

**MEETING THE DEVELOPMENT AND
PARTICIPATION RIGHTS IN JAMAICA
A JOINT UNFPA/UNICEF PROJECT FUNDED
BY UNFIP**

**PROMOTING
ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION
IN JAMAICA**

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Executive Summary

Adolescents, as defined by the World Health Organisation are girls and boys between the ages of 10-19 years. This study is about their participation in organisations. The conceptual framework is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child which guarantees all children the right to participate as well as a number of other international instruments that Jamaica has signed, as well as national policies, action plans and programmes. These agreements also include the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which specifically addresses the needs and rights of the girl child to equal participation. The Plan of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) also highlighted the importance of adolescent participation in identifying their sexual and reproductive health needs and in designing appropriate programmes. (ICPD POA Section VII). The Regional Action Plan from the Caribbean Youth Summit on Sexual and Reproductive Health sponsored by the Caribbean Office of UNFPA held in 1998 is also relevant. It underscores the importance of youth empowerment through youth participation. UNFPA's Regional Programme for 1997-2001 places youth as the major beneficiaries of the regional programme that includes: Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health; Population and Development Strategies and Regional Advocacy. Youth participation was the hallmark of the Caribbean Youth Summit.

Jamaica's National Youth Policy, the country's adoption of the World Summit Goals for Children, the National Plan of Action for Children, the National Policy for Children and the Draft Child Care and Protection Act also form part of this conceptual framework. The current study seeks to support these initiatives, broaden the debate and increase commitment as well as action to improve adolescent participation.

The main objectives of the study were to assess the level of adolescent participation in organisations whose programmes are designed for young people, to identify best practices and to make recommendations to improve their involvement in decision-making, as well as programme design, implementation and evaluation.

Primary and secondary research was done and a checklist on adolescent participation was developed to assess participation in 30 organisations. Three organisations were also studied in depth to develop case studies. A non-random sampling strategy was used to select the agencies in collaboration with UNICEF, with efforts being made to include a diverse range of groups.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to collect data and included: a telephone survey of the 30 groups, focus group discussions with adolescents involved in programmes of three agencies as well as interviews with senior staff members in each agency. In addition, literature on adolescent participation and background information on the three agencies was reviewed. The primary research focused on collecting and comparing the perceptions of adolescents and adults on this issue in relation to decision-making and programming. Data were analysed using the checklist and Roger Hart's

Ladder of Participation, which both helped to assess levels of children's participation in organisations.

In prioritising the greatest areas of need emerging from the analysis of 30 organisations and the three case studies, it emerged that promoting self-governance must be the top priority as this was the weakest area. Only 43% of agencies consulted provided opportunities for self-governance by promoting responsibility by giving them space to conceptualise programmes, providing resources for their implementation by adolescents and developing accountability structures to ensure their satisfactory completion. The second most urgent need was to encourage agencies to include adolescents in policy and decision-making and just over a half (57%) had adolescents represented on Boards or Committees. Few agencies appeared to have mission statements that explicitly promoted adolescent or child participation. Time, space and resources to enable adolescent participation emerged as a third area of need, followed by limited input into programme design and evaluation. Only 63% ensured their participation in programme design and evaluation but there was greater involvement (70%) in implementing programmes. Perception on the level and quality of participation differed between adolescents and adults and there was a gap between perceptions and practices in some organisations. Most agencies (80%) conducted needs assessments, but not all involved young people in the process.

While consultation was common (90%), young people's views and voices were not always heard or respected. Some 60% of agencies provided time, space and resources to enable adolescents to form opinions and views and 70% said that information enabled them to understand issues.

Data analysis revealed that the factors enabling participation were: respecting adolescents' right to participate, providing a supportive environment, skill training; active listening and respecting their ideas and opinions. Providing opportunities for them to grow and develop self-confidence and assigning them incremental responsibility in accordance with their age and interests could facilitate their development. Good communication was essential. Institutional flexibility demonstrated by simplifying language and procedures in meetings also emerged as important as these helped to ensure that youths understood concepts and issues being discussed at Board level. Participation should not be forced however, but should evolve in response to the needs and interest of adolescents. Encouraging participation in the home, school, community was also important to complement the efforts of organisations that are committed to this process.

Factors inhibiting participation were manipulation of adolescents, using them as tokens or decorations but not giving them a real voice or respecting them. Others were, perpetuating negative attitudes and practices that limit their scope and inhibit their development. Attitudes that lead adults to do what they think is in the best interest of the adolescent without consulting them were paternalistic and stifled their growth. Lack of respect and denial of the right to participate, lack of training, as well as inadequate time, space and resources to facilitate their participation also emerged as inhibiting factors.

The paper concludes that that participation is a basic requirement for holistic development. It builds capacity, capability, leadership skills and self confidence of adolescents to use the opportunities provided through various channels, to take control of their own lives and contribute to the development of their society. Increased opportunities for participation in policies and programmes helps to prepare future leaders and enables adolescents to maximize their full potential.

Recommendations are directed at agencies working with adolescents, as well as to UNICEF and UNFPA. In support of child rights and a commitment to holistic development, they seek to improve adolescent participation by promoting a cultural change aimed at facilitating adolescent growth and development. This includes ensuring a policy commitment in each agency's Mission Statement, the appointment of adolescents to boards and providing training to enable them to participate effectively. Recommendations also focus on internal analysis, providing resources to enable them to develop opinions and self-confidence to express them. Agencies are encouraged to provide young people with greater opportunities to conceptualise, design, implement and evaluate programmes. This can be a very empowering process for young people, and will prepare them for future leadership and management at local as well as at national level. To support this process, UNICEF and UNFPA are asked to consider supporting a two-year pilot programme that involves research, training, development and dissemination of a model policy for promoting participation as well as supporting public education and resource materials.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Adolescent participation is a basic requirement for personal, community and national development. Consistent with the definition of the World Health Organization, adolescents are defined as males and females between 10-19 years. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines participation as ‘taking a part or share in.’ Rajani (1999) defines adolescent participation as “*adolescents taking part in and influencing processes, decisions and activities.*” This definition has been used to guide our study. Rajani also notes that “*it is only through participation that (adolescents) develop skills, build competencies, form aspirations, gain confidence and attain valuable resources.*” (p. i). Participation therefore supports the well-being of the adolescent and contributes to improving his or her skills and abilities. This will ultimately improve their access to a better quality of life. Effective participation therefore contributes to national development.

Sen (1993:3) notes that development itself is “*a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.*”

1.1 Terms of Reference

In building awareness and understanding of adolescent participation in the Jamaican context, the specific work assignment outlined in the contract had the following objectives:

- a) To determine the extent of adolescent participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of existing programmes;
- b) To detail 3 or 4 that have clear strategies for/or solid experiences of participation in order to identify the barriers and enabling factors to meaningful adolescent participation within the programmes;
- c) To recommend strategies for increased adolescent participation within programme development, implementation and evaluation as well as the institutional structures and messages that are necessary to achieve meaningful participation.

Outputs

The specific outputs in the Terms of Reference were:

- A critical overview and analysis of adolescent participation within existing programmes for adolescent development; (30 were subsequently agreed);
- A detailed evaluation of adolescent participation in the design and delivery of 3 or 4 programmes (three organisations were subsequently identified by UNICEF)
- Documentation of best practices and lessons learnt
- Recommendations for strategies to implement and increase adolescent participation in programme design and delivery

Note: A checklist was developed as a benchmark to conduct organisational assessments to determine the extent/level of adolescent participation

1.2 Rationale and Conceptual Framework for Adolescent Participation

There are several moral, legal and developmental reasons in favour of adolescent participation. Social, economic and demographic statistics highlight the urgent need to expand channels for adolescent participation because of the social problems they generate. Crime and violence, adolescent motherhood, drug abuse, teen suicide and unemployment are but a few of the symptoms associated with adolescent alienation, anger and exclusion. These factors contribute to periodic social upheavals that help to undermine national growth and development. Finding effective mechanisms for adolescent participation must therefore be a priority for all sectors, across groups and classes and across the rural-urban, inner-city/uptown divide.

This study is an important milestone in the history of child rights and poses a special challenge for organizations promoting the rights of children in Jamaica. It comes against the background of the old tradition that “children should be seen and not heard.”

1.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual, moral and legal framework for adolescent participation is shaped by a number of international instruments as well as national laws, policies and action plans.

1.3.1 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Participation in decision-making is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which establishes participation as a basic right of all boys and girls, irrespective of class, race, social status, physical or mental ability. Participation is also a channel through which children can have access to other basic rights. Article 12 specifically states that:

“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

The CRC also promotes the principle that:

- children should be respected as individuals
- they have a growing capacity to participate in and influence decision-making processes that affect their daily lives
- their views should be respected
- participation encourages learning and resourcefulness, builds self confidence and self esteem, protects children, creates a sense of ownership and belonging, promotes a democratic culture, and gives children a sense of control over their own lives.

Article 12 of the CRC insists that children should be visible as citizens in their own right. This article challenges traditional perceptions of adult-child relationships and encourages

adults and all organizations committed to the CRC to actively listen to and facilitate the participation of children. In addition, Article 12 asks that everyone respects the rights and dignity of children and provides them with effective support that will help them to actively participate in decisions that affect them as individuals and as members of the community in which they live.

1.3.2 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) specifically addresses the needs and rights of the girl child to equal participation and the elimination of discrimination against girls.

Article 5 of CEDAW asks countries to apply measures to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct that impede equal development for boys and girls and perpetuate stereotypes for men and women. Article 7 (b) explicitly outlines the right to participate in government policies and Article 10 establishes the right to education and information, which is central to the right to participate.

Action Plans from international conferences also provide a framework for participation. Among these are the Beijing +5 Plan of Action and the follow-up to the *International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)* held in Cairo in 1994. **The Plan of Action of this Conference highlighted the importance of adolescent participation in identifying their sexual and reproductive health needs and in designing appropriate programmes that respond to these needs. (ICPD POA Section VII).**

1.3.3. The Plan of Action from the Caribbean Youth Summit

The Plan of Action from the Caribbean Youth Summit held in 1998 sponsored by UNFPA Caribbean Office, speaks to the issue of ‘Youth Empowerment Through Youth Participation. Among several things, the Plan asks for:

- a) Alliances between stakeholders to promote unity of action, resources and programmes,
- b) Promotion of youth and adolescent participation as full members of networks and coalitions that promote reproductive health;
- c) Networking between youth and youth groups to strengthen their capacities to advocate for adolescent reproductive health;
- d) Acquisition of expertise to access technical and financial resources.
- e) Institutionalization of the Caribbean Youth Summit as a regional forum for young people to make input into decisions about adolescent reproductive health.
- f) Resources to enable production of appropriate information for young people, on adolescent reproductive health issues and choices packaged in multimedia format.

In summary, this Plan highlights basic requirements to promote adolescent participation such as networking, alliance building, resource allocation and forums for participation. It also addressed the importance of research to determine the needs of young people.

1.3.4 National Policy Framework

National policy commitments that have been made also underscore the importance of these international agreements. Among these are the National Youth Policy, the country's adoption of the World Summit Goals for Children, the National Plan of Action for Children, the National Policy for Children and the drafting of the Child Care and Protection Act. This study is another step in a series of initiatives aimed at broadening youth participation.

1.3.5 Global Trends

In the wake of a decade of international development conferences, there is increasing acceptance of the reality that people must be central to the development process. In addition, policies and programmes aimed at social, economic and political development can only be sustained, if people participate in their development and 'own' the process. There is also growing awareness that development will only be sustainable if the environment is respected, hence the concept of environmentally sustainable development.

A review of global trends also points to more widespread acceptance of democracy as the ideal context for sustainable development to take place. Participation is an integral requirement for democracy. In Jamaica, evidence abounds of the negative results associated with non-participation or unequal participation in the process of economic, social and political development. Among these are unemployment, limited education and skills, crime and violence and political apathy, which result in low levels of voter turnout for elections. A culture of non-participation also limits the level of responsibility that citizens take for their own development.

Individualistic material values and attitudes limit the priorities for personal development. They also undermine local government and community structures that need to be strong if people are to take more responsibility for their own development. The increasing numbers of suicides and the high levels of teenage pregnancy and drug use among young people, are in part related to lack of participation and feelings of alienation on the part of young men and women. Addressing these problems, requires that an analysis be done of how young people are allowed to participate in home, school, community, at national level as well as in organisations.

This study specifically looks at their participation in organisations whose programmes are designed for their benefit. The level of their involvement at various stages of their physical, psychological and emotional development can make the difference in preparing a new type of Jamaican man and women for the country's future. This 'new Jamaican' would be equipped with appropriate leadership skills, would be capable of creating a vision of the kind of society in which he or she would like to live and would be equipped with the tools and confidence to realise his or her vision. This exposure would also enable young people to work in teams, manage conflict constructively, be more tolerant of differences, and able to negotiate goals to ensure everyone's rights are respected. Given the potential of organisations to support the development of adolescents, it is therefore

essential that they examine their policies, programmes, strategies and attitudes to guarantee adolescent participation at the highest level of decision-making.

1.3.6 The ‘Ladder of Participation’

Roger Hart (1997) developed the concept of a “Ladder of Participation” as a tool for assessing levels of participation. The lowest rung of the ladder starts with:

1) manipulation and moves up to 2) decoration, 3) tokenism, 4) children being assigned but informed, 4) children being consulted and informed, 5) adult-initiated programmes and shared decisions with children, 6) child initiated and directed programmes, to culminate in 7) child initiated, shared decisions with adults at the top.

Hart adds that “The ladder of children’s participation: while the upper levels of the ladder express increasingly degrees of initiation by children, they are not meant to imply that a child should always be attempting to operate at the highest level of their competence. The figure is rather meant for adult facilitators to establish the conditions that enable groups of children to work at whatever levels they choose. A child may elect to work at different levels on different projects or during different phases of the same project. Also, some children may not be initiators but excellent collaborators. The important principle is to avoid working at the three lowest levels, the rungs of non-participation.” (Quoted in Rajani, 1999, p.12). This conceptual tool is used to assess levels of adolescent participation in the organizations studied.

1.4 Research Methodology and Limitations

A Project Advisory Team for the five research components of the UNICEF/UNFPA project was established. This included the main researchers and UNICEF’s Project Coordinator. Approximately three meetings were held during the early research phase to agree on the conceptual framework and a moderator’s guide for focus groups. The latter were conducted for three of the five components of the UNFIP funded project. Project Steering meetings were also held with the team and representatives of UNICEF and UNFPA.

In August, draft papers were reviewed and discussed at a meeting with reviewers as well as representatives of two social sector organisations: the Planning Institute of Jamaica and the Monitoring and Review Committee for the Poverty Eradication Programme in the Office of the Prime Minister.

The study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The process involved:

- a review of available literature on adolescent participation;
- development of a checklist to assess forms and levels of adolescent participation in organizations
- telephone interviews with 30 organisations using the Adolescent Participation Checklist
- the conduct of focus group discussions and interviews with adolescents and administrators in three organisations.

Logistics were arranged with the support of the management of the three agencies consulted for the detailed reviews. Research was conducted with the support of two graduate research assistants from the Regional Coordinating Unit of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, Mrs. Sharon Robinson and Mrs. Grace Christie.

The Sample

A selection of the 30 organisations reviewed was made on the basis that their work seeks to meet the needs of young people, including adolescents. Using databases of non-governmental and community based organisations working with this target group, a selection was made of agencies working in rural and urban areas and across various sectors. A non-random sampling method was used to select the agencies and UNICEF was consulted. Efforts were also made to include agencies working with disabled adolescents, children's homes and churches, which are often under-represented. In addition, a project of one international agency working on a project with adolescents was included. Efforts were also made to include tertiary educational institutions that provide training for older adolescents.

Selection of the three organisations used to develop case studies was also done in consultation with UNICEF. The main criteria was that the programmes of these agencies reflected 'good practice' in adolescent participation and could provide lessons for replication. The TOR stated, these agencies should be deemed to have 'clear strategies for/and solid experiences of adolescent participation...'

Research Instruments and Process

An extensive literature review was not required but UNICEF and UNFPA provided some background literature which was analysed. This review, combined with consultations with a few adolescents, facilitated the development of two research instruments:

- a) a list of questions to guide the focus group discussions and interviews.
- b) a checklist to assess forms and levels of adolescent participation in 30 organisations.

In each of the three agencies, a focus group discussion was conducted with adolescents who participated in the programme. Agency staff was not present when these discussions were being held. Interviews were later done with staff and their responses were later compared with those of the students. The data were used to develop the three case studies and these are presented in Part 2 of this report.

Background information on the three organisations was also used to complement the information provided from focus group discussions and interviews. Additional details on the data collection methods are provided at the end of each of the three case studies.

Telephone interviews were used to collect data from the 30 organisations using the checklist as a guide. Responses were noted and analysis of this data was done against the background of the Roger Hart's 'Ladder of Participation.'

Data Analysis and Presentation

Data were analysed using the Checklist and Guidelines and results were presented using simple percentages. Analysis of data from the three case studies and the thirty organisations consulted was used to place organisations on Hart's Ladder of Participation. Best practices and lessons learnt were also summarised and recommendations made to increase adolescent participation.

Each case study included a brief background on the organisation, structures for adolescent participation, adolescent's perception of their involvement, staff perceptions of adolescents' involvement, enabling and inhibiting factors and finally recommendations to increase adolescent participation.

Limitations

Use of a non-random sample meant that the findings cannot be generalised across the sector. They however provide a good indication of trends, some of the concerns as well as important lessons to improve adolescent participation in organisations.

Use of telephone interviews for the 30 agencies, provided a quick means of consulting these agencies. However the limitation was reliance on information provided by the respondents which was not independently verified by documentation or wider consultation with staff or adolescents themselves. Ideally focus group discussions should have been held with adolescents from all the agencies consulted.

The three-month timeframe to conduct this research, develop and test research instruments as well as the Checklist and write the report was grossly underestimated. A six-month time period would be more realistic.

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS ON ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION

This section of the report presents the finding on adolescent participation in the thirty organisations consulted. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and the lessons learnt are summarized.

Table 1: Adolescent Participation Checklist: Summary of Responses

Adolescent Participation	% Yes/Priority
1. The organisation's Policy and Mission Statement promote adolescent participation	80
2 Adolescents are on decision-making Boards/Committees	57* (2)
3. Adolescents make input into programme design	63* (4)
4. Adolescents make input into programme implementation	70
5 Adolescents make input into programme evaluation	63* (5)
6. Needs assessment are done prior to the start of programmes	87
7.. Consultation mechanisms (e.g Meetings) are established	90
8. Adolescents are consulted/their opinions are sought	73
9. Views of adolescents are respected (listening, feedback provided; confidentiality respected)	77
10. Time, space, resources are provided for adolescents	60* (3)
11. Information is provided to increase adolescents' understanding of issues	70
12. Space is provided to help adolescents develop their opinions	67* (6)
13. Information is provided in simple, accessible format	83
14. Meetings are scheduled between adolescents and adults	77
15. Self –governance is promoted through responsibility, resources, accountability structures	43* (1)

* These results show in rank order, the weakest aspects of adolescent participation emerging from the review of the 30 organisations. These should become priorities for future programming by UNICEF, UNFPA and organisations working with adolescents. ***The top three (3) priorities are the need to promote self-governance, increase adolescent participation on Boards and to provide time space and resources for adolescents.***

Details of responses to the 15 questions are presented in Appendix 4 (see Table 1A). Table 2 below ranks the 30 organisations according to reported levels of adolescent participation based on responses to the Checklist.

Table 2: Levels of Adolescent Participation

Level of Adolescent Particip	Agencies
1. 100%	YMCA, Ashe, Hope for Children, Mel Nathan Institute, St I Foundation;
2. 90-99%	Jamaica Association of the Deaf; National Youth Developm
3. 80-89%	Western Society for Children; Anglican Youth Movement (Worthley Home for Children Shortwood Teachers College UTCWI; Child Guidance Clinic
4. 70-79%	Girl Guides; United Church Youth (UCY); Ja Family Plann Glen Hope Place of Safety; Peer Counsellors Association
5. 60-69%	JCRC; Youth Link; Hope United Church Youth; Juvenile J Consultation
6. 50-59%	YWCA; Teen Challenge
7. 40-49%	Priory School; Anglican Youth (Rural); Ja Assoc. of Child Learning Disabilities
8. 20-39%	Mt Olivet Boys Home; Family Court,
9. 0-19%	Best Care Lodge (for disabled children)

2.1 Scope and Limitations of Adolescent Participation

- The analysis of data presented in Table 1 shows that most organisations (80%) stated that adolescent participation is included in their policy and mission statement. Further discussions with respondents however revealed that there were different perceptions of what this meant. While all recognised the importance of the principle of participation, adolescent participation itself was not in fact explicitly included in their policy and mission statement. Some agencies erroneously assumed that because their work focused on education, health or other services and programmes for children, this meant that their policy supported the principle of adolescent participation. This gap was further confirmed by the results which showed that only 57% of organisations reported that adolescents were represented on the Board or Committees.
- It was more common to find organisations involving adolescents in the implementation of programmes (70%). Fewer of them (63%) involved them in the design and evaluation process.
- Needs assessments were quite common and some 87% of those consulted, involved adolescents in the process.
- Nearly all organisations (90%) said that there were established mechanisms for consultation with young people, with meetings emerging as the most common medium used. The research process did not however enable any detailed assessment of group dynamics and the level of adolescent participation in these meetings. Fewer agencies (77%) reported that there are regular meetings between adolescents and adults.
- Although meetings are held for consultation, results from the question on whether adolescents' views were sought showed that only 73% indicated that these meetings actually facilitated genuine consultation.

- Some organizations had developed mechanisms for consultation with adolescents, which were then fed to the Board. It was also not uncommon for adults to make decisions, which they thought were in the best interests of the adolescents, without formal consultation.
- Marginally more agencies (77%) said that the views of adolescents were respected. This provided further confirmation that participation in meetings did not guarantee that adolescents' views were sought, heard or respected.
- Some 60% of agencies said they provided time, space and resources for adolescents to develop opinions and views. However, many recognized that their efforts were inadequate and much more was needed to make this effective. Several noted that the non-profit nature of their operations meant that they were operating with very limited resources. Lack of financial resources was frequently cited as a limiting factor.
- Over 70% of agencies consulted said that information is provided to increase adolescents' level of understanding on issues and more of them (83%) said that this information was provided in an accessible format. The research method did not however allow time to review materials to verify these statements and the level of 'access' for various age groups.
- *Responses to the question on whether self-governance is promoted through assigning responsibility, resources and accountability structures were fairly low (43%).* Again, many agencies cited the lack of financial resources as an impediment for this to take place. This response suggests that there is still a far way to go to create readiness to have adolescents assume a greater level of responsibility in managing organisations.

Factors enabling and inhibiting adolescent participation emerging from the review of the 30 agencies are summarised below. These will be compared with data from the three case studies and a synthesis provided at the end of this report.

2.2 Factors Enabling Participation

Enabling factors emerging were:

- Board members' commitment to adolescent participation at the level of the Board and management and acceptance of participation as a basic principle as a child's right.
- Board members' acknowledgement and acceptance of adolescents as legitimate stakeholders with rights and responsibilities.
- General recognition that adolescents have a right to be involved in policy decisions.
- Adolescents having the knowledge, skills and abilities to make input into policy as well as into programme design, implementation and evaluation.
- Involvement of adolescents in needs assessments to ensure that programmes respond to their actual needs, rather than those perceived by adults
- Ensuring that meetings and mechanisms are participatory, consultative and also respect the rights of adolescents, to encourage their participation, build their confidence and make them feel valued.
- Facilitating self-governance by enabling adolescents to acquire leadership and management skills on an on-going basis.

- Delegating responsibilities to young people, commensurate with their skills and abilities build a sense of ownership and responsibility for programme design and management.
- Ensuring that information is provided to adolescents and that this is in an accessible and user-friendly format, to empower them and encourage their participation.
- Providing special spaces for adolescents to meet by themselves and have freedom to discuss issues, develop their views without adults being present.
- .

2.3 Factors Inhibiting Participation

Inhibiting factors identified were:

- Lack of opportunities being created for self governance, skill development;
- Adults' unwillingness to create an enabling environment for adolescent participation.
- Gaps between an organisation's verbal commitment to participation and practice.
- Attitudes of adults (including teachers) who think that adolescents should only be consulted on matters affecting them directly or in areas that they control.
- Absence of a culture of genuine respect for children as citizens in their own right.
- Adolescents unequal access to power and decision-making (e.g. absence of adolescents from the decision-making structure of media organisations gives the editor final authority even when the views and ideas of adolescents have been sought)
- Restrictions imposed by a curriculum for external examinations. One educational institution reported that this limited their flexibility in adapting the academic programme for adolescents.
- Limited ability of mentally challenged children to make an input into policy and programme development.
- Adolescents' limited awareness of decision-making structures and strategies within their organisation.
- Poor inter-personal communication skills. The tendency for some adults to speak down to adolescents and children, often creates a negative response and contributes to conflict in the classroom.
- Absence of mechanisms for adolescents to make their views known in appropriate ways.

CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER 3

CHILDREN FIRST CASE STUDY

3.1 Profile of the Organisation

Children First is a child-centered, non-governmental organisation that supports street, working and marginalised children in Spanish Town between the ages of 3-18 years. The agency is currently in its 12th year, having been originally established in 1989 as a project supported by Save the Children (UK). It was known as the Spanish Town Marginalized Youth Programme and served some 50 street children. Children First was officially launched as an independent non-profit agency on June 17, 1997. In September 2001, there were 718 children enrolled in the programme. The agency's work has however affected the lives of thousands of children across Jamaica and the region.

The organisation's many achievements have included: a) returning hundreds of children to school; b) providing employment and skill training; c) contributing to a reduction in the number of children on the street and the number of working children in the parish of St Catherine by 50%; d) increasing public awareness on the situation of children at risk, and e) enabling several children to attend universities.

3.2 Vision and Mission Statements

The stated vision of Children First is

'To work with and for children using a holistic approach while promoting the rights of the child.'

The Mission Statement of Children First is:

'To work with street and potential street children to improve their life chance enabling them to make positive contributions to society'

The organisation also has a Motto which is

'Children First Preserving our Nation's Future'

The vision and mission statement both indicate quite explicitly, that the organisation is committed to 'work with and for children, ...while promoting the rights of the child.'

3.3 Decision-Making Structure

A Board of Directors manages the agency and they meet monthly. Of the 14 members, five (5) are children between 12-19 years. Their peers select them and they represent the three educational levels in the programme, which are based on academic ability rather than age. Children are also represented on all Committees including: Programme Planning, Budget and the Advisory Committee. The Executive Director is responsible for day-to day operations. This structure indicates that adolescents are key participants in the decision-making and management structure. Major progress has been made in self-

governance, with the young people being heavily involved in policy making as well as programme design, implementation and evaluation.

3.4 Main Programmes

The main programmes are:

- Remedial Education
- Skill Training
- Environmental Education and Awareness
- Child Rights Advocacy Training
- Recreational/Sporting Activities
- Counseling
- Nutrition
- Annual Summer Camp

Children First operates five days per week from 8:30am to 4:30pm. It provides remedial education and basic skills training as well as recreational and group activities. The programme works closely in collaboration with the home, school and community as key stakeholders. From Monday to Wednesday, children are involved in remedial education and basic skill activities. Thursdays are used for field trips, recreational and group activities, and parent interviews. Fridays are used for home visits and staff development.

3.4.1 Remedial Education:

Based on the principle that children are more empowered if they can read and write, remedial education has been the main programme since the agency was established. Since October 1997, it has been supported by USAID's Uplifting Adolescents Programme (UAP). The agency's educational programme operates at three levels, with *children being grouped according to academic ability rather than age*.

The Uplifting Adolescents Programme provides empowerment through education and includes language skills, number skills, art and craft and life skills such as sexuality, conflict resolution, reproductive health, career guidance, self-development and basic survival skills. The Language Skills Programme includes oral and written communication, reading, writing, phonics, word study, language structure, creative writing and reasoning. Thematic teaching is used for the number skills programme, which means that the programme is fitted to their life experience. Children are taught the use of money, budgeting and measurement that will equip them to function in everyday life. It therefore responds to their practical everyday needs. Non-traditional methods such as games, drama and culture are used to teach remedial skills. *Child participation techniques are used to empower the children to become actively involved in their own learning as well as decision-making about matters that affect their development.*

3.4.2 Skill Training:

The skill-training programme provides a foundation for economic empowerment. It includes art and craft, (linked to recycling waste), photography, barbering and cosmetology. Graduates from the personal care services course have either found employment, or have used the training to become self-employed. They are also

encouraged to return as volunteer teachers. Scholarships are also found to facilitate continuing educational opportunities and several students have benefited and have attended institutions in the United States as well as locally. Others have found employment in various fields.

3.4.3 Environmental Education and Awareness:

The Environmental Protectors programme started in 1996 and seeks to promote environmental awareness and management among the children and their parents. In 2000, the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ) provided funding to support this programme.

3.4.4. Child Rights Advocacy Training :

Children are taught the Convention on the Rights of the Child and these principles guide everyday operations including decision-making in the agency.

3.4.5 Recreational/Sporting Activities

Some recreational and sporting activities are held on Thursdays but physical space is limited.

3.4.6 Counseling

Counseling is provided for the children and their parents and guardians as needed by the staff and volunteers. A small contribution is requested to make it accessible and affordable to clients. Referrals are made to the Ministry of Health's Child Guidance and Counseling Clinic.

3.4.7 Nutrition Programme

To enable the children to participate, nutritional support is provided as all the children are from low-income families. The Planning Institute of Jamaica and local businesses and volunteers support this aspect of the programme. Collectively, these programmes support children's empowerment. Various elements have developed over the years in response to needs articulated by them.

3.4.8 Annual Summer Camp: Best Practice

Children First holds an annual summer camp. The 2001 camp is presented as a best practice in promoting adolescent involvement in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes. An analysis is then done to extract lessons learnt from the process.

The camp is child-initiated and decisions are shared with adults. The 2001 camp was held at Munro College from August 10-22 and was attended by 95 children aged 10-17 years. With the support of the staff, the young people planned and prepared for the event and organised training workshops. This made them very comfortable and confident with the process and built a strong sense of ownership. For example, it was reported that when a small girl referred to the camp as 'Miss Pious camp' many children immediately responded that it was their camp and they would make it work.

The summer camp was the culmination of a community research and training initiative conducted by the young people. It started with a survey in 12 communities from which the 95 children came. The training workshops included a 'Cultural Bashment' in which culture was used to highlight the main messages. Workshops sessions were held on leadership, conflict resolution communication, reproductive health, the use of drama for change and child rights issues such as building self-esteem, self empowerment and self-development. The children designed the camp programme over a period of one week. A 'trainer of trainers' workshop was also held to prepare camp leaders. All workshop participants developed action plans for their communities and several of them were recruited to become Environmental Protectors and will work in their own community.

The main lessons learnt included the importance of building a process which is evolutionary and responsive to real needs, rather than a project which is time bound and has a starting and finishing time. The camp was considered successful because the children had been prepared to and did assume leadership at all stages. Exposure to child rights and leadership training had helped to build capacity, leadership and self-confidence. They decided what would be done, who would do it and how.

3.5 Programme Strategies

3.5.1 Child Participation

Children First is the largest project of its kind in Jamaica and uses the *child participation technique* extensively. This means that children are "*empowered to become actively involved in decision-making at all levels of the organisation.*" There is on-going learning and adaptation in response to the needs of their needs.

Children and adolescents are also empowered by enabling them to participate in conferences and public activities. Through these channels, they get considerable exposure and experience in public speaking. Several have shared their experiences at large conferences, discussions with community groups and through public performances. In 1996 for example, the children made their Executive Director's presentation to a national conference on child labour. In 2000, they participated in the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Children and Social Policy held in Jamaica as part of the Youth Choir. In the same year, four of the youth advocates attended the *Caribbean Youth Explosion* in Grenada and provided training for 30 Caribbean Youth Ambassadors in the use of creative methodologies for change and community development. More recently, they were invited to send a representative to the UN Special Conference on Children in September 2001. Their Executive Director was also invited to facilitate a session in the Children's Forum. Unfortunately, the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York City on September 11, changed these plans.

The young men and women at Children First have also attended Child Participation conferences in 2000 and 2001 in the USA and United Kingdom. On their return they have shared these experiences with their colleagues and have demanded changes to make the

agency's programme increasingly more participatory. In addition, they have lobbied for and worked to ensure that the needed changes take place.

3.5.2 Child-focus and Flexibility

The programme is child-focused, with efforts being made to create an enabling environment for them to learn and develop. Flexibility is built in to respond to their needs and suggestions. For example, games are used to introduce them to words and their meaning. If they are unable to express themselves, they can draw what the word means. There are also various channels for participation, which are discussed later.

3.5.3 Child-supported Partnerships

As a child-focused programme, street and working children are the main clients. They reflect the social and economic reality in Jamaica that does not guarantee all children the right to an adequate standard of living. The programme strategy therefore includes working with other stakeholders to support the children's development. These include parents, staff, volunteers, community members, community groups and partner agencies who provide resources and advice to the programme. Resource agency partners include HEART Trust/NTA, Young Men's Christian Association (YWCA), and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) among others.

3.5.4 Parent Participation and Empowerment

Parents of children in the day programme, participate through the Parent Teachers Association. There is also a group called 'Parents in Action' (PIA). Over 150 parents from communities in and around Spanish Town are members of both groups. Empowerment of parents is integral to the overall strategy, which is based on the assumption that if parents have good parenting skills, are economically empowered and have a strong organisation, they will be able to provide a better home environment for their children. Organizational development is therefore stressed to ensure sustainability. Through Children First, the parents have received training in parenting skills (including children's rights), organizational development as well as skill training for employment. Assistance is provided where possible to establish small business enterprises to improve income earnings to support their family. In return, the parents provide various forms of voluntary assistance to the agency. Training in conflict resolution and participatory approaches to community development has also been provided.

3.6 Mechanisms for Communication and Consultation

Simple language is used in Board meetings and the minutes are written in a simple form to enable the children to understand. They ask questions when they are not clear about an issue and time is taken to explain it to them. This is important, as they have to report back to their form members. The children have also suggested that their concerns are documented in drawings and this is being explored. Culture is used extensively as a medium of communication with music, drama and art as common channels for expression.

Consultation mechanisms are quite varied and several exist for children and adolescents to consult with each other on their own, as well as with adults. These include:

- **Annual Reviews and Annual Retreats:** At the end of each year an annual review is done to evaluate the programmes implemented and annual retreats are also held. Successes and shortcomings are identified and recommendations made for improvement. Planning is done with input and participation from the children, their parents and the staff. In these meetings ideas are thrown out for discussion.
- **Form meetings:** The representative of each form has discussions with group members. Issues and concerns are then channeled to the Board through this Form Representative.
- **Staff and Teachers:** Children also have the option to share their concerns with an adult or staff member.
- **Children’s Forum/“Come Mek Wi Reason.”** These sessions enable the young people to meet on their own for decision-making. They decide what they will and will not do and agree on what will and will not work in the agency. Decisions from the Board are shared with the wider group once per month in these sessions. Emerging from this process the agency was able to develop a Social Studies curriculum this year as a new addition to the programme. This was in response to the children’s decision that they wanted to learn more about how their country operates. Decisions about uniforms, rules and sanctions are all decided by the children.
- **“Children Talk”:** This is a session where, in a relaxed atmosphere children can draw, play games and use drama to express themselves. Staff then documents their views and suggestions, using formal language to help the children to learn vocabulary. The result is that children learn to use words such as ‘empowerment’ and are able to explain its meaning. For example, one child reportedly said: “I feel empowered... I feel strong and responsible...”
- **Evaluation of Teachers :** Children evaluate their teachers each year against a list of criteria that has been developed jointly. Among the areas examined are: attitudes and behaviour, whether the teacher is a role model and whether the children themselves feel that they are learning.
- **Staff Meetings :** These are held monthly; every other Friday is used for staff development and relaxation.
- **Peer Educators and Peer Counselors :** These are available to the young people and more complex issues are referred to the staff or professional counselors outside the agency.

Through these consultative mechanisms, the children and adolescents have space, time and resources to participate, develop opinions as well as leadership skills. Adapting the programme to address their needs is an indication that their views are respected. Staff also has time to reflect and identify how they can support the children.

Despite the creativity used above, there are limitations of time, space and financial resources to facilitate adolescent participation. As a non-profit agency dependent on funding, there is not always adequate staff to provide adequate counseling. The strategy however demonstrates that ‘space’ is given to enable the children and adolescent to develop their own programmes, and in so doing the process contributes to their development.

3.7 Voices of Adolescents: Focus Group Feedback

3.7.1 Perceptions of Participation

Fifteen adolescents participated in the focus group discussion, which did not include staff. They were articulate and confident and the discussion provided a wealth of information about their thoughts, feelings and experiences related to adolescent participation. They freely described their personal experiences of participation at the level of decision-making and programme evaluation, and related stories of friends and family members regarding aspects of participation.

Frustrations experienced as they attempt to communicate with some adults were shared openly. Some complained of experiencing feelings of low self-esteem as they felt that their opinions were not always accepted and respected by some adults. Feeling of injustice and unfair treatment by adults were described and used these as the rationale for their actions. They frequently attributed their behaviour to underlying causes. Some adolescents spoke of their experience of being raised in dysfunctional families and not growing up with appropriate male figures. They felt that their family background impacted negatively on their emotional and psychological development.

3.7.2 Participation in Decision-making:

The young people were asked to give their opinion on specific issues and were quite vocal and candid in their response to the question - Do you think it is important for adolescents to participate in decision-making?

There was general consensus that adolescents should be allowed to participate in decision-making. Some of the individual responses given were as follows:

“We’re all human beings and we have different needs”

“Things affect us differently, we need to have a say”

“Since the decisions that adults make will affect us, we need to tell them what we need”

“Everyone has a right to make his/her own decision”

“We’re people too, we need to be heard”

“Adults shouldn’t dictate to us, they need to listen too”

“Doesn’t our opinion count?”

Twelve of the fifteen participants felt that adolescents should be given more opportunities to participate in decision-making. The other three adolescents felt that adults were older and wiser and should make the decisions for them. This view sparked off a lively discussion among the members of the group and they felt that the old adage ‘children should be seen and not heard’ had done more harm than good. The view was expressed that children and adolescents were often denied their rights as persons and this practice should be discontinued.

They also said that children often refuse to ‘speak up’ because they were afraid of being ‘shut up’ or reprimanded by adults. Experiences of what they considered to be examples of abuse of child’s rights by some adults were also shared. They were able to identify ways of dealing with the ‘generation gap’ which they identified as a barrier to participation in decision-making. In addition, they felt that sometimes parents fail to allow them to choose as they felt that they were young and inexperienced and likely to make ‘stupid’ decisions. They reported that parents, guardians and other caregivers could do much more to foster harmonious relationships in the home, thereby indicating that they placed a high value on good communication.

Participation in school was also discussed and they expressed the view that the school as an institution should become more ‘student-friendly’. They also saw the need for more mentors in the home, school and community to educate persons and mobilize adolescents. They felt also that schools could do much more to ensure that the views of the students are solicited and factored into the design and implementation of programmes and activities. They were not convinced that some adults were aware that adolescents have rights too.

3.7.3 Participation in the Design, Implementation of Programmes

Adolescents were asked to assess the extent of their involvement in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes, and activities. All identified at least one area and felt that their inclusion was vital to their future prospects. In terms of freedom to choose the area of involvement, they felt satisfied for the most part, that they were allowed to indicate their preferences and select specific areas of interest. For them, having the freedom to choose is an indication and recognition that children and adolescents have rights.

They felt that adolescents should always be consulted and asked for their views when programmes were being designed. Additionally, they felt that since they are ultimately affected by decisions that are made regarding their welfare they should be consulted before the decisions become final. They acknowledged that parents and other adults are older, wiser and more experienced than they are. However, they thought that adults should be more respectful of and responsive to their needs and should elicit their views when planning and implementing programmes.

The areas of involvement mentioned included:

- a) academic instruction
- b) skills training
- c) recreational activities/sports
- d) outreach activities.

Specific areas of their involvement were:

- a) Peer Counselling N=(4),
- b) Survival Skills Training N=(6),
- c) Environmental Awareness/Environmental Protectors (5)

- d) Management N=(5).
- e) Youth Advocacy Training and Child Rights Education
- f) Skill training (photography, drama)
- g)

The Environmental Protectors group had started in 1996 with twenty children who were currently working on environmental projects. Now the group also focuses on:

- ❑ Child Abuse
- ❑ Child Rights
- ❑ Social Issues (eg. role of parents/guardians)
- ❑ Children Mental Health (eg. guidance counselling)

The adolescents participate in workshops, which take the form of drama presentations including songs and poetry written by group members. These dramatic presentations have been shared with members of several communities and other groups.

The overall programme also gives them scope to have group discussions by themselves as well as with other NGOs in their communities. Participants revealed that persons are selected on the basis of their interest, willingness and commitment to make the best use of the opportunities that their involvement offers. Some adolescents felt that they had benefited from the exposure provided by Children First and have been able to exert a positive influence on other members of their family, community and peers.

3.7.4 Participation in Programme Evaluation

There was consensus that adolescents should be allowed to give their views on the evaluation and impact of programmes and activities. They felt that adolescents should:

- a) Speak out on the way they are affected;
- b) Make suggestions to improve or modify specific programmes and activities.
- c) Be allowed to express their views and ultimately influence the change process since they are most affected;
- d) Have increased dialogue with parents to ensure that their suggestions were not always 'shot down', but were given adequate consideration and valued;
- e) Have more opportunities to 'air their views' in a non-judgemental atmosphere.

Language was also regarded as a major barrier in evaluation procedures as adolescents sometimes experienced difficulty in accurately articulating their views because they sometimes lack the required vocabulary. In this regard, they felt that adults need to 'rap' more often with young persons and allow them to express their views in ways that are comfortable. The generation gap was also seen as a barrier to candid assessments of specific issues, activities and programmes.

Participants noted that the reluctance of adults and programme planners to have evaluations was sometimes associated with a fear that it might show up their weakness, lack of creativity or their resistance to change. To increase their participation in evaluations, adolescents suggested that:

- a) Evaluation should be done in a respectful manner to minimize the risk of conflict.
- b) Adults need to create an atmosphere that is conducive to dialogue.
- c) Adolescents themselves need to become more aware of their rights and responsibilities and ensure that they have information to ensure that they make informed choices.
- d) More of them needed to make use of the Internet, library, and other forms of literature that will assist them in making informed choices and decisions.

3.8 Factors Enabling Participation: Adolescents' Perceptions

Adolescents interviewed identified the following enabling factors to facilitate their participation:

- a) Greater dialogue and communication between adolescents and adults;
- b) Adults exercising greater confidence in adolescents' ability to make sensible choices.
- c) Adolescents 'getting the facts' and being properly guided when attempting to make important decisions.
- d) Adolescents being more respectful of the views of adults and learning how to disagree without being disrespectful.

3.9 Factors Inhibiting Participation: Adolescents' Perceptions

Among the barriers identified were:

- a) Lack of self-confidence
- b) Intolerance among adults regarding the level of adolescent involvement in specific activities and programmes.
- c) Lack of consensus between adolescents and adults on life choices. For example, the case of an adolescent wanting to become involved in sports while the parents/programme planners do not approve on the basis of the adolescent not being able to strike a balance between academics and sports. In their view, the adolescent defies the parent as he/she feels that both areas are essential and he/she should not be forced to choose. There was consensus that the decision of the adolescent would indeed create a barrier between both parties and that this would require an amicable solution.
- d) Selection criteria imposed by adults on adolescents were considered discriminatory and regarded as creating conflict. Persons who do not match the requirements are excluded.
- e) Intimidation also had a negative impact on participation. They felt that everyone should be allowed to participate in the area(s) of his/her choice without fear of intimidation.

3.10 Staff Perceptions and Recommended Strategies

Interviews with senior staff members provided their own perceptions of adolescent participation in Children First. Adolescent participation was defined as:

“ Young people having a say in what are the issues that affect them and really being involved”.

3.11 Factors Facilitating Participation: Staff Perceptions

Staff indicated that members of the student body are:

- represented at the board level
- very involved in the day-to-day running of the organisation.
- allowed to express their views and make decisions that influence their well-being.
- allowed to make rules, are responsible for ensuring that the rules are upheld and participate in decision-making about the forms of punishment considered appropriate based on the nature/severity of an offence.

3.12 Factors Inhibiting Participation: Staff Perceptions

- Staff identified barriers to adolescent participation as:
- Lack of confidence of some adolescents
- Specific criteria for selection
- Ignorance of facts concerning child rights
- Age and gender

3.13 Strategies Recommended

Strategies recommended by staff included:

- Building the self-esteem and self-confidence of adolescents
- Removal of criteria for participation
- Promoting education and exposure to relevant materials to assist adolescents in decision-making.
- Using creative methodologies to maximize their potential
- Using child participation techniques to ensure that all children are allowed to participate
- Discovering specific skills of individuals and helping them to develop these
- Designing programmes to meet specific needs identified by the adolescents.
- Promoting positive peer influence
- Making adolescents visible in an organisation.
- Inviting resource persons to visit the organisation and give motivational talks to the adolescents. (e.g. Child's Rights, sexual reproduction etc.).
- Using **mentoring programmes** to provide practical guidance to adolescents which helps to motivate them to make informed choices.

3.14 Assessment of Adolescent Participation in Children First

Analysis of adolescents' responses indicates that they have a very strong sense of their rights and responsibilities as well as their limitations, hence the need for adult support. Their analysis of barriers and enabling factors was also very focused and provided insight and excellent qualitative data on strategies that organisations can use to improve adolescent participation and empower youths.

There was a high level of consistency between the views of the adolescents and adult staff members in relation to adolescent participation at the level of policy, and decision-making in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes in Children First. As full members of the Board, five students provide a direct channel for information flow as well as have the power to decide on policies and programmes. There are several avenues through which they can and do participate.

A comparison of the views of staff and students also showed that there is *still* scope to improve the quality of participation in the organisation. The young people constantly challenge the organisation and staff to improve this area of work. The multi-faceted strategy of working with children, parents and communities helps to ensure reinforcement in the child-centered values that have been developed and which are now part of the culture of the organisation. This spills over to the home, schools and wider community as they are also active in the wider national and international community.

The overall assessment is that Children First is a very good model of an organisation that promotes a high degree of adolescent participation. It falls between level seven and eight on Roger Hart's ladder of adolescent participation. Children obviously initiate many programmes and share decisions with adults. Equipping adolescents with the skills prior to giving them responsibility to plan, implement and evaluate programmes also builds their self-confidence and skill. The next major challenge for the organisation is to harness adequate financial resources to have enough staff, physical facilities and programme funds to maintain and expand these achievements.

3.15 Note on Data Collection

The methodology used to develop the case study involved a review of literature on the organisation, a focus group and interviews with staff. The focus group was convened at Children First on May 22ND with a total of fifteen (15) participants. The sample comprised ten (10) females, and five (5) males between the ages of 13 and 19 years, who currently participate in programmes of the institution. The mean age was 15 years and the youngest and oldest person was 13 and 19 respectively. The purpose of the study was outlined, permission sought to tape the session and conditions were discussed. They were allowed to participate on the basis of their willingness and commitment to factual and honest responses. They were told that the discussion was confidential and that they could voluntarily withdraw from the exercise if they saw the need to do so. The researcher then conducted the focus group and the discussion was tape-recorded. The recordings were reviewed and the responses grouped according to areas of interest to prepare the report.

Interviews were then held with staff members to get their views. A comparison of data from the focus group and interviews was done to compile the case study. A follow-up interview was later done to clarify some points. Overall, the focus group approach provided rich information about many issues relating to adolescent participation. This methodology is recommended as appropriate for collecting detailed and descriptive information about adolescent participation. The findings from the focus group underscored the need for further research with a wider sample of adolescents who hail from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

CHAPTER 4

THE WOMEN'S CENTRE FOUNDATION OF JAMAICA

CASE STUDY

4.1 Profile of the Organisation

The Women's Centre Foundation (WCFJ) is a Limited Liability Company established in 1978 to provide programmes for adolescent mothers. In 2001, the agency is currently attached to the Ministry of Tourism and Sport which is the portfolio of the Minister Responsible for Women's Affairs. The programme caters primarily to adolescent girls aged 17 years and under, who have become pregnant while in school or have already given birth to their first child. The WCFJ Annual Report 2000 indicated that since the start of the programme the total number of participants assisted island-wide was an estimated 26,298. It is also highly respected because it has a very low rate of girls who have a second pregnancy, which the 2000 report indicated was 0.47% island-wide for second pregnancies.

Programmes also operate for men, women and children addressing problems associated with adolescent fertility such as interrupted education, limited employment opportunities, child neglect as well as child abuse. From its Kingston base, the WCFJ has now expanded island-wide to include seven main centres and six outreach stations. The main Centres are located in Kingston, Mandeville, Montego Bay, Port Antonio, Sav-la-Mar, Spanish Town and St Ann's Bay. It is well known and respected internationally for its work in the area of adolescent reproductive health.

In addition to the financial support received from the Government of Jamaica, the Jamaica Social Investment Fund and international funders (including UNICEF, USAID, Christian Children's Fund of Canada, Caribbean Conference of Churches), the Centre receives technical and moral support from a large number of institutions and individuals. Their time and contributions expose the students to a wide range of topics, leadership training, mentoring and other skills. Students from a number of tertiary institutions do placements at the Centres across the island. The WCJF also does extensive public education programmes locally and internationally and has helped a number of countries to replicate the model.

4.2 Vision and Mission

The Mission Statement of the WCFJ states that :

The WCJF, an agent for innovative change, has particular responsibility for promoting a new approach to the problems associated with teenage pregnancy, especially in the area of interrupted education

The WCJF focuses on education, training and developmental counseling, to improve employment and productivity among our young and delaying unwanted pregnancies. Other services are offered by the Foundation.

Specific objectives of the WCJF are to:

- a) Continue the academic education of young mothers, 16 years and under to return them to the normal school systems and to provide the necessary support services after they return to school;
- b) Provide intensive counseling on an individual and group basis in Family Life Planning.
- c) Educate the young mother, her baby father and her parents, of their responsibilities as parents, ensuring that correct childcare standards are maintained.
- d) Provide support, referral services and/or training to young men and women who have already dropped out of the formal school system;
- e) Provide skill training for young mothers who cannot return to school;
- f) Provide Outreach services to adolescent mothers who are not able to reach a main Centre;
- g) Intervene so as to delay early unwanted pregnancies amongst young women in Jamaica;
- h) Provide a sanctuary where teenagers can air their problems in a non-judgmental confidential environment.

4.3 Decision-Making Structure

A Board of Directors manages the affairs of the WCFJ but adolescents are not represented on this body. Their needs are filtered through staff consultation with adolescents.

4.4 Main Programmes

The WCJF programme includes:

- a) On-going formal education for adolescent mothers during their pregnancy
- b) Returning young mothers to the formal school system after the birth of their babies.
- c) Remedial education classes
- d) Counseling and referral services to women and men at all the Centres and medical services;
- e) Training peer counselors at schools near to the Centres island-wide;

- f) Skill training for women and men aged 17-25 years at four centres island-wide;
- g) Assistance to the ‘baby fathers and parents of the teens;
- h) Day Nurseries for the babies of the students who are attached to the main centres island-wide. In addition the WCFJ operates three “Chubby Cheeks” Day Nurseries for the babies of working mothers at the Kingston, Montego Bay Centres and the St Elizabeth Outreach Station.
- i) Family Planning Counseling. Most students return to school on a family planning method.
- j) An academic programme that facilitates young men who need to continue their education;
- k) An afternoon activity programme in five rural Centres which operates between 3:00-6:00 pm to assist children in the age range 10-14 years who have dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out. This programme provides Family Life Education and Reproductive Health Counseling, Remedial Vocational Education, drama, music and art. These adolescents are also assisted in returning to the normal school system;
- l) The Young Men at Risk Programme, which is a continuing education and counseling programme for young men, aged 17-25 years which operates in all of the seven main WCFJ locations.
- m) The Fort Augusta Pre-release Programme which operates at the Fort Augusta Correctional Centre for Women. This counseling and self-development programme is funded by the Caribbean Conference of Churches and has assisted over 80 inmates since its inception in May 2000.
- n) The Christian Children’s Fund of Canada (CCFC) sponsorship programme operates at all Centres in conjunction with the CCFC and provides monthly monetary assistance for 450 teen mothers and their babies. This component also assists with skill training for men and women.

4.5 Programme Strategies

The main strategies used were:

- Continuing education young mothers
- Continuing education for ‘Young Men at Risk’

- Counseling
- Skill training
- Day Care facilities
- Drama

As previously noted, these strategies seek to enable adolescent girls who had become pregnant in school to complete their education and to develop parenting and other coping skills. Support systems such as counselling and day care centres enabled them to manage the transition to motherhood and to have childcare support while studying. Working with their parents/guardians and baby-fathers is also a component of the strategy.

4.6 Mechanisms for Communication and Consultation

Regular meetings are held with between the staff and students. In addition, they have access to teachers and the guidance counselors.

4.7 Voices of Adolescents: Focus Group Feedback

Fourteen adolescent females from three Centres, participated in the focus group which was not attended by staff. They were selected by the WCFJ staff and came from the Kingston Centre at Trafalgar Road, St. Margaret's and Spanish Town. The focus group discussion started with an introduction to ensure that the group understood the meaning of the word "adolescent participation" as used in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Using the game "gossip" as an icebreaker, the message sent was "I have the right to be heard". Each student was then asked to elaborate on that sentence. Various responses were given, but most outstandingly were:

- "Because we are people like everybody else".
- "Because my views are important".
- "Because my opinion is of value".
- "Because if somebody else's opinion is wrong, I can fix it".

They shared their thoughts and feelings and openly discussed their concerns, especially their unique situation of being pregnant schoolgirls and the implications for participation. It was obvious from the responses received and from the general spirit of the girls, that

they felt the need to be heard, for their opinions to be considered important and for validation. They were familiar with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had attended one meeting on the CRC held at the Medallion Hall. They had not however, attended the Fifth Ministerial Conference which had been held at the Conference Centre. The facilitator then briefed them about the conference, and noted that it had caused displeasure among the adolescents who attended because of their low level of participation in the event. This explanation allowed them to understand the different types of participation that can exist, making them able to see for themselves what true participation should entail.

4.8 Factors Enabling Participation

Adolescents felt that their participation in the decision-making process was important and confirmed that their opinions are sought. “*It felt good to be consulted,*” they said and provided the following justification for consulting them:

- “I must tell them what I am going through, not they tell me what I’m going through”.
- “Although I am an adolescent, I have rights too”.
- “All decisions made by them affect our lives somehow”.
- “Expressing your opinion shows older persons what you think”.
- “Some parents think children should be seen and not heard”.

Factors enabling participation were therefore related to having opportunities to express themselves, sharing opinions and having their rights respected

4.9 Factors Inhibiting Participation

During the focus group session, several factors emerged that impacted on their participation in the organisation. Among these were changes in the relationship with their parents, and public perception of them. Factors inhibiting participation were:

- Loss of self-esteem related to becoming pregnant during adolescence
- Reduced influence on decision-making at home and within the family
- Reduced communication with their parents
- Reduced sense of security as some parents kept reminding them of their mistake and others threatened to put them out as soon as they reached 18 years of age
- Depression for being constantly reminded by parents that all the money they have spent on their education had “gone down the drain”

One student mentioned that if it was not for her “baby-father” she didn’t know what she would do and he paid her school fees. Things were so bad between herself and her mother that she did not even eat the food she provided.

Lack of maturity to take responsibility for their actions also emerged from the discussion. The girls were unwillingness to take responsibility for their actions and reportedly all felt that parents had to take part of the blame for them getting pregnant so early in life. Some of the reasons given for this strong view was:

- Inadequate access to material things: *“Things in the home you want, you can’t get it, so you go out - you want somebody to talk to - somebody who will listen. My ‘baby-father’ started out like a ‘big brother’ to me. I could talk to him about anything.”*
- Poor communication: *“If you had a problem and you talked to somebody outside of the home e.g. a guidance counselor or another relative, and they in turn spoke to your parents, you usually got into more trouble with your parents afterwards - they might even beat you for taking your family business outside.”*
- Choice of confidante for support: *“You therefore found it very easy to go to somebody, usually a boy, who you are sure you could confide in, then you would get involved.”*
- “Parents sometimes talk to you good when the outside person is there talking with them, but as soon as that person leaves everything is back to Square One.”
- Intent upon talking out all their frustrations at home, the adolescents continued to express themselves with much emotion.
- “I was so tired of the terrible, unkind, things my mother told me on every occasion, that one day I threatened to give my baby poison to drink, since it seemed that he was the reason for all the problems.”
- “I have often felt like committing suicide.”
- “My ‘baby-father’ always encourages me to talk with my parents and to apologize even if I am not wrong, but it is very hard to do, because of how they treat me, especially my mother.”

Wearing the Women’s Centre uniform, identified them as pregnant schoolgirls. As a result they suffered verbal abuse from men who often made *derogatory sexual remarks* to them, especially if the individual man was trying to be friendly was ignored. There was unanimous agreement that men expect them to be *easy targets for sex* because they have had a child or were pregnant. Men on the streets *verbally abuse them*, accuse them of not having any ambition because they had become pregnant while in school. Men told them that they (the men) wouldn’t want anybody else’s “baby-mother” as a girlfriend. This *created feelings of rejection and anger*. These factors appeared to limit their self-confidence and self-esteem which would affect their approach to asserting their rights.

4.10 Adolescent Participation in the Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Programmes

The students did not feel that they make any input into design, implementation and evaluation of programmes. This suggests that while they were consulted they perceived themselves as having limited input in these areas. Debates and drama were valued as these were perceived as one of the few avenues through which they were able to express their feelings. They participated in the school and day care programmes as well as counseling, drama. Participation of the ‘baby fathers’ was limited and of the fourteen girls in the focus group, only one ‘baby-father’ had enrolled and he did not attend regularly. The reason given was that he was working and found it difficult to attend. Others reasons given was that the men lived far from the Centres.

In evaluating the programme, some of the girls expressed their reluctance in using the counseling services because of previous lapses in confidentiality. The academic programme was also too limited for some students who wanted a wider range of academic subjects. At present only English, Biology and Mathematics were currently offered. An interview with the Administrator for the Kingston Centre however revealed that there was not much scope for any change in the academic programme. There is no channel for them to participate in programme evaluations. Past students are consulted for formal evaluations of the overall programme.

4.11 Staff Perceptions and Recommended Strategies

Interviews with senior staff members provided insight into their perceptions of adolescent participation in the WCFJ programme. The staff defined adolescent participation as

“Involvement of adolescents in programmes and activities that are designed to foster maximum involvement in all areas”

These discussions confirmed the earlier views of the students that they had limited scope for participation in the decision-making process. There was limited scope for flexibility in the design and structure of the core programme but specific modules are designed in response to students needs the staff noted. For example the Peer Counselling Programme, the Young Men at Risk Programme and Counselling for baby-fathers had been developed in response to students’ needs.

The Administrators noted that the Peer Counselling Programme offers confidential counselling services for children and adolescents of any age. Young persons are also trained to support their peers. However, it is not known if the students’ concern about lack of confidentiality related to peer counsellors. Skills training is also offered based on needs as they are identified and it was these initiatives that offered the most autonomy to the adolescents and scope for participation.

The perception of the staff members interviewed was that participants are allowed to play an integral part in the design, implementation and evaluation of these programmes and they can select the activities in which they want to be involved.

They also reported that new programmes and activities are added periodically based on needs identified by adolescents. This was done to provide variety and respond to the ever-changing needs of the target group. The administration reported that each cohort has different needs and so a blanket approach is not considered ideal. They are cognizant of the need to adopt a more student-friendly approach. Strategies recommended by staff to facilitate participation are summarised below:

4.12 Factors Enabling Adolescent Participation

- Good communication skills
- Mutual respect between adults and adolescents
- Participation in decision-making, programme design, implementation and evaluation.
- Allowing adolescents to plan their own programmes
- Providing scope for informal evaluation on a regular basis
- Ensuring that adolescents become involved in activities such as drama and skills training,
- Enabling student participation in meetings and conferences such as the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Children and Social Policy held in Jamaica in 2000

- Providing academic instruction and extra curricular activities such as fish farming, chicken rearing, sewing among in response to needs identified by students;
- Using resource persons to inform the students about current affairs issues, as well as different perspectives on family life and family life education
- Mentoring programme to provide a medium for individual expression and to allow for practical guidance
- Using past students to give motivational talks
- Organising home-school sessions
- Organising individual and group counselling sessions.

4.13 Factors Inhibiting Adolescent Participation

Staff perceptions included

- Short time period most students spent at the institution to influence policies and programmes
- High student turnover made it difficult to have them on the Board and to be involved in annual reviews of the programme.
- Erosion of self-esteem based on feedback from family and the public
- Poor communication skills
- Poor relationship with parents and other family members
- Failure to comply with instructions
- Unwillingness to become involved beyond the scope of academic instruction
- Fear of failure

4.14 Assessment of Adolescent Participation in the WCFJ

Analysis of the data strongly suggested that the lack of adolescent representation on the Board, the absence of an explicit commitment to adolescent participation in the Mission Statement, and adolescent pregnancy had a combined negative impact on students' levels of participation in the programme. Pregnancy appeared to limit their ability to exercise their rights with the result that they did not seem heavily involved in the design and implementation of programmes. Drama and discussions were used to solicit their views and opinions which had the positive impact of making them "feel good to be consulted." The perception that they had a key role in the design of programmes did not emerge from the focus groups, suggesting that there is a gap between the perceptions of adolescents and administrators regarding the level of actual involvement.

Although administrators recognised that the curriculum limited their flexibility to adapt to the needs of the students, they cited several programmes that had been introduced in response to needs identified by students.

Broadening the avenues for consultation and adolescent participation in decision-making could benefit the agency. This could be facilitated by establishing a past students group and asking them to name representatives to the Board. In addition, an orientation programme could include the history of the WCFJ and how the various programmes had developed in response student's needs. The gap in perceptions of the staff and students

suggests the need for greater dialogue to build a greater sense of ownership of the process. This is a major challenge, given the reality that most students are there for only a few months.

The overall assessment is that the Women's Centre Foundation of Jamaica falls at between points five and six on Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation. Students are consulted and informed (5) and programmes are adult initiated. There is however, some shared decision-making with the students.

4.15 Note on Data Collection

The case study on the Women's Centre Foundation of Jamaica was developed to assess the level of participation of Adolescent Mothers who are the main beneficiaries of the programme in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Research for the case study involved documentary reviews, a focus group and interviews. A review was also done of the organisation's brochure and the 2000 Annual Report. The focus group discussion was held on Tuesday, May 29, 2001 and was attended by a group of fourteen adolescent females. One interview was held with two administrative staff members and a follow-up interview was held with one staff member. Responses from both groups were compared to determine the level of perceived participation that exists in the WCFJ programme from the viewpoint of the adolescents and staff. Analysis of the findings were then compared with the framework of adolescent participation developed by UNICEF and recommendations were then made to improve levels of participation.

CHAPTER 5
YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED
CASE STUDY

5.1 Profile of the Organisation

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.) is a voluntary Jamaican organization, which provides a supervised Mentoring Programme and other positive interventions for in-school adolescents aged 10-18 years. Programmes are designed to help the students complete their post-primary education and move on to higher education, employment or skills training. The organization was launched in March 1991 with 12 students at Excelsior High School and in 2001 had approximately 1000 adolescents from 10 schools enrolled in one or more of its programmes, which are based in Kingston and St. Andrew.

5.2 Vision/Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of Y.O.U states that the organization seeks to:

- Ensure that through the mentoring relationship every adolescent is provided with the emotional support necessary to build self confidence and self esteem;
- Provide through counseling, training and example, the tools, resources and ideas that will ensure that adolescents complete their post-primary education and are equipped to become productive citizens.
- Support schools in their goal of leading students to effectively utilize the opportunities offered to them through post-primary education
- Play a strong advocacy role for the rights of children and adolescents

Y.O.U. also has a Motto which states that:

“We believe that youth from even the most disadvantaged circumstances can succeed, when they are connected with caring adult mentors, who listen to them, stand by them and help them to attain their fullest potential.”

5.3 Decision-Making Structure

The Board is comprised of a team of distinguished Jamaicans: Professor Errol Miller (Chairman), Mrs. Betty Ann Blain (Founder); Mrs. Georgia Scott (new Executive Director), Ms Vintoria Bernard, Mr Kenton Palmer, Mrs Sheila Nicholson, Mr Winston Blake, Rev Dr. Garnet Roper and Rev. Dr Vivian Panton. Adolescents are not represented on the Board.

5.4 Main Programmes

5.4.1 Y.O.U Mentoring Programme/Strategy

Mentoring is both a programme and a strategy for YOU. The mentoring team is comprised of social workers, trainers and administrators who work with teachers and guidance counselors to identify promising adolescents at risk of dropping out of school. Caring adult volunteers are trained to serve as mentors for them in a supervised programme. To date over 300 mentors have been recruited, trained and matched on a same-sex basis with student 'mentees.' In 2001, over 100 mentor-mentee pairs were functioning and recruitment, training and matching is reportedly done continuously.. The training programme for mentors includes workshops on effective communication, counseling skills, adolescent behaviour and other issues related to adolescent development. Priority is placed on building self-esteem and providing environmental education. Gender is not taken into consideration when selecting students to participate in the programme, but gender issues are addressed in the training programmes offered.

Other programmes that support the Mentoring Programme include:

- Career guidance
- Adolescent workshops that provide practical life skills
- A supervised homework centre
- A summer day camp
- Workplace orientation
- Motivational talks in schools
- Peer counseling
- Parenting education to 1,500 parents and guardians annually
- Child rights advocacy on behalf of Jamaican children and adolescents
- Networking with several local and international non-governmental organisations, the Ministry of Health's Child Support Unit, bilateral and multilateral agencies.

5.4.2 Mentoring Consultancy

Y.O.U also runs a Mentoring Consultancy Programme which was launched in 1997. It has trained 18 other community organizations to establish mentoring programmes in service clubs, school alumni groups, a college, church, and an umbrella group for

voluntary agencies. In 1999 the Government of Jamaica commissioned the organisation to establish mentoring programmes in two residential children's homes and one 'place of safety.'

5.5 Mechanisms for Communication and Consultation

This is done through monthly workshops held at various locations, students who drop in to the office, feedback from mentors, telephone calls, letters and flyers distributed to students as well as through end of programme reviews (e.g. Summer programme).

5.6 Voices of Adolescents: Focus Group Feedback

Nine adolescents participated in the focus group discussion which was held at the offices of YOU and conducted exclusively with the group of young people comprised of five girls and four boys. The participants were very articulate, bright, vibrant, insightful in their reflections. They demonstrated a lot of self-confidence in expressing their views and opinions, describing how they had been helped through participation in Y.O.U. programmes. In addition they shared their views on enabling and inhibiting strategies to promote adolescent participation in various spheres.

5.7 Participation in Decision-Making

The students felt that adolescents should be involved in needs assessments and decision-making about programmes. They demonstrated a high level of self-confidence and felt satisfied, knowing that their opinions were valued. In expressing their feelings, they provided strong arguments to underscore the importance of their participation in decision-making, noting that:

- The majority of persons in Jamaica are adolescents
- The youth of today are more highly educated than earlier generations.
- The programmes are about adolescents so they (adolescents) should be involved.
- Jamaica is a democratic country so they should be involved.
- Adolescents need to feel that their input is important.
- The 'generation gap' exists due to a lack of involvement of the youth. Participation could help to close the 'gap'.

5.8 Participation in the Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Programmes

Feedback from the focus group discussion with adolescents showed that the young people do not have direct involvement in the design of programmes. They are however actively involved in the implementation of various programmes and they have all been trained for leadership. Many of those in the group participated in the training and adolescent workshops. This was part of the *methodology of Y.O.U. which is that children learn by doing things themselves. Role-playing also represented another important part of Y.O.U's methodology.*

To promote participation and to make young people more visible within the organisation, students are constantly asked to make presentations in workshops, which are highly participatory. Youth leaders are identified through this process, particularly in the summer programme and are then given particular jobs, which help them to develop their skills, abilities and self-confidence. Their excitement in discussing this programme demonstrated that they valued it highly. The Summer Enrichment Programme, they noted, included: workshops on Art, Drama, the Environment, Social Skills, gender analysis and relationships. Among the opinions expressed were the following:

- “It teaches a lot of things I didn’t know before.”
- “Was really designed to fill our needs.”
- “I (young male) was allowed to work in the office as a Counselor under the programme. As a result, it made me feel like a part of the staff team. I was able to help kids and felt noticed. ...But on the down side, I felt the need for more power and authority, as I had not been formally introduced to the group as their ‘counsellor’, so the children did not show me sufficient respect.”
- “I liked Shadow Week, where students are placed in workplaces to give us the opportunity to experience the world of work.”

Students also participate in programme evaluations. Space, time and resources are provided to enable them to participate and to suggest improvements. Their views are then factored into programme planning for the following year. So although they are not represented on the Board of Directors, they are, through this medium, able to have their

views heard and their opinions are valued and included. The adolescents are not however involved in the evaluation of staff. When asked for their overall assessment of the YOU programme they said:

- “It is inspiring and helps you to inspire others.”
- “You are allowed to learn office procedures.”
- “The friendliness of the staff helps adolescents to develop self-esteem.”

Perhaps their strongest support for the programme was their perception that their opinion is appreciated, which is important to them.

In addition to their reflections on the YOU programme, the discussion also included participation in other areas of national life and some of these views are shared below. They provided insight into wider and deeper issues of participation as well as valuable feedback, which can be used to enhance adolescent participation.

5.9 Views on Participation in Schools

Based on their need for participation in decision-making, the students expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which schools generally operate:

- “Teachers always seem to know what is going on, but children don’t.”
- “One example is the curriculum - children never seem to know what to expect.”
- “Children should be allowed to have a say both in the curriculum and in the teaching methods used.”

5.10 Views on ‘Youth Link’ Newspaper

Focus group participants also commented on the newspaper publication “**Youth Link**” which is an avenue for youth to express their views and opinions. There was overall dissatisfaction and some of the comments were:

- “Boring”
- “Needs to be written by more interesting ‘youth’ writers, not adults thinking they know what youth want to read about.”
- “Writers should be ‘models’ who have actually experienced the issue that they speak on.”
- “The Committee responsible for the production of Youth Link should ask the youth how they would like to see it (the publication) done.”

- “A good idea would be to feature a “model student of the week” as all kids enjoy seeing their photograph in the newspaper. It makes them feel ‘big’.”
- “They need to get “down-to-earth kids to help them in planning.”
- “They need a mixture of youth from all social strata - urban & rural. Rural youth are disadvantaged”

5.11 Adolescents’ Perceptions: Factors Enabling Participation

- Opportunities to learn and develop leadership skills
- Formal training
- Being given responsibility to implement programmes
- Self-confidence
- Climate of consultation and valuing the views and input of adolescents

5.12 Adolescents’ Perceptions: Factors Inhibiting Participation

- Soliciting and consulting but ignoring the views of adolescents
- Limited avenues for participation
- Lack of access to information
- Poor communication structures within institutions that deny adolescents access to important information on issues affecting them

5.13 Staff Perceptions and Recommended Strategies

Interviews with the staff confirmed that although adolescents were not directly involved in the design of programmes, their opinions were regularly factored into any improvements or changes that became necessary. All activities were developed with them in mind and this is done by conducting a needs assessment. The Y.O.U. team speaks with the adolescents, their teachers and guidance counsellors to identify their needs. Results are then used to develop programmes. The Group Mentoring Programme is one example of a programme which came out of the needs assessment process. It was recognized that there was the need for more children to be brought into the mentoring experience, but there was a difficulty in matching children with (individual) mentors.

The staff also felt that the main lessons learnt from the Y.O.U. experience regarding adolescents were varied:

- Adolescent have talents and are capable of planning, implementing and evaluating programmes
- Adults don't listen enough to adolescents and as much as they require.
- In school, teachers are the only ones involved in making the rules.
- Adolescents want to be heard and to express themselves, even if they are semi-literate.
- When adolescents are given the opportunity, they make meaningful contributions.
- YOU leadership programmes have proven effective as they promote leadership, boost self-esteem and self-confidence which then enable adolescents to take the initiative to do things by themselves.
- The programme has had a tremendous multiplier effect promoting leadership skills. One participant (a young man), had started a peer counseling group at his high school and asked counselors from YOU to be resource persons.
- Youth speakers and resource persons have a major impact on the adolescents. When they are brought into workshops, the youngsters gravitate more to them. They see them as peers as they are closer to their own age group.
- Adolescents have important views on just about every subject- not just on matters related to their age group.
- Adolescents are able to mobilize and collaborate with other peers.
- Adolescents value their opinions being sought and respected.

5.14 Factors Facilitating Participation

- Creating an enabling environment in which adolescents feel that their opinions and views are important and valued and where they can freely express themselves
- Friendly staff that help adolescent develop self-esteem
- Providing adolescents with the skills for leadership, decision-making, planning and evaluation

- Providing opportunities for adolescents to learn by doing
- Good listening skills
- Mentoring and providing positive role models for adolescents

5.15 Factors Inhibiting Participation

- The ‘generation gap’ between adults and adolescents
- Unwillingness of adults to listen to and respect the views of young people
- Unwillingness to consult adolescents and involve them in decision-making.

5.16 Assessment of Adolescent Participation in YOU

There was a high level of coherence between the views of the adolescents and the staff interviewed, in relation to the participation of young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of YOU’s programmes. Although they were not members of the Board, feedback from the students confirmed that there is a high level of participation in the implementation of programmes. Mechanisms also exist to ensure that their views, opinions and needs are communicated to decision-makers. This level of involvement and respect, makes the students feel valued and builds positive self-esteem, despite the social problems that may exist in their personal lives.

The overall assessment is that YOU is a good model of an organisation promoting adolescent participation which falls between levels six and seven of Roger Hart’s Ladder of Participation. Some programmes are “Adult-initiated, and there is shared decision-making with children. Other programmes are “child-initiated and directed.” Appointing adolescent representatives to the Board is the next challenge that no doubt will be addressed in the near future, given the adolescent-friendly environment created in this organisation.

5.17 Note on Data Collection

The focus group nine adolescents was held on Tuesday, May 22, 2001. The Executive Director and a senior Programme Officer were also and a follow-up telephone interview was later done with the new Executive Director to fill data gaps.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report summarizes the findings, lessons learnt and recommendations emerging from the analysis of data of the 30 organizations and the three case studies.

Findings

6.1 Adolescent Participation in Policy and Decision-Making

There is a high level of awareness about the importance of adolescent participation in most organizations. Many stated that their policy and mission statement promoted this but there seemed to be a gap between perceptions and reality. Over half of the agencies (57%) also stated that adolescents were members of their Board or Management Committee. More detailed research, would be required to verify this but responses were accepted at face value.

6.2 Best Practices

Best practice would ensure that commitment is expressed in both policy and practice which would mean: references to participation in the policy/mission statement; adolescent representation on the Board; facilitating their participation by simplifying language, procedures and forms of communication and providing leadership training. Table 3 below presents data on the three case studies and demonstrates best practices.

Table 3: Overview of Adolescent Participation

Agency	Adolescent Participation in Mission Statement	Adolescents on Board	Facilitating Measures
Children First	Explicit reference	5 children on 14-member Board	Development of self confidence Strong child consultation and re Simplified language in meeting; Simplified minutes Procedures explained etc.
YOU	Indirect reference	No children on Board	Consultation through adults and Meetings
WCFJ	No specific reference	No children on the Board	Consultation through adults and Meetings

Children First had the most developed systems and procedures to adolescent participation. There was an explicit commitment to child participation and 5 children were on the Board. The Mission Statement of Y.O.U, had an indirect commitment stating that the agency seeks “to play a strong advocacy role for the rights of children and adolescents.” The Mission Statement of the WCFJ makes no reference or commitment to adolescent participation.

**Strategies to Promote Adolescent Participation in Decision-Making:
Children First Case study**

- Ensuring that vision and mission statements, promote adolescent participation.
- Ensuring adolescent participation on the Board (5/14) and that different age groups are represented (aged 12-19 years).
- Providing training to build self-confidence to enable adolescents to become effective Board members
- Facilitating participation by using child-friendly forms of communication in meetings (e.g. use of drawings if needed to ensure that issues, concepts and ideas are understood by the children).
- Conducting meetings to facilitate children’s participation.
- Special consultation mechanisms for children to discuss issues by themselves, as well as other forums for communication with staff, parents and the Board.
- Ensuring a high level of accountability as children report back to colleagues through formal channels/special sessions.
- Ensuring that participation is voluntary (not forced), and young people determine the extent and form of participation desired.

6.3 Adolescent Participation in the Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Programmes

Needs Assessments

Prior to the start of programmes ‘best practice’ indicates that a needs assessment should be done to ensure that programmes respond to specific needs. Findings from the analysis of the 30 agencies indicate that most (87%) said that needs assessments were done prior to the start of programmes. Practices varied widely however as some agencies did this quarterly, annually or every two-five years. In some cases, the assessment was done at Board level, which meant that adolescents only participated if they were members. *The findings suggest that to promote adolescent participation, needs assessments should be done WITH adolescents and should be done at established intervals.*

Adolescent participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes also varied. Most agencies consulted said that they ensured that adolescents have some input into these areas of operation. Among the 30 organisations:

- 63% stated that adolescents had input into their programme design;
- 70% had adolescents involved in programme implementation through programme committees and
- 63% had adolescents involved in programme evaluation, although this was not always formal.

This indicates that *adolescents tended to be more involved in implementation than in design and evaluation of programmes, reinforcing the tendency for them to have lower levels of participation in decision-making.* Agencies that scored high on adolescent

participation (100%) were YMCA, Ashe, Hope for Children, St Patrick’s Foundation, and the Mel Nathan Institute.

Results from the three case studies, show adolescents at WCFJ with lower levels of involvement, those at YOU with a more advanced level and those at Children First with a very high level of participation. (See below).

Table 4: Assessment of Adolescent Participation in Case Study Agencies Using Roger Hart’s Ladder of Participation

Levels of Participation	Case Study Agencies
8 Child initiated	Children First
7. Child Initiated & directed	Children First Youth Opportunities Unlimited
6. Adult-initiated shared decisions with children	Youth Opportunities Unlimited Women’s Centre Foundation of Jamaica
5. Consulted and informed	Women’s Centre Foundation of Jamaica
4. Assigned but informed	
3. Tokenism	
2. Decoration	
1. Manipulation	
0 No participation	

6.4 Best Practices

From the three case studies, Children First emerged as a ‘best practice’ in this area as several programmes are conceptualized, implemented and evaluated by the children. The experience of Summer Camp 2001, stood out in this regard. The strategy is summarised below:

Strategies to Promote Adolescent Participation in Programme Design, Implementation and Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment conducted with children prior to the start of programmes (Research by children in their community to identify needs of adolescents) • Training in leadership, counseling, conflict resolution and other skills needed for the camp; • Joint planning to build ownership of the process to ensure a high level of participation and responsibility; • Developing programmes (long term) to address needs rather than projects (short term). This created a framework for a more sustainable change process. • Development of action plans to address the needs identified in communities. • Participation of children with support of staff in implementation of programmes.

6.5 Communication and Consultation Mechanisms

Consistent with the conceptual framework previously outlined, communication and consultation are vital for adolescents to develop relevant skills and self-confidence to participate at policy and programme levels if they so choose. Findings from the review of the 30 agencies indicated that:

- Most agencies (90%) said they had meetings for consultation but only 73% indicated that they sought opinions of adolescents suggesting that consultation was not necessarily effective from the point of view of adolescents.
- Many agencies were aware of the importance of adolescent participation but needed encouragement to adopt more effective strategies.
- Some organisations were not adequately equipped to manage this transition to an adolescent-centered programme.
- Participation should be progressive and incremental in line with increasing age, maturity, competence and interest of adolescents.
- Adolescent participation is most difficult in institutions caring for children with disabilities and in some children's homes.
- The level of adolescent participation in several agencies could be described as 'tokenism'

Findings from the three case studies also indicated that:

- Adults and adolescents have different perceptions of the quality of time, space and resources available to promote adolescent participation in decision making.
- Child/adolescent-friendly communication helped to improve communication and consultation
- Adolescents require special skills to participate in meaningful ways.
- Partnership is needed between adults and adolescents to promote participation.
- Roles and responsibilities of adults and adolescents have to be negotiated and shared.

These findings confirm the importance of adolescent participation as pivotal to achieving people-centered and holistic development. They underscored the importance of supporting adolescent participation to build a democratic and participatory culture, to build human capital and to equip young men and women to work at whatever level they choose. The findings also pointed to the negative attitudes and behaviours that can develop when adolescents are marginalised and excluded. The findings highlight the need for organisational change and the creation of a culture of affirming and including young people as citizens with rights. Jamaica has made several commitment to conventions and action plans that promote children's basic rights as well as adolescent participation.

With particular reference to the CRC the findings affirmed that:

- children and adolescents should be respected as individuals
- their views should be respected
- they have a growing capacity to participate in and influence decision-making processes that affect their daily lives

- participation encourages learning and resourcefulness, builds self confidence and self esteem, protects children, creates a sense of ownership and belonging, promotes a democratic culture, and gives children a sense of control over their own lives.

The data presented show that without opportunities to facilitate their exposure, adolescents will not be able to develop these skills, abilities and the self-confidence to become leaders. All institutions must therefore collaborate to support the personal development of our youth.

6.6 The Challenge: Creating a National Culture of Adolescent Participation

The following participation settings and roles were developed by Rakesh R Rajani in the publication ‘Promoting Strategic Adolescent Participation: a discussion paper for UNICEF’ December 1999 (See p.10). These have been adapted for the Jamaican context. They give a range of roles, geographical as well as institutional settings in which adolescent participation can and must be expanded. This list poses a challenge that must be met by decisive action, hence the recommendations that follow.

Geographical Settings	Institutional Settings	Roles
Personal/individual Domestic/home, neighbourhood Local community District Parish National Regional International	Schools Workplaces (street, home, institutions) Streets Physical environment, Recreational spaces Health and social services (clinic/hospital) Cultural organisations Cultural events (stage shows, concerts) Religious institutions Youth groups/ associations Organizations serving youth CBOs/ NGOs Media International agencies Political parties Parliament Conferences Children’s homes Juvenile centres	Speaking, Learning/teaching, Listening/hearing, Discussing/deliberating, Resisting, care-taking, Income generating, Counselling/facilitating, Recreating/playing Culture-making Producing/reproducing Researching/investigating Monitoring/evaluating Reasoning/analysing Planning/policymaking Rule-making Decision-making Administering/advocating Representing/advocating, Voting

6.7 Recommendations

Recommendations to Agencies Working with Adolescents

In response to the priorities and needs emerging from the review of 30 organisations and the three case studies, agencies seeking to promote adolescent participation should:

1. Review the status of adolescent participation in their agency to identify strengths and weaknesses.
2. Identify and implement strategies to *promote adolescent participation and adolescent self governance*
3. Ensure adolescents are members of Boards and Committees
4. Ensure there is an explicit policy commitment to adolescent participation in the agency's Mission Statement
5. Build adults' awareness of the importance of adolescents' participation at the highest level of decision-making.
6. Ensure adolescent involvement in needs assessments as well as in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes to develop trust, self-confidence, skills and ownership of the process and outcomes.
7. Create an adolescent-friendly institutional environment that is flexible to meet the emerging needs of adolescents.
8. Increase time, space and resources to broaden channels and opportunities for communication and participation.
9. Ensure that in joint meetings between adolescents and adults, there is mutual respect and that adolescents feel comfortable to express their opinions and views. Efforts should be made to ensure that these views are acknowledged and respected.
10. Develop partnerships with parents, schools and communities to mutually reinforce adolescent participation in the home, school and community.
11. Develop special programmes for youth in rural and inner-city areas as well as for children's homes, special care homes for children with disabilities, to enable the youth to develop more effective means of participation.

Recommendations to UNICEF and UNFPA

The current study provides a crude baseline for measuring adolescent participation in specific agencies. To address the needs identified UNICEF and UNFPA should fund a strategic two-year pilot project on adolescent participation, aimed at improving policy and practice within the sector. An evaluation should also be done at the end of this period to assess progress, revise strategies and identify new priorities to promote a culture of adolescent participation that will support national development.

1. Research

Conduct research to

- Identify strategies to promote adolescent self-governance in response the weakest area emerging from the organisational assessment. This is perhaps the most challenging, because of the social, cultural and economic challenges and the unfavourable funding climate for local non-profit institutions.
- Identify strategies to expand adolescent participation in the home, media, schools, churches, community organisations, national institutions, the political process, local government etc.

2. Policy Development

- Support the development and dissemination of a model policy to promote adolescent participation in relevant institutions and strategies that will facilitate their appointment to Boards, promote self-governance etc.

3. Public Education and Training

- Organise a series of Child Participation workshops island-wide to discuss problems, share best practices and strategies to promote participation of children and adolescents in organisations and other institutions.
- Support public education and training programmes that:
 - Build awareness of the factors facilitating and inhibiting adolescent participation (e.g. skills for involvement in policy development and decision-making; listening skills; problem solving; creative thinking; incremental responsibility for smaller then larger programmes to build self-confidence etc.).
 - Equip institutions to promote adolescent participation irrespective of age, class, economic status, abilities, language, experience etc.

4. Resource Materials

- Develop and disseminate resource materials that promote Adolescent Participation such as:
 - the Checklist/Guidelines and Hart's Ladder of Participation to assess and improve organisations' level of policy commitment and practice.
 - Case studies on best practices in adolescent participation
 - A Child/Adolescent Participation Manual, as well as flyers, posters and electronic information on web pages

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

GUIDELINES AND CHECKLIST TO PROMOTE ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISATIONS

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How to Use the Guidelines and Checklist

The Adolescent Participation Guidelines and the Adolescent Participation Checklist have been designed to conduct rapid assessments of organizations working with adolescents aged 10-19 years.

The “Guidelines” establish standards of ‘good practice’ in organisational behaviour that promote effective adolescent participation. They also focus attention on practices to avoid in promoting adolescent participation.

The “Checklist” is a ‘ready-reference’ that can be used to collect data on organisations through:

- a) Interviews
- b) Observation of adolescent participation in policy making and programming
- c) Review of programme reports.

Analysis of the data collected through ‘yes/no’ responses, can indicate whether the organisation falls in the top or bottom half of UNICEF’s ‘Ladder of Participation.’ If most responses are yes, the organisation is likely to promote adolescent participation. Alternatively, if most responses are ‘no’, they encourage non-participation.

Practices to avoid in promoting adolescent participation include: manipulation, decoration and tokenism. Based on the outcome of the rapid assessment using the Checklist, organisations can then take steps to encourage and promote increased levels of adolescent participation over time.

ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION: GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

1. Participation in Policy and Decision-Making

- The organization's policy, mission statement and strategies explicitly promote the principle of adolescent participation in decision-making, as well as in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes.
- Adolescents are represented on the Board and have full voting status.
- Adolescents are members of the Board's committees and sub-committees

2. Participation in Programme Design, Implementation and Evaluation

- Adolescents are represented on Programme Committees which decide on programme content
- Needs assessments are conducted with adolescents prior to deciding on programmes.
- Adolescents are involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes
- Adolescents are consulted prior to assigning them to groups and programme activities

3. Factors Enabling Adolescent Participation

- Adolescents are consulted on key issues and their opinions sought
- Mechanisms are established for adolescent representatives to consult with their peers, discuss needs and to develop consensus on issues
- The opinions and rights of adolescents are respected through:
 - Active listening to their views and opinions
 - Valuing and providing feedback on their opinions
 - Treating information shared through counseling as confidential
- Time, space and resources are provided to support adolescents and their programmes
- Space is provided to help adolescents develop their own opinions on an issue
- Information is provided to adolescents to increase their understanding of issues
- Information is provided to adolescents in a format that is simple, accessible and easily understood
- Meetings between adolescents and adults/ managers are scheduled at regular intervals
- Self-governance is promoted by giving adolescents responsibility and resources to run programmes and holding them accountable for results against agreed objectives

Practices to Avoid in Promoting Adolescent Participation

Manipulation

- Adolescents are told what to do and say
- Adolescents are treated as mouthpieces for adults
- Adolescents speak but don't understand issues for which they advocate

- The organisation pretends that adolescents initiated an event or action but these are in reality orchestrated by adults. Children are consulted and their ideas used but neither feedback nor credit is given to them

Decoration

- Adolescents are invited to events to 'perform' but are not aware of the objectives of the event and they were not involved in the design of the programme
- Adolescents are not informed or included in decision-making
- Adolescents are not involved in setting programme priorities
- Adolescents are used as decorations

Tokenism

- Adolescents are given a voice but told what they should focus on
- Adolescents are told how to communicate their ideas
- Adolescents are not given opportunities to formulate their opinions

Adolescent Participation Checklist

	Good Practice Yes	Bad Practice No
1. The organisation's Policy and Mission Statement promote adolescent participation		
2. Adolescent are on decision-making Boards/Committees		
3. Adolescents make input into programme design		
4. Adolescents make input into programme implementation		
5. Adolescents make input into programme evaluation		
6. Needs assessments are done prior to the start of programmes		
7. Consultation mechanisms (e.g Meetings) are established		
8. Adolescents are consulted/their opinions are sought		
9. Views of adolescents are respected (listening, feedback provided; confidentiality respected)		
10. Time, space, resources are provided for adolescents		
11. Information is provided to increase adolescents understanding of issues		
12. Space is provided to help adolescents develop their opinions		
13. Information is provided in simple, accessible format		
14. Meetings are scheduled between adolescents and adults		
15. Self –governance is promoted through responsibility, resources, accountability structures		

Practices to Avoid in Promoting Participation

<i>Manipulation</i>		
Adolescents are told what to say & do		
Adolescents are used as mouthpieces for adults		
Adolescents speak but don't understand issues		
Organisations pretend that adolescents initiated an event or action		
Children are consulted, their ideas used but neither feedback nor credit is given to them		
<i>Decoration</i>		
Adolescents are used as 'decoration' – invited to events to 'perform' but are not aware of the objectives of the event		
Adolescents are not informed or included in decision-making		
Adolescents are not involved in setting programme priorities		
<i>Tokenism</i>		
Adolescents are given a voice but told what they should focus on		
Adolescents are told how to communicate their ideas		
Adolescents not given opportunities to formulate their opinions		
Adolescents not properly informed nor involved in planning		

Appendix 2

Questions for Focus Group Discussions and Interviews

1. Questions to guide interviews and the focus group discussions and interviews:
 1. Do adolescents have a say when programmes are being designed?
 2. If yes, how?
 3. How are their views incorporated into the design of projects and programmes?
 4. Are they involved in the implementation of programmes
 5. If yes how?
 6. What mechanisms are used to involve them in this process?
 7. Are there any barriers to their participation? If yes what are they?
 8. Are adolescents involved in the process of evaluating programmes designed for their benefit?
 9. How do adolescents participate in the programmes?
 10. What lessons have been learnt by the organisation to ensure effective involvement of adolescents in decision-making
 11. Are adolescents members of the Board and its Committees?
 12. Are adolescents involved in the evaluation of staff and programmes?

Appendix 3
List of Organisations Consulted

1. Young Women Christian Association (YWCA)
2. Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)
3. Anglican Diocese Youth Organisation
4. Jamaica Association of the Deaf (JAD)
5. Ashe
6. Hope for Children
7. Girl Guide Association
8. United Church Youth Department
9. Western Society for Children
10. Best Care Lodge
11. Jamaica Coalition on the Rights of the Child
12. Youth Link Newspaper
13. National Youth Development Agency
14. Mel Nathan Institute
15. St Patrick's Foundation
16. Teen Challenge
17. Jamaica Family Planning Association (St Ann's Bay)
18. Mount Olivet Boys' Home
19. Worthley Home for Children
20. Family Court
21. Shortwood Teachers College
22. Priory School
23. Anglican Young People's Association (Manchester)
24. United Theological College of the West Indies
25. Hope United Church Young People's Association
26. Juvenile Justice Consultation
27. Glen Hope Place of Safety
28. Child Guidance Clinic (Spanish Town)
29. Jamaica Association of Children with Learning Disabilities
30. Peer Counselors Association

Appendix 4

Table 1A presents responses to the 15 questions on the Checklist. A summary score of 'yes' responses was calculated for each agency and presented as a percentage to show the level of adolescent participation reported. Agencies scoring 15/15 received a score of 100% indicating a high level of participation. It is important to note that these are self-reports from telephone interviews and not verified independently.

Table 1A: Report on Adolescent Participation in 30 Organisations

Adolesc. Particip.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	1512
YMCA-100%	Y	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	y	Y	y	y	y	Y
YWCA 53%	Y	N	N	y	n	y	n	n	Y	y	Y	n	y	y	n
Anglican Yth. Kgn 87%	Y	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	y	Y	n	y	y	n
Ja Assoc. Deaf 93%	N	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	y	Y	y	y	y	y
Ashe 100%	Y	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	y	Y	y	y	y	y
Hope for Children 100%	Y	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	y	Y	y	y	y	y
Girl Guides 73%	Y	Y	Y	y	y	n	y	n	Y	n	Y	y	y	y	n
United ChYth 73%	Y	N	Y	y	n	y	y	y	y	y	N	y	n	y	y
Western Society 80%	Y	N	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	Y	y	y	y	n
Best Care Lodge 13%	Y	N	N	n	n	n	n	n	n	y	N	n	n	n	n
Jamaica Coalition 67%	Y	Y	Y	y	n	y	y	y	y	n	N	n	y	y	n
Youth Link	Y	Y	Y	n	y	y	y	y	n	n	N	n	y	y	n

60%															
National Youth Dev. Ag 93%	Y	Y	Y	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	y	y	y	y
Mel Nathan 100%	Y	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
St Pat's F. 100%	Y	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Teen Challenge 53%	Y	N	N	y	n	y	y	n	y	y	y	n	n	y	n
Ja. Fam. Plan Ass. 73%	Y	Y	Y	n	n	y	y	y	n	y	n	y	y	y	y
Mt.Olivet Boys 27%	N	N	N	n	y	y	y	n	n	n	n	n	y	n	n
Worthley Home 87%	Y	N	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	N
Family Ct 27%	N	N	N	n	n	y	y	n	n	n	n	y	y	n	N
Shortwood Teachers C. 87%	Y	Y	N	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	y	Y
Priory 47%	Y	Y	N	n	y	n	y	y	n	n	n	N	y	y	N
Anglican Youth (Rural) 47%	Y	Y	y	y	y	n	y	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	N
UTCWI 80%	Y	N	n	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Hope Utd Ch.67%	Y	N	y	y	n	y	y	n	y	y	n	y	y	n	y

Juvenile Justice C. 67%	N	N	n	y	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n
Glen Hope Pl./ Safety 73%	Y	Y	n	y	n	y	y	y	y	N	y	y	y	y	n
Child Guid'ce Clinic80%	N	N	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	y
Ja. Assoc. of Child. Learning Dis. 40%	N	N	n	n	n	y	n	y	y	n	y	n	y	y	n
Peer ClrAssoc. 73%	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	n	y	n	y	n	y	y	n
Total															
	Y24	Y17	Y19	Y21	Y19	Y26	Y27	Y22	Y23	Y18	Y21	Y20	Y25	Y23	Y13
	N 6	N13	N11	N9	N11	N4	N3	N8	N7	N12	N9	N10	N5	N7	N17

Source: Data from Organizational Assessment 2001