences of violence against children vary according to its nature and severity, but the short and long term consequences can be devastating. Maturing brains and nervous and immune systems can be affected. Behaviours that cause disease, injury and social problems can result. The economic costs of violence against children are high - and are often unrecognized and therefore not calculated.

#4 - States are obligated to protect all children from all forms of violence

Your country has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child which require States to protect children from all forms of violence, to prevent and respond to violence and to provide support to children who are victims of violence.

Your Government should also sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, if it has not yet done so. The actions of this Protocol are not optional, they are vital to the effective protection of all children in your country.

#5 - Parliamentarians have a key role to play in ending violence against children

You are key to ensuring that the cycle of violence is broken. The children of the Eastern Caribbean look forward to your affirmative action in their best interest.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Stewart

Child Protection Specialist

UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean



CHILDREN IN FOCUS

LOOKING INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

UNICEF/BECO/2007/Asael

There are arguably more resources dedicated to tackling child sexual abuse than ever before, however, there is also increasing evidence that child protection services are failing to reduce the prevalence of child sexual abuse and are unable to keep up with the growing global menace of commercial sexual exploitation.

Despite all that we think we know, the child protection systems of more economically developed countries are increasingly being seen as ineffective at best and at worst, they sometimes simply substitute one form of abuse for another – the subjection of children to invasive and insensitive institutional procedures which themselves may be harmful. These systems are also costly and overly complex to administer.

In the USA the child protection

'industry' costs over US\$100 billion annually, yet child abuse is said to be increasing and similarly in the United Kingdom the cost of maintaining child protection systems is high – over a £1 Billion a year amidst suggestions that most of the resources are committed to dealing with the aftermath of abuse rather than its prevention.

Less economically developed countries should learn from lessons arising out of systems developed elsewhere, but should not emulate them. What are needed are policies, practices and systems that are grounded in the reality of cultural and social location and utilise the strengths of the families and communities. They have the most to lose and to gain by protecting their children.

This was the background for a study of child sexual abuse in the Eastern Caribbean.

The need for this research was based on recognition that social programmes to prevent and address child sexual abuse must be built on knowledge of the *localised* situations, behaviours and attitudes that contribute to its existence.

Caribbean Contexts

While the effects of child abuse are a part of the lived reality of survivors and as such are 'concrete' and real, it is also the case that perceptions and definitions of child abuse are socially constructed. The meanings ascribed to the term are a product of specific cultural, social and historical contexts.

Child maltreatment has existed throughout history (infanticide, abandonment, severe physical punishment, prostitution, incest, harsh labour), however what is considered to be abusive in

a particular society alters over time and in relation to particular circumstances.

Although there is extensive international research, few empirical studies of child sexual abuse have been carried out in the Caribbean and there are no reliable data on the prevalence of child sexual abuse, or indeed on attitudes and perceptions of abuse across the region.

Statistics are generally collected on convictions for sexual offences involving children, however these figures do not include reported cases, they do not address the problem of under-reporting and quantitative methods are in any case, inadequate for investigating the complexities of sexual abuse.

A World Population Council study of adult survivors in Latin America and the Caribbean concluded though that forced sexual initiation and early childhood abuse were not uncommon in the Caribbean.

Additionally, in many Caribbean countries the onset of sexual activity is occurring at younger ages and we know from other research that early sexual initiation is positively correlated with child sexual abuse.

Also linked with early sexual 'debut' is the increasing practice of the commercialisation of sex among minors as a commodity for material exchange.

Recent research suggests that boys and girls, especially those in poverty, are using sex as a source of economic exchange (exchanging sex for money or material goods) and young girls especially, are at risk of being solicited for child prostitution.

Research about perceptions and attitudes to child sexual abuse is important to determine whether perceptual and conceptual differences contribute to the social and cultural sanctioning of child sexual abuse in some communities.

Questions such as, is incest more prevalent in communities where there is a disconnection between meanings associated with incest and perceptions of abuse, need to be explored.

We also need to find out if factors specific to the Caribbean region create specific risks for children; for instance there is increasing concern that the 'mini-bus' culture may be a breeding ground for transactional sex with children and for predatory grooming behaviours.

Another factor is tourism, which while recognised as presenting risks for children in countries such as Thailand and the Philippines, has not been identified at the policy level as a particular threat to children in the Caribbean even though children are increasingly presenting in cases of tourism-related child prostitution.

Child sexual abuse is universally criminalized across the Caribbean however there has been little research into the social and cultural factors that contribute to its existence. Furthermore, little is known about new threats to children such as the growth of technologically-driven forms of abuse (mobile phones, text messaging and internet abuse) in a context in which the increased access to computers has not been matched with safeguarding measures. Also, there is a need to understand the ways in which phenomena such as migration impact upon the prevalence of child

sexual abuse, as it relates to a) the movement of persons convicted of crimes against children, b) the trafficking of children and c) the care and supervision of children left behind when parents migrate.

The Study

The study arose out of a joint programming initiative of UNICEF and UNIFEM, together with key stakeholders across the region, and is aimed at reducing sexual violence against children. The study examined the attitudes and meanings associated with the term 'sexual abuse' within the Eastern Caribbean.

Conceived of as an *Action Research* project, the process of investigation itself increased awareness and built alliances for the prevention of child sexual abuse. Perhaps most importantly, the results are helping to identify culturally-relevant, strengths-based interventions to reduce the associated psychological trauma and subsequent psychopathology for children and young people affected.

Headed by Professor Adele Jones, Professor of Childhood Studies at The University of Huddersfield, UK, together with Mrs. Ena Trotman Jemmott, Programme Advisor, NCH International, the team comprised researchers from the Caribbean with expertise across a range of disciplines: social work, psychology, child law, psychotherapy.

Adele Jones is Professor of Childhood Studies, University of Huddersfield, UK

Ena Trotman Jemmott was Programme Advisor (Caribbean), Action for Children.

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UNMASKING SEXUAL ABUSE



UNICEF/BECO/2007/Asael

THE STUDY

This landmark study represented the first comprehensive investigation of child sexual abuse across several Caribbean countries.

It was underpinned by the philosophy that policy and programmes for dealing with child sexual abuse should be relevant to the cultural and social context in which abuse occurs.

The Study aimed to understand how Caribbean people perceive the problem, what behaviours and social conditions contribute to it, what the impact of child sexual abuse is on those most affected, and what views are held about the forms of action that might be needed.

The objectives were to:

- Increase understanding of the perceptions and behaviours associated with child sexual abuse, including incest, within the cultural contexts of the Eastern Caribbean region.
- Increase research capacity in the Eastern Caribbean into issues affecting children.
- Provide base-line data on perceptions on the scale of the problem within the region.

- Investigate the manifestations of child sexual abuse across diverse ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups.
- Sensitize stakeholders to the socio-cultural and psycho-social issues underlying child sexual abuse.
- Develop partnerships with key stakeholders and professionals in order to enhance country and regional capacity for addressing child sexual abuse and addressing its psychosocial effects.
- Identify inter-country and country-specific policies and strategies for reducing child sexual abuse.
- Contribute to the establishment of a shared language on the definition of child sexual abuse and to regional partnerships and consensus on what needs to be done to address the problem within Caribbean contexts.
- Make recommendations for the development of relevant policy, protocols and programming.

The study was carried out across six countries collectively considered representative of the region: Anguilla; Barbados; Dominica; Grenada; Montserrat; St. Kitts and Nevis.

STUDY PROBES CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

A comprehensive study on child sexual abuse in the Eastern Caribbean has concluded that the practice is a serious and extensive problem for societies in the sub region.

The study “Perceptions of, Attitudes to and Opinions on Child Sexual Abuse in the Eastern Caribbean” was commissioned by the UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean in a joint programming initiative with UNIFEM. It was undertaken by the University of Huddersfield and Action for Children, with partial funding from the UK Department for International Development.

The landmark study, which was carried out across several Caribbean countries, pointed to a situation where respondents presented an alarming picture of a social problem which is perceived to be escalating, has increasingly severe consequences for Caribbean societies and has multiple layers.

While not designed to measure the prevalence of child sexual abuse, the study concluded that the practice is perpetuated not only by adults who carry out harmful sexual practices with children, but by non-abusing adults who through complicity, silence, denial and failure to take appropriate action.

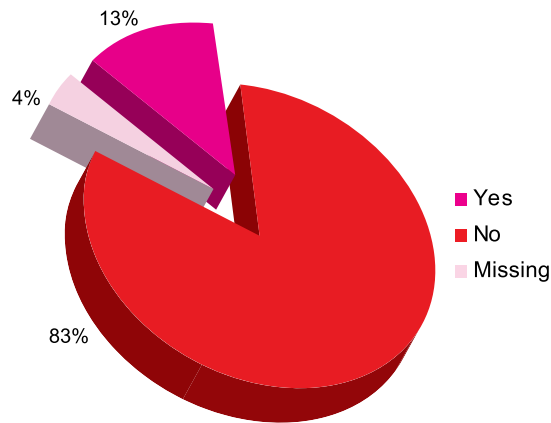
The researcher team, led by Professor Adele Jones of the University of Huddersfield and Ena Trotman Jemmott, a Consultant working on the behalf of Action For Children, confirmed findings reflected in other studies - the majority of child abuse was committed by adult men with most victims being girls. Yet respondents also reported that the abuse of boys (mostly by men also) was a significant and growing problem.

Men who abuse children were reported as coming from all social backgrounds, walks of life, professional groups, levels of education and ages.

Families Aiding Abuse

The study, which involved over 1,400 people through surveys, interviews and focus groups, showed that while some women were also sexually abusing children, women's disempowerment unwittingly contribute to the problem of failing to protect minors even when they were made aware that abuse was occurring.

Proportion of people who had an experience of child sexual abuse



The majority of respondents (70.2 per cent) agreed with the statement "women sometimes turn a blind eye when their partners have sex with children in their families"; 14 per cent did not agree with this and 11.2 per cent said they were not sure.

Some factors identified for this were poverty, the commodification of sex within society, patriarchal values which gave some men the idea that their status as breadwinner gave them the right to sexually abuse children of their female partners, gender socialization and norms, cyclical

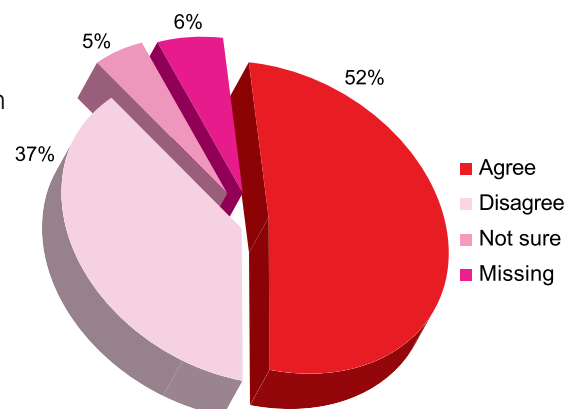
abuse (52.4 per cent think adults who sexually abuse children were themselves abused as children) and the predatory behaviour of some men.

However, most respondents thought that sexual activity between adults and children was never acceptable, no matter what the circumstances. Some 76 per cent agreed with this statement although 17 per cent thought there were circumstances when sexual activity between adults and children was allowed and 5.2 per cent said they were unsure.

A Matter Of Age

A major finding of the study was that the many ambiguities and contradictions in respect of age limits within the Caribbean and the lack of clarity regarding the legal status of the child, may be contributing factors to illegal sex with minors. For example, just over half of the respondents (51.9 per cent) thought childhood ended at age 16 and not 18 as outlined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

"Childhood is up to the age of 16"

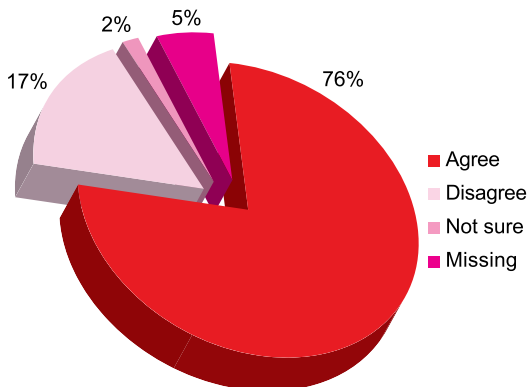


Additionally, many respondents said they would not consider it as abuse if a 19-year-old male and a 15-year-old girl had sex and he believed she was older and had "given consent". However, more people said they would see it as rape if a man in his 30s or 40s had sex with a 15-year-old girl "although some people, and men in particular, would still not consider this as abuse".

While the issue of raising the age of consent to 18 years was outside the remit of the study, the researchers noted that much child abuse occurs in situations in which childhood is not in doubt and where the illegality of the act is abundantly clear.

"As the law itself is not an effective protector of children, it is difficult to see how increasing the age of consent will provide the necessary protection for young people, especially in contexts which lack the necessary infrastructure for the effective enforcement of existing law," the research team added.

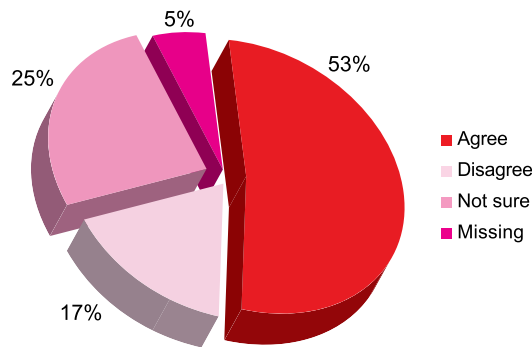
"Sexual activity between adults and children is never OK no matter what"



Why Children Don't Tell

Most survey respondents (82.3 per cent) said they believed children do not tell about sexual abuse because they are scared of the consequences, while 9.2 per cent said they believed children chose to remain silent because they did not mind the act of abuse happening to them.

"Some men who have sexual activity with children have had the same thing done to them as children"



Focus group participants and interviewees shared the view that not only are children not believed, but the consequences of telling can be very grave.

One survivor related being beaten by her mother when, at age 7, she told her about an act of abuse committed by a 15 or 16 year old male: "When my mother came home I told her ... she held me down and took a stick to beat me. I still have a scar on my face," she said pointing at a scar about 11/2 inches long.

"I don't know why she beat me, but she beat me real bad.... I guess she didn't believe me," she added.

Other factors named by

respondents included children's fear of creating conflict, causing the breakup of relationships or having their private nightmare turned into a public shame once the act was reported.

The Effects Of Abuse

In keeping with this, the researchers said surveys revealed that over 85 per cent of respondents believed that long term emotional harm was caused to children as a consequence of sexual abuse and this is regardless of whether the child feels loved by the person who abuses them.

"We found evidence of devastating consequences of child sexual abuse at the individual, family and societal level and there were physical, social, psychological and economic effects," they said, listing some of the personal effects as anger, low self esteem, self hate, difficulties with school work, child runaways, depression, mental illness and alcoholism.

The Legal System And Child Abuse

The prevailing view of respondents was that the sub-region's justice system failed to protect girls and boys, with the state of legislation being regarded as ineffective.

Many respondents criticized police for their response/non response to child sexual abuse, with almost half (48 per cent) of the view that police officers generally did not know how to deal with sexual abuse cases. Only 21.8 per cent said law enforcement officers knew how to deal with such

CHILDREN IN FOCUS

NEW ST. LUCIA TRANSIT HOME

UNICEF/BECCO/2009/Knight



A SHELTER FROM ABUSE

Its walls are freshly painted, its rooms are lovingly furnished and the New Beginning Transit Home stands ready to provide a warm shelter to abused children in St. Lucia.

But the well-appointed new government building in the bustling Gros Islet area will be much more than a shelter, as it has been designed to provide a holistic programme to families and children who have been victims in the rising tally of child abuse cases in the island.

It is expected that the facility, which has been renovated to accommodate 21 children, together with the purpose built therapeutic centre which is nearing completion, will open its doors to its first charges before the end of 2009.

For officials at the Department of Human Services, the opening cannot come soon enough as already welfare and family case workers have identified at least 49 children who could benefit from the carefully crafted holistic programme being offered at the facility.

Home to fill void

Family case worker with responsibility for developing the home, Angelina Mohammed, says the home will fill a void.

“St. Lucia is experiencing volumes of child abuse but some of the abused have no places of safety to go,” she says, noting that the gradual loss of the nuclear family is changing the situation where other family members previously stepped in to house and support family members who are in need.

“We will work with the parents/guardians and child so that affected children can be returned to an improved environment after up to six months in residential care. We will run a parenting programme concurrently with the child’s stay in the home.

“In the unfortunate situation that the child cannot be returned to the home environment we will look at fostering and adoption,” Mohammed said.

Tailored programme designed

She said that in order to develop the right atmosphere and programme at the home, authorities looked at

different models in the Caribbean and at the best practices in western societies before tailoring the type of interventions to fit the St. Lucian situation.

Boys from infancy to age 10 will be accommodated at the Home, while girls from infancy to 18 will be catered to.

Good support for centre

The business community and non-governmental organisations have joined the Government of St. Lucia in outfitting the home and authorities are hoping that level of support will continue to be forthcoming once the Home’s doors are opened.

Staff positions were advertised in November and December of 2008 and officials are expecting that the professional staff will soon be in place.

“At the moment we are waiting for staff to be appointed to positions in the home and we are hoping that can happen relatively soon,” Mohammed said, noting that the Department was anxious for the home’s opening, which will signal the start of a new approach to treating to the issues presented by child abuse on the island.

CHILDREN IN FOCUS

A SURVIVOR'S STORY



UNICEF/BECO/2009/Cadogan

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: A STRONG SURVIVOR'S STORY

As she tells her story in slow, deliberate tones, Cheryl (not her real name), is insistent that she not be presented as a victim, but as one of the strong survivors.

It has been over 15 years now since she was among the hundreds in Barbados and throughout the Eastern Caribbean who are made to endure the cold, harsh reality of child sexual abuse, but the “30-something” year-old mother of one is also adamant that the pattern of abuse she endured not be lost in the statistics.

Abuse was a constant feature in her home. The articulate young woman watched as the man who she called dad then (she later found out he was her stepfather) inflicted beating after beating on her mother. She heard too that he would sexually abuse her two older sisters.

But nothing prepared the then 14-year-old when her “turn” came. “It was very traumatic as I was having my period ... I wanted to know why this man who I called my father was doing this to me,” she recalls, noting that the only thing which equalled the mental anguish she suffered was her mum’s acceptance of the sexual abuse of herself and her sisters.

“My mum knew, but her excuse was it was because of the situation she was in. He was her husband and the breadwinner,” Cheryl says.

Attempted suicide

Without any support mechanisms in her immediate family or among her peers, the teenaged Cheryl retreated within herself, leading to a drop off in her school work and her general zeal for life.

It was at this low point in her teenaged life that she overdosed on pills in an attempt to end her life.

She ended up in hospital where she got professional help and found the will to report her stepfather’s acts to authorities.

“I had blamed myself for what was happening and I tried to end my life, but as I got older I came to realise that I wasn’t guilty of anything. I was a child, still innocent, the adults were the ones to blame but I blamed myself.

“When I think back of that suicide attempt his reaction made me laugh. He actually told me if I died he was going to kill me,” Cheryl recalls, as she flashes one of the rare smiles she allows to cross her face during the interview.

“The doctors and nurses in hospital gave me my strength. They would constantly talk to me and encourage me, but my mum came to the hospital and told me to drop the case. All I could think was that my mum did not love me,” she said.

Once out of hospital the Child Care Board intervened and relocated her and her three sisters (including a younger one who had not yet suffered the fate of her older sisters) to various foster homes and state-run homes, but no criminal charges were laid against the perpetrator.

“It was just a matter of time before we were back in the house again ... back to the same abuse we left. It was as if nothing had happened,” she says, noting that this state of affairs caused her to lose all faith in the “system.” Thankfully, she says, there have been positive changes since then.

Coming to terms with abuse

The young mother says she was forced to design her own mechanisms to cope with the abuse but it was not until over a decade after the acts ended that she was able to fully come to terms with that dark period in her life.

“It was a very, very long healing process. It took me a long time to heal. The only professional help I had was God ... The Lord says to forgive, but it is hard to forgive something; you have to work on it. It took me years and it’s only in the last four years or so that I can talk about that period,” she says. But have the intervening years and Cheryl’s new found spirit allowed her to forgive her mum and step dad, both of whom are now deceased.

“I did not hate my mum. I did not love her either, but I have found a way to forgive. Even after I left home I always kept in contact with her and was actually waiting for her to apologise to me but it never came.

“My mum didn’t physically abuse

me but she was abusing me all the same. She took care of all my material needs but we never had that good mother/daughter relationship and I could not confide in her; neither could my sisters, everything you tell her she would go back and tell dad,” she painfully recalls.

Of the perpetrator she says:

“When he was on his death bed he wanted to see me. To this day I do not know if he wanted to apologise or say something, but I did not go as I did not want to hear him ... I have since come to forgive him though,” Cheryl adds.

Memories live on

However, even while moving to the point of forgiving the perpetrator and her mum who she blames equally, Cheryl says her memories will forever live with her and will largely define the type of mother and neighbour she will remain.

“It was only in around 2005, over 10 years after this thing, that I was able to speak about it without any shame and with the understanding that I did nothing wrong. I can honestly say I have forgiven them, but the memory will be here all the time. I can never forget, it’s just what it is,” she said.

The mother of a seven-year-old son said her experience has taught her to be watchful around her son, her nieces and nephews and indeed all neighbourhood children.

“I constantly tell my son and my sisters’ children to feel free to come to me and talk to me about anything. Tell me anything at all because in our case they were people who knew what was going on - some of my mum’s friends and neighbours and they did nothing. I won’t be like that,” she vows.

While a man was the cause of her pain, Cheryl says she has not allowed that to stop her from letting men into her life.

“I don’t hate men but it took a while to be trusting. One thing though: in all of my relationships with men I have been very defensive, always on guard, always keeping a watchful eye,” she said.

Wish list for the abused

The child abuse survivor has a wish list of things she would like to see in order to spare any more children the ordeal she survived.

Included in this list is her wish for a support group to help people who encounter child sexual abuse and their families.

“The same way we deal with the scourge of drugs and have support whether it is illegal drugs or alcohol, we need to have support for children and people who suffer sexual abuse. We know it is happening out there so we need a support group, somebody to advocate for children and their family,” she said.

Most of all, however, she wants parents, especially mothers, to listen to their children and strive to create the environment where their offspring are comfortable talking to them about anything happening in their lives.

“Build that trust with your children from early. Remember that they are children and are innocent and we are the ones to protect them,” she advises other parents from the heart.

It’s advice she wishes her mum had taken to save her sisters and her from being robbed of their innocence.

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT



BRIEF SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

... a snapshot of the child abuse in the Eastern Caribbean

Antigua and Barbuda

Girls and boys in Antigua and Barbuda were the victims of various forms of abuse. Authorities are concerned about trends in child neglect. A 2006 study reported that 26 per cent of children ages 11-16 years had forced sex in the home, but also in school and community settings.

Barbados

In 2005-2006, 1,076 new allegations of child abuse were received by the Child Care Board. Analysis of physical abuse shows that significant education and support is required with young, single mothers. Persistently high levels of reported sexual abuse affect the 12-16 year old cohort most. Peaks in sexual activity among primary-aged school children also point to exposure to adult sexual activity, including via the electronic media.

British Virgin Islands

The British Virgin Islands was among a nine-country study which found that 48 per cent of adolescent girls' and 32 per cent boys' sexual initiation was "forced". Child neglect most often occurs at festival time. Work on a child abuse and reporting protocol is being finalized.

Dominica

Child sexual abuse remains the major form of reported abuse, constituting 87 per cent of police cases for child abuse. While the Sexual Offences Act has helped improve reporting, a concerted approach for further law reform, screening, public education and intervention is required.

Grenada

While a child abuse reporting protocol has been in place for some time, it is yet to be backed by law, so compliance remains inconsistent.

Montserrat

Child sexual abuse comprises the majority of cases reported to the Police and more frequently occurs between teens and older men. Police sources also believe that physical abuse may be more prevalent than reports suggest.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Since 2006, there have been increasing reports of incest involving girls. Significant sexual abuse is suspected but vastly under-reported and there are reports of children being involved in commercial sexual

exploitation to supplement family income. In 2007, of 511 cases of child abuse reported, only 47 victims actually received care and support. Street children are also an emerging phenomenon.

Saint Kitts and Nevis

On average, 200 cases of child abuse are reported to the Child Protection Services yearly. These comprise child neglect (62 per cent), physical abuse (20 per cent), sexual abuse (8 per cent), issues of access of fathers to children (5 per cent), maintenance of children (4 per cent) and abandonment (1 per cent). There are mandatory reporting laws which are yet to be enforced.

Saint Lucia

Major concerns relate to the increasing reports of child abuse and neglect since 1999, particularly in the reported cases of child sexual abuse. However, poor interagency collaboration results in the duplication of information and roles by agencies and presents a fragmented and unrealistic status of the magnitude of incidence of child abuse and neglect.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Data gaps for child abuse and neglect highlight glaring deficiencies in state systems for prevention, reporting and management of child abuse. Available data shows that sexual and physical abuse was a significant problem in the 2002/3 period but reported incidents have reduced since.

* Sourced from Child Abuse and Intake Reports, April 2004-2005 and April 2005-March 2006.

CHILDREN IN FOCUS

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION



UNICEF/NYHQ2001-0435/Claudio Versiani

WHERE DOES THE CARIBBEAN REGION STAND ON THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN?

by **Ena Trotman Jemmott**

Last year's World Congress III on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in Brazil presented an opportunity for the Caribbean to join countries across the globe to focus on the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Given the worldwide magnitude of the CSEC industry and the increasing anecdotal evidence that the Caribbean is not immune to this rapidly increasing social and economic evil which perversely targets children, this region must become more proactive and cognizant of both the short-term and long-term effects.

The genesis to the third international congress began 12 years ago in Stockholm. The awareness and knowledge of governments throughout the world

were increased on the ugly and shocking spectre of sexual violence against children and young people following the first World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in Stockholm, Sweden in 1996.

This was at a time when the subject was comparatively new to governments and not surprisingly was not on their agenda. Stockholm, however, raised the bar with the fervent advocacy of NGOs such as End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT).

World Congress II on CSEC took place in Yokohama Japan in 2001, resulting in the Yokohama Global Commitment. Global partnerships and reinforced commitments to protect children from sexual exploitation were forged. By this time a total of 161 countries had signed the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action.

The World Congress III, among other things, sought to enhance international cooperation and promote practical advances in tackling the problem and further mobilise all countries to guarantee the rights of children and young people by taking specific action, particularly to be protected against sexual exploitation.

What do we mean by commercial sexual exploitation?

The violation of children through prostitution, child pornography and

trafficking is what we mean by commercial sexual exploitation.

Child prostitution is the phenomenon of children being used for sexual intercourse while child pornography is the use of children to make pornographic images. Trafficking in children for sexual purposes is the taking of a child from one place to another in order to use them for sexual purposes.

By 'child' we mean persons under the age of 18 as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Regional Position

In Central America, ECPAT International has reported that there has been increased networking between organisations to tackling CSEC in the region.

Countries like Belize and Panama were acknowledging that there was a problem, but the report stated that governments of the region must commit the necessary resources to make national plans of action effective if children were not to continue falling prey to sexual exploiters.

Right here at home in the Caribbean, acknowledgement was paid to the ILO/CCDC (Caribbean Child Development Centre) rapid assessment study on child prostitution.

Some data gathering was also cited as occurring in Trinidad and Tobago. In Antigua and Barbuda from press reports the government authorities were cited as closing down a gang operating child pornography Internet sites from the island. It was



World Congress III on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in Brazil.

observed that more preventative actions were needed to combat sex tourism throughout the region.

Not a step too far

The Caribbean Region has not committed itself to action, in any meaningful way to the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. This is evidenced by the poor response to the signing and ratification of the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on: the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. This dire picture is somewhat offset by the few countries who have committed to the ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour.

Worldwide arrest and successful prosecution of traffickers and the lack of dedicated resources to protect and reintegrate victims back into society remain a major problem. The exploiters have the necessary motivation, the human and networking resources and the technical capabilities to outwit Governments and NGOs many of whom in comparison are yet to fully accept and acknowledge that child sexual exploitation exists in their country.

Added to these challenges are reports of increasing prostitution by children, where minors are being exploited (sometimes actively encouraged by care givers) for the reward of money and other material things.

The commercial sexual exploitation of girls and boys has the potential to affect every sinew of a sustainable Caribbean society in terms of the violation of Rights, corrupt practices, declining cultural values and the establishment of deviant norms. The dramatic effects on mental and physical health such as depression, venereal diseases, HIV/AIDS, and early pregnancies all have both personal and societal costs.

Caribbean Governments cannot afford to ignore the phenomenon, but rather to commit to the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on: the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, which came into force on 18 January 2002. Attendance by Caribbean Governments to the World Congress III was indeed a wake up call to action.

CHILDREN IN FOCUS

ADOLESCENT'S VIEWPOINT

AN ADOLESCENT'S CALL TO ACTION

**By Rashad Brathwaite - Head Boy,
Harrison College, Barbados**

Child abuse is undoubtedly a phenomenon that continues to touch the faces of boys and girls throughout the world.

No matter the form it takes, child abuse should not be accepted. Whether it is sexual, physical or emotional abuse, the toll taken on any child is too high and the resultant damage too great.

With child-abuse statistics ranging from 10 per cent to as high as 30 per cent and others suspecting even higher incidences in the Caribbean, we need to take deliberate steps urgently in whatever capacity, whether as young people, policy makers or parents.

UNICEF afforded me one of the greatest opportunities in attending the Third World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescence in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in November 2009 where 450 adolescents converged because they had a story to tell and refused to be silenced.

I had the privilege and pleasure of addressing the closing session of this Third World Congress, not on behalf of myself, but on behalf of 450 other adolescents who spoke on behalf of millions of children around the world.

I celebrated my 18th birthday on



Adolescent delegate Rashad Brathwaite (left) at the World Congress III on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in Brazil.

the last day of the congress. I left the insular and small boundaries of Barbados a 17-year-old boy but undoubtedly returned as an inspired 18-year-old, having a greater sense of purpose because of this experience.

To all youth, my challenge is that each of us becomes an advocate for a cause and an advocate for change.

The need for urgent action goes beyond youth to be advocates but also to present and future parents. Parents and guardians have a special responsibility to listen to their children as far too often an abused child who finds the courage to speak is silenced and ignored.

Further, I wish to remind the policy makers and leaders of what

the children of the world said in Brazil and our promise as Youth Advocates: *"It is simply not enough to allow governments to make empty promises to curb this attack on children and we refuse to allow this."*

Leaders we are watching and waiting and we will not relent.

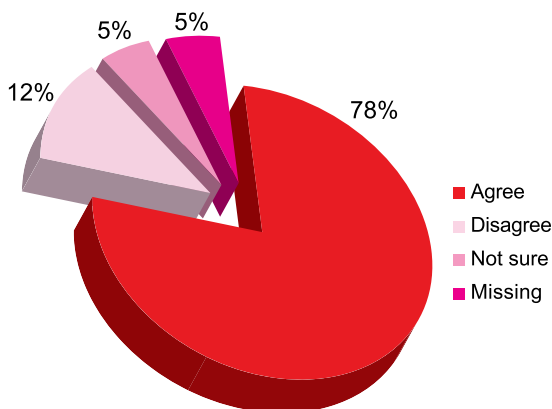
To the child that screams that ever relevant song – "Daddy, don't touch me there" - or the broken soul who as a child cries alone because no one is ever home, or to that child who has been orphaned and strangers abuse and mistreat them, what will you say?

More importantly, What will you do?

cases, while 22.5 per cent said they were not sure.

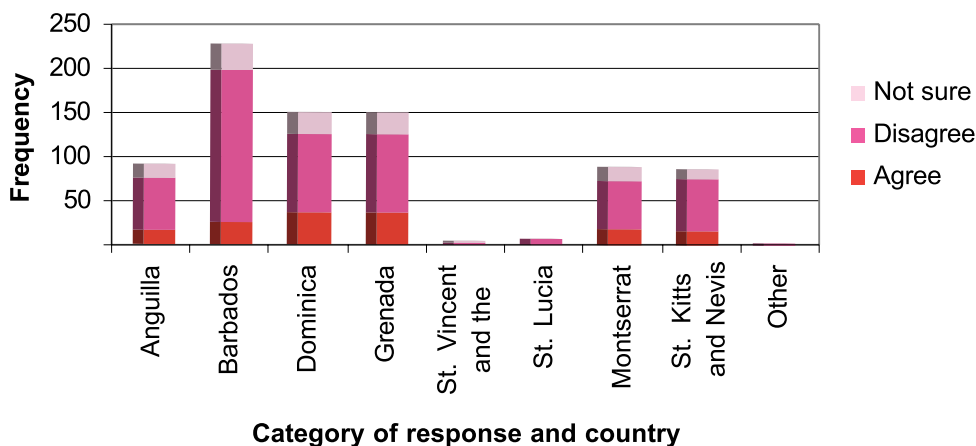
However, 67.4 per cent of respondents said they would always involve the police if an adult in their family was sexually abusing a child in the family while 22.4 per cent said they would try to sort out the situation without informing the police.

'Girls draw men's sexual attention by the way they dress'



Over 82 per cent of those surveyed said they wanted the introduction of legislation which made it mandatory for child abuses cases to be reported to authorities, although some focus group participants did not believe this would help victims, as countries currently lacked the systems and resources to implement current laws.

"Women refusing sex is a reason men seek sex with children" – by country



The Way Forward

The research concluded that a holistic approach, bringing together families and communities, religious leaders, schools and the media, was needed to address the issue of child sexual abuse, which many believe was increasing.

Among specific suggestions were:

- A)** improving institutional capacity through the establishment of well-resourced specialist regional agencies, with country-level satellite specialist agencies;
- B)** public education through mass media and public education campaigns and;
- C)** the informing and strengthening of traditional socializing institutions such as the family and community, church, school and the media.

Governments of the region will be presented with the findings of this research in a bid to garner the necessary action to improve the prevention, reporting and management of child sexual abuse in the region.

Dominican adolescents speak out

Child sexual abuse stirs up emotive discussions whenever the topic is mentioned in public discussion throughout the Eastern Caribbean.

The case was no different when Dominican adolescent journalist **Cordelle Lazare** posed the topic of child sexual abuse to fellow adolescents and youth in that country.



Danielle Wilson (16)

Such actions only steal a child's innocence and have the potential to taint the future generations. Harsher punishments should be handed to perpetrators.



Francillia Graham (17)

Sexual abuse is the greatest injustice being done to children. It pushes them to lose faith in society and changes their perspectives of life.



Kimone Ferrol (16)

It's heart wrenching to hear such cases. I feel that offenders have serious mental disorders when they hurt pure beings such as children.



Fabiola Corbette (17)

It's sad to see the sexual abuse of children and to know that even while attention is being paid to this topic the number of cases is rapidly rising.



Rajiv Wallace (18)

It is something sad when persons feel that to make their dominance seem profound they have to destroy the lives of young children. The offenders are only fulfilling their selfish desires and use their superiority as an advantage.

CHILDREN IN FOCUS

UNDER AGED SEX?

PROPOSED INCREASE IN AGE OF SEXUAL CONSENT SPARKS DEBATE

There is a raging debate in Saint Kitts and Nevis over the proposed amendment to the Federation's laws to raise the age of sexual consent from 16 to 18.

The Saint Kitts and Nevis National Assembly recently began considering legislation which will give effect to the change.

Attorney General and Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Hon. Dennis Merchant, laid the Criminal Law Amendment (Amendment Bill (2008) in the legislature late last year.

This suggested age of consent is intended to be consistent with the age a person is considered an adult in accordance with section 3 of the Age of Majority Act. No. 15 of 1983.

The age of 18 is also consistent with the age a person is deemed responsible enough to legally consume alcohol. It is also the legal age for obtaining a driver's licence in the Federation as provided by Section 31 of the Liquor Licence Act, Cap 252 and Section 32 of the Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Cap. 270.

A explanatory memorandum from the Legal Department noted that "a person is restricted from marrying when he or she is under 18 years old, according to Section 28 of the Marriage Act, hence the age one is legally permitted to marry should coincide with the age one can legally give consent to engage in sexual activity".

It notes that a person between the ages of 16 and 18 may marry with the consent of certain specified persons.



UNICEF/NYHQ2005-1909/Roger LeMoigne

In this article Paediatrician Dr. Ian Jacob responds to one of the many letters to the editor which have been generated out of the announced intention to increase the age of consent.

The proposed new law criminalizing adult males having sex with girls 16-18 years instead of just those under 16 is a good law. It is not "Dumb, Lopsided and Draconian" as perceived in a contribution by Mr. Archibald, whose views are always interestingly posited and often correct. But to quote Sparrow, "Not this time."

Part of the reason our society accepts adult males having sex with little girls as being "ok", is because we see it happening every day, so our eyes and minds have become numbed to this wrong unless it is done to our daughter or sister.

There can be no reason for a man of say over 21 to have sex with girls under 18, no matter how provocative they may appear. Surely he can find enough prey between 18 and 21, if he really likes them young.

Mr. Archibald's piece would have us believe that there are a lot of 18-21 year old men having sex with girls under the age of 18. This does occur, and the law is mostly not an ass, and hopefully would not apply full sanctions those (say) 18-21 year old males who infringe it with girls 16-18. If this proviso needs

to be written into the law, it should.

But in the overwhelming number of cases of adult males having sex with girls less than 18, the males are over 25, and sometimes way over 30. These are the men who will hopefully feel the full weight of the proposed law, don't matter how provocative and tempting the under 18 year old girl was.

Students of history will know that many of our attitudes to men having sex with girls have their roots in our history of slavery, when (the planter class) used and abused our women and girls as they pleased. We accepted then and continue to accept in our males this behavior.

The young girls who buy into this notion and sell their bodies to older men for their pleasure are misguided and often corrupted by society's low norms in this area and by the so-called hapless victims who have no choice but to take advantage of these sex-hungry and sexy girls.

The new law will not stop the practice, but rightly signals that society finds it reprehensible, and allows for the appropriate sanctions to be visited on the abusers. For that is what they are.

So, "Mek dem show you dey birth certificate!!"

Dr. Ian Jacobs is a paediatrician in St. Kitts & Nevis.

CHILDREN IN FOCUS

VOICES

UNICEF/BECO/2009/Haynes



A PLACE CALLED SAFETY

Care-fully given
Love- unconditionally shared
Tears once shed in private are now gently
wiped away
Past overwhelming feelings of rejection
now spared

In a place called Safety
A haven for the seriously abused
A refuge for the young and defenseless
Exploited, degraded, bemused

Cas-En Bas is the chosen location
In the beautiful isle of Saint Lucia.
With treatment and support the automatic
vocation-
And standards of care uncompromised

Where staff training and supervision, the
order of the day
Ensuring each child is helped in every way
The goal is therapeutic rehabilitation
A fragile existence, tattered emotions put
together again

Like the cool sea breeze on each tear
stained cheek
Like the cleansing, warm comforting rain
Like the great humanity within us
Their future will be without any stain.

By Ena Trotman Jemmott a.k.a Stane

TO DREAM

I want to dream again
To pretend my mom's love is as it should be
Between her and my daddy

That they could be together forever
Let him dream again of the way

He feels to be in her arms
To remember the touch, the touch of her
hands

And taste of her kiss
I want to dream again
To pretend my moms love is as it should
Between her and my daddy

by Adrien Matthew (17)

Student of the Social Centre

Adolescence Skills Training Programme

Dominica

LIFE

They say life is a challenge
So you are fuh face it
Me say life is an opportunity
So are fah take and make it the best you can

What you are fah do You go pay in de long run

So in this life do the best you can
What you are fuh do now make sure it clean

For if not you go pay for that sin
Make sure that when you lay your head and
rest

You have no regret

by Olivette Guiste (18)

Student of the Social Centre

Adolescence Skills Training Programme



UNICEF/BECO/2003/Baldeo

YOUNG PARENTS FACING CHALLENGES TO MEET RIGHTS

A recently-completed UNICEF study on **Young Parents and Caretakers in the Eastern Caribbean** has concluded that while parents of adolescent age continues at high levels across the sub region, some of the rights of these parents are not being met.

The 2009 Study which was undertaken by consultant Dr. Loraine Blank on behalf of the UNICEF Barbados and Eastern Caribbean Office, said young parents and caretakers frequently face violations of rights guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These include possible violation of: (i) the right to adequate health care; (ii) the right to education for young mothers; (iii) protection rights, particularly protection from sexual abuse, parental abandonment, legal protections, and the right to social protection; and (iv) the right to participate in decision making for themselves and for their children.

“The policy, planning, and programming environment does not adequately focus

on the needs of young people who become parents or on child-headed households. Multiple ministries are responsible and policy, planning and service delivery are fragmented.

“Social protection programmes do not adequately address income and social risks resulting from young parenting and caretaking. Monitoring and evaluation of programmes for young parents are consistently weak,” the research noted.

Most children born healthy

However, it said most children and youth in the Eastern Caribbean are born healthy and have access to basic services, including health services, primary and secondary education, and to a lesser extent, early childhood development services.

“The region, though well advanced in many of the development areas, is facing increasing challenges such as providing sufficient quality access to child and youth-centered services and social policy and social protection frameworks to ensure the realisation of their rights,” it added.

The Study concluded that despite the fact that adolescent childbearing

continues at worrying levels, the absolute number of teen mothers and fathers is not so large as to make it impossible to provide proactive outreach services to all young parents and their families to assess their situation and provide for their most critical health, education, financial, and social needs.

Solutions Identified

As part of the solution to the problems, it recommends the priorities for the future should be to:

Foster a Supportive Policy and Institutional Framework for Young Parents and Caretakers that clearly defines rights with respect to health care, education, and social protection for the mother, the father, the child, and the extended family.

Advocacy and action across multiple policy arenas, including health, education, and social protection.

Promote Integrated Approaches for Young Parents and Caretakers, including multidisciplinary programmes for young parents and their extended families and proactive efforts to identify and intervene in cases of child headed households.

CHILDREN IN FOCUS

UNICEF NEWS: PARTICIPATION STUDY



UNICEF/BECO/2009/Knight

UNICEF commissioned study: Youth Participation in the Eastern Caribbean Study conducted in November 2008 by Dr. Corin Bailey of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies, The University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus

STUDY PROBES STUDENTS' LOW PARTICIPATION RATE

For 18-year-old Krista, a former student of the Alexandra School, being involved in student governance seemed a natural thing to do. The same can be said for Danny Babb who was not only involved in the Student Council at the said school but has gone on now to become an active member of the Barbados youth parliament.

But have you ever wondered why other teens do not become involved in school governance or more precisely in students' councils?

This was the question UNICEF sought to answer when it conducted a study last year on in-school youth participation with students from secondary schools across Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia and Antigua and Barbuda.

Barbadian students believe students should have a say in school governance

Our study found that generally students thought that the students' council was needed because it provided an avenue to give students a voice. Some 87 per cent of the students interviewed felt this way.

Low level of participation

Nevertheless, this recognition that students' councils were important was not necessarily reflected in the level of active participation of students in the councils as the study found that in general active participation, even by those on the Council, was low.

When those students who were not involved were asked why, they cited reasons such as: they thought the students councils would be a waste of time; others had tried to get on the students' councils but did not get enough votes, some reported not even knowing a students' council existed at their school and others felt that students did not take the students' councils seriously.

Focus groups were also conducted with some students and other issues that emerged included not enough support from the school's administration. Another issue was how one will be perceived if he/she joined the students' council as was reflected in this quote:

'If you were not already popular then you are a nerd that is throughout the school. Nobody cares if you feel bad, you are a nerd and that's how they classify you. So guys shy away from organizations like this.'

What needs to be done to get students more involved?

When asked what needed to be done to get them more involved, students felt that the Councils should have more fun activities, more meetings with students, better promotion of council so that students can see the benefits of joining. It was also recommended that the Councils needed to be better organized and finally in some cases they need more encouragement and support from school administration.

Children in Focus is a newsletter of the UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Office covering Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Turks and Caicos Islands. It is intended as a channel for the exchange of information between this office and the field on issues related to child development and protection in the Caribbean. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of UNICEF. Articles may be reproduced provided credit is given to **Children in Focus**.

Copies of all studies mentioned in this publication can be found at www.unicef.org/barbados or obtained by contacting the office.

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