

**FACTORS THAT SHAPE THE INITIATION OF EARLY SEXUAL  
ACTIVITY AMONG ADOLESCENT BOYS AND GIRLS:  
A STUDY IN THREE COMMUNITIES IN JAMAICA**

Report to UNICEF and UNFPA

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Revised November 12, 2001

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study on adolescent sexuality is part of a broader study on adolescent development and rights in Jamaica. It was commissioned by the UNFPA Caribbean Office (United Nations Family Planning Association) and UNICEF-Jamaica (United Nations Children's Fund) and funded by the United Nations Fund for International Partnership UNFIP).

The main purpose of this sub-study was to investigate and determine the factors that shape the initiation of early sexual activity among adolescent boys and girls. The results would guide the development of programmes to support healthy adolescent development. Using focus groups as the main methodology, the report presents the findings from focus group interviews with 170 boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 19 years, attending schools in Montego Bay, Clarks Town and Maxfield Park in Kingston. The majority of adolescents were from low socio-economic groups. The report highlights several major issues:

1. Factors that encourage and others that delay young men and women in Jamaica into early sexual activity; their first sexual partner, where they had their first sexual experience and the consequences.
2. Adolescents' perceptions of what society expects of them and what it imparts to them about sex (messages).
3. Adolescents' ideas about appropriate sexual health, sexual behaviour, sexual orientation and sexual practices
4. The role of sexuality in forming the gender identities of young people.

The study confirmed, challenged and expanded on several themes examined in the literature review on adolescent sexuality. Themes included sexual practices and the fertility rates of young people and the multiple dimensions of women's lives. This included but not limited to, sexual behaviour of women of all ages. Adolescent motherhood, older adolescent sexual activity and the transmission of infections and disease were also examined. Other themes related to masculinity and "male marginalization," adult sexual behaviour, adolescent reproductive health, prostitution, and child labour. The findings showed that the main motivating factors for early adolescent sexuality were: poor economic conditions, peer pressure to be sexually active to prove one's gender identity; the centrality of sexual activity to definitions and practices of adult masculinity, and gendered inequalities of power. The research also confirmed that together, these factors often place young people in conflict with dominant social ideals and values about adolescent sexuality. These factors are mediated by adult family members, the school, and church leaders, however, to some extent they are shared by the young people themselves and put young people, particularly girls, at great health and developmental risks. This occurs although young people have considerable knowledge about protection against disease, abuse, and unwanted pregnancy.

The report points out that adolescents do not always desire early sexual activity. However, few messages enable them to gain knowledge about their sexual rights or about positive alternatives to existing patterns of gendered sexual behaviour and identity. Adult discourses on adolescent sexuality, tend to stress negative aspects of sexual activity, emphasising danger and harm. The media tends to reinforce existing patterns and ideals of gendered sexuality. Within this context, many young people are grappling with the psychological, physical, intellectual, and emotional changes happening in their lives. They construct meanings about their own sexuality and their

sexual realities that may not always conform to dominant ideas and values.

One important difference between adult and young people's notions of adolescent sexuality that emerged related to the reasons given for adolescent girls to engage in sexual activity. Earlier studies and messages from adults have often centred on girls' desire to have children, love, marriage, and sometimes, abuse. The study however showed that adolescent girls identified money, fun, and pleasure as important factors. They often accorded these greater priority than the factors usually identified by adults.

In conclusion, the study confirmed that peer pressure linked to establishing a perceived sex and gender identity, demands of adult males (and some females) as well as meeting economic and social needs, were important factors motivating adolescents in low socio-economic circumstances to engage in sexual activity. The mass media also stimulated adolescents through erotic visual images, music, soap operas and pornographic (blue) movies. However, the media also educated them about sexual health, safe sex and inter-personal relationships, which influenced their behaviour.

Recommendations revolved around using a rights-based approach to programming, adolescent participation in interventions, public education, training, research and strengthening the legal and institutional framework to support children's rights. Specific recommendations focused on programmes to support healthy adolescent sexual development. These would also help to bridge the gaps between adults and adolescents as there are two opposing forces: those that propel young people into early sexual activity and adult notions of adolescent sexuality and others that promote youth rights, needs and desires.

Specific recommendations were made to increase academic research on sexuality especially as it relates to the construction of adolescent gender identities, incest and sexual abuse in the family, home and community. Better targeting of poverty alleviation programmes to promote sustainable economic development were encouraged. Increasing adolescents' awareness of their legal, social, and sexual rights and improving the content of Family Life Education in schools were also recommended. An alternative focus on sexuality as a fundamental aspect of human social behaviour and gender identity were suggested. Diversifying media programming to offer adolescents alternative ways of conceptualising and learning about sexuality were outlined.

UNICEF and UNFPA were also encouraged to support public education work and to give positive consideration to expanding the gender sensitization work currently being done by FAMPLAN Jamaica targeted at youth. They were also encouraged to support the work on incest being undertaken by the Bureau of Women's Affairs. Consistent with the 1998 Caribbean Regional Action Plan on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, future programmes should always be developed with the full participation of adolescents. Partnership between adults and adolescents, cooperation from adult men and adult recognition of adolescent sexual rights, all emerged as important factors for the success of programmes.

## 1. INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW & METHODOLOGY

This study on adolescent sexuality is part of a wider study on adolescents, entitled '*Meeting Adolescent Development and Participation Rights*' funded by the United Nations Fund for International Participation (UNFIP), a collaborative project of UNICEF and UNFPA. This section of the report presents a review of the literature, which highlights several trends in the study of adolescent sexual activity.

Adolescents are defined by the World Health Organisation as young people between the age of 10 and 19 years. In 2000, this group constituted 20 percent of the Jamaican society. (PIOJ, 2001). This pattern was consistent with trends in other Caribbean countries where approximately one-third of the population is under 15 years (Lewis 1995). Despite this, recognition of the rights of the adolescents is not widespread in political, social, academic or economic life, although there has been growing awareness of its importance over the past two decades. In 1986 for example, the Caribbean Federation of Youth was revitalized. In 1990, the African, Caribbean, Pacific and European Community (ACP/EC) Youth Assembly was formed. In 1998, there was the Caribbean Youth Explosion and the Youth Summit on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (Lewis 1995, UNFPA 1999).

Despite the lack of attention to the rights of Caribbean youth, many studies have focused on adolescence sexuality over the years. The main research themes have included a focus on the **sexual practices and the fertility rates of young people**, particularly of young women and teenage girls of African descent in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. This has been done in the context of studies on the family and marriage and includes the work of Henriques 1953, Clarke 1957, R.T. Smith 1973 and Powell 1977 among others. The Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) carried out in 1979-1982 in the English-speaking Caribbean, also contributed valuable insights into **multiple dimensions of women's lives, including, but not limited to, sexual behaviour of women of all ages** (Senior 1991). The WICP research has been partially updated with a study on **motherhood among women 15 years and older** in three territories in the Eastern Caribbean (Mohammed and Perkins 1999) but has not been extended to Jamaica. Since the early 1990s, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and medical assessments indicate that young heterosexually active people are both physically and socially one of the most vulnerable sectors of the population in developing countries. In Jamaica, growing attention has been given to the correlation between **adolescent sexual activity and the transmission of infections and disease**. There are several quantitative "Knowledge, Attitude, Practices" (KAP) studies conducted by Hope Enterprises between 1991-2000. Public concern about **masculinity and "male marginalization," adult sexual behaviour, adolescent reproductive health, prostitution, and child labour** have also produced several studies. These describe some dimensions of adolescent sexuality in Jamaica (Chevannes 1993, Chevannes and Mitchell-Kernan 1993, Boxill 1994, Le Franc et al. 1996, Branche 1997, Campbell et. al, 1999, Williams 1999 and 2000, Jackson 2000, Chevannes and Gayle 2000, Parry 2000, Waszak and Wedderburn 2000; Ministry of Health 2000, Dunn 2000, Campbell and Campbell 2001, Chevannes 2001). Other important research in this field includes the VIP Baseline Community Youth Survey conducted for UNFPA (Waszak

and Wedderburn 2000), studies on sexual behaviour and masculinity by Chevannes (1993, 2000, 2001) and work on adolescent rights (Lewis 1995, UNFPA 1999).

In addition to these studies, several public sector agencies, international agencies and civil society groups support programmes on adolescent reproductive health. The Ministry of Health in Jamaica has made significant interventions targeted at adolescents and there is a comprehensive Adolescent Reproductive Health Programme. Other MOH interventions include a study by Dr Health Royes, who reviewed the behaviour change communication programme of the HIV/AIDS/STI Programme. This provided considerable information of the response of adolescents to targeted interventions. In addition, there has been collaboration with international agencies such as the Futures Group International, which manages the **'Youth.now'** project on adolescent reproductive health. The National Family Planning Board which is a statutory agency under the Ministry of Health and a specialised programme for adolescents which focuses on education, information and counselling and also operates a 'telephone hotline.' The Uplifting Adolescents Programme (UAP) sponsored by USAID also includes a component on adolescent reproductive health providing education and information.

**The Media:** The media plays a major role in influencing people's attitudes, behaviour patterns, and culture (see Dunn, 1995; Aggrey Brown, 1995, Hilary Brown 1995). In "Globalization, Communications and Caribbean Technology" (Dunn 1995), Hilary Brown examines "American Media Impact on Jamaican Youth," and Aggrey Brown analyses 'Caribbean Cultures and Mass Media Technology: Re-examining the Cultural Dependency Thesis.' The Annual Conference of the Department of Advanced Nursing Education at the University of the West Indies, May 14-15, 2001 focused on HIV/AIDS. It included a paper by entitled 'Popular Music and Sexual Behaviour among female adolescents in Jamaica.' (see D Holder-Nevins and B Bain, 2001). This clearly demonstrated the role of the media and music in influencing adolescent sexual behaviour. These and other studies help to clarify the powerful impact of the media on adolescent sexual behaviour.

A recent overview of more than sixty quantitative and qualitative studies about Jamaica produced during the 1990s address adolescent reproductive and sexual health. This brings together the information and data contained in most of the recent reports and describes the main trends identified in the research (de Bruin 2001). The current study builds on all of the above research and tests the validity of some of these trends. Several themes, issues and trends have emerging from de Bruin's review of the studies are outlined below:

### **i. Sexual Activity**

The main trends are:

- Adolescents engage in early, high-risk sexual activity and boys start at an earlier age than girls
- **Curiosity emerges as the most common motivation for boys and girls to have first time sex.**
- **Boys emphasize physical pleasure and elevated status among peers as reasons for sexual activity.**
- Girls are not expected to have premarital pregnancies and feel badly if they do

- **Girls receive mixed messages from family members (especially mothers) about sexual activity and sexuality**
- **“Men, especially between 15 and 19 years old, typically offer two main inducements to get women to have sexual relationship: money and material things “(p.9) and sex is expected by a boy if he spends money on a girl**
- **“Transactional sex” and “multiple partnering” that derive from economic necessity and other socio-economic factors, are common among poor young women. (Apart from the studies included in de Bruin’s overview see also Le Franc et al. 1996, Campbell et al, 1999, Williams 2000, Dunn 2000, Campbell and Campbell 2001).**
- For general information about sex, girls under 15 years identify a clinic or friends as their primary sources. For boys this is peers and relatives.

De Bruin also notes that many of the earlier studies recognised gaps between what adolescents say and do, as well as between knowledge and behaviour. This she notes, presents a particular dilemma for the development of strategies to address teenage pregnancy and high-risk sexual behaviour.

## **ii. Sexual Health**

The major issues emerging are:

- The majority of adolescents (68% boys, 69% girls feel at no risk of contracting HIV/AIDS). Between 41% and 48% of adolescent boys and between 46% and 60% of young women do not use always use condoms during sexual intercourse.
- Older teens, girls/women and inner-city residents are disproportionately affected by STIs
- The most recent 2000 KAP survey shows that the popularity of the condom appears to have declined. Men reportedly do not use a condom because they believe that it spoils their pleasure. Women’s reasons are mainly that they know their partner well.
- In 2000, there were more persons between the ages of 15 and 19 who were sexually active, and were more likely to have non-regular partners than there were in 1996.
- Boys/men decide condom use when having sex with a non-regular or casual partner.
- Teachers, say 70% of 12-14 years olds, are the most important source of information on HIV/AIDS
- The church is becoming more important as a source of information for boys and schools are more important for girls.

Research also shows that men play a major role in sexual health. On November 24, 2000 *The Gleaner*, reported on the basis of the most recent “Behavioural Surveillance Survey.” The article quotes the director of the National HIV/AIDS/STI Programme of the Ministry of Health, Dr. Yitudes Gebre as saying that HIV in Jamaica is largely driven by the high-risk sexual behaviour of men. The newspaper quotes him as saying “The problem is compounded because HIV is more easily transmitted sexually from men to women than vice versa. It is not surprising therefore that the rate of infection to women in Jamaica is increasing steadily, more than men.” Men, as the headline of the newspaper report reads, are the “main cause of HIV/AIDS spread.” On July 18,

2001 the Minister of Health announced during a JIS (Jamaica Information Service) Broadcast that adolescent girls have three times the rate of HIV/AIDS than boys of their age group.

### **iii. Sexual Abuse**

The review by de Bruin, also showed that **sexual abuse is common among girls and young women. They are frequently sexually abused and a first sexual activity often occurs without the girl's consent.** Studies in the early 1990s suggested that this could be as high as 46%. More recent reports indicate that around 12% of girls under 15 years report being raped or forced during their first sexual experience and 26% of girls aged 15-19 years having a similar experience. The number of sexually abused boys is said to be rising, and is estimated at around 3% ( de Bruin 2000, p.9).

The VIP Youth Baseline Survey (Waszak and Wedderburn 2000) of 1,130 young people between 15 and 24 years in the same communities as this present study, adds several other findings on the issue of sexual abuse and harassment. it notes that :

- Approximately 7 - 12% of girls and 5% of boys did not feel safe from sexual harassment in the home
- 16- 32% of young women reported that their first sexual experience was forced
- 37- 48% of young women reported being “touched in a way that wasn't right”

Sexual abuse and harassment, in the home and community, and during a first time sexual activity, appear to figure quite prominently in girls' lives in the communities under study. Williams (1999) also outlines this picture of sexual abuse of young people in Jamaica. Citing data collected between 1991 and 1995, she states that ”sexual abuse of boys appeared as a phenomenon amongst prepubescent children, in contrast with the prevalence of sexual abuse among girls in adolescence.” Williams reports that males aged 20-49 years were the majority of the abusers and were known to the victim.

### **iv. Male Sexuality**

This also emerged as a dominant issue from de Bruin's review. Chevannes and Gayles (2000) did a qualitative study of male adolescent sexual and reproductive health in rural, urban and suburban areas in Jamaica. The focus was on boys and young men 10-24 years and offers important findings and conclusions regarding sexuality and constructions of masculinity:

- The most important aspect of manhood is viewed by men and boys as the ability of the man to provide for a family
- Being the aggressor in sexual activity is of great importance to young men
- Young men consider it important to have a girlfriend, and the majority feel it is normal for a man to have more than one sexual partner
- Early sexual activity is related to socio-economic factors - inner city boys who “traditionally grow up much earlier than other boys in order to fend for themselves or assist their mother economically are... the earliest starters.” (p.80).

- Few boys support abstinence from sex in the early teen years. Age 14 and younger for first sexual activity is common among boys of all socio-economic groups.
- Battery, rape and force against a woman are viewed by some adolescent boys as justifiable in certain circumstances

Chevannes (2001) also indicates that the hegemonic construction of African Caribbean masculinity privileges a man to engage in a variety of types of sexual relationships. This ranges from the very casual to a steady multiple partnering arrangement (polygamy), and that a man is not considered a “real” man unless he is heterosexually active. Homosexual intercourse and identity are not tolerated within the dominant discourse on masculinity (Chevannes 2001, Hope 2001).

#### **v. Female Sexuality**

de Bruin’s review also shows that three main assumptions appear in the literature about girls and women’s sexuality and sexual activity:

- That girls/women are interested in sex primarily for reproductive purposes. Childbearing is considered to be central to femininity and “being a woman” (Senior 1991, Chevannes 2001).
- Girls under 15 often see sex as connected to friendship and notions of love (de Bruin 2001)
- For many teenagers and young women sex stands independent of love, and is used strategically for survival, to get money, material items and/or status and power (Senior 1991, Le Franc et al. 1995, Kempadoo 1999 and 2001, Williams 1999, Dunn 2000, Campbell and Campbell 2001). “Transactional sex” has been proposed as a term to capture this understanding and activity.

A review of research indicates a shift may be taking place. The notion that childbearing is a centrally defining characteristic of Caribbean femininity requires qualification in regards to younger women and adolescent girls in Jamaica. de Bruin’s review of existing research showed that girls do not necessarily feel proud or good if they get pregnant at an early age. For example, in the VIP Youth Baseline Survey 2000, less than one-fifth (18.7 %) of the young women believed that a woman should have a baby before the age of 20 years. It also showed that less than 30% of the young women aged 15-24 years expressed the view that having a child makes a girl a woman. These studies suggest that childbearing does not appear to be desirable for teenage girls or to figure prominently in their constructions of self and identity. The image of the young Jamaican woman or teenage girl desiring children to prove her femininity and to obtain the status of “woman” in the eyes of the family or community, therefore needs to be questioned in light of research that is sensitive to adolescent gender constructions and realities.

As Mohammed and Perkins note for the Eastern Caribbean “childbearing as a primary definition of femininity in the Caribbean may be simultaneously undergoing change among different groups of women in society,” proposing that it may be more marked for younger women (1999, p.110-111). **The most recent studies in Jamaica among adolescents and young women certainly suggest that childbearing is not as central to adolescent constructions of femininity as it was for older generations of women.**

Chevannes signals another dimension of adolescent sexuality that has been underexplored and

has direct bearing on this study. It is the appreciation of **sexual activity by girls and women for purposes other than children, love, or money**. Sexual intercourse, he points out can also be considered good for and by women “because it promotes regular menstruation which is thought of as healthy and cleansing” (1993:7). However, apart from this biological approach, while sexual activity is considered a fundamental part of the healthy development of boys/men, no studies exist for Jamaica that fully explore the social meaning for adolescent girls. The question, then about what girls/young women may find healthy, attractive, erotic, or pleasurable in sexual activity has barely been explored, although girls/ women as autonomous sexual agents in popular culture have been acknowledged (see Cooper 1995). Homosexuality among women in Jamaica has also been signalled ( see Blackwood 2000), and there is some evidence that points to girls and women seeking sex for their own gratification and fulfilment. The VIP Youth Baseline Survey 2000, for example, found that for around 20% of the young women, being sexually active, in itself, was seen to define womanhood.

Other sub-themes of female sexuality are the issues of sexual activity with more than one partner and cultural standards for males and females. Having multiple partners is more complicated for young women than for young men. While it is widely accepted that boys and men may be promiscuous and polygamous, for girls and women another norm and standard dominates, and the stigmas of “whore,” “prostitute” “mattress” and “loose” serve to condemn sexually active girls/women who publicly venture outside of the boundaries of the dominant script. Nevertheless, in actuality some adolescent girls do manage to engage in multiple partnering, casual and transactional sex, as well as prostitution, and to avoid stigmatization (Chevannes 2001, Kempadoo 1999). There is also some indication that young men are beginning to support the idea that women can have more than one partner (Waszak and Wedderburn 2000).

#### **vi. The Peer-Group**

The review also showed that the peer group is crucial for boys to acquire information and knowledge about sexuality. Chevannes (1993) and de Bruin (2001) point out that for adolescent girls, the peer group is also important, and that both boys and girls rely heavily upon school and peers, and the media to a lesser extent, to develop their knowledge about sexual activity and relations.

#### **vii. Adolescent Rights**

The review also showed that the rights of adolescents are often ignored. Lewis notes that “though we see evidence of sexual experimentation by the youth even before the legal age of consent ... we continue to treat young people as asexual beings” (1995, p. 15). Adolescent sexuality he argues is an issue that is broadly ignored by adults or cast as a social problem that can be solved with information about the mechanics of sex. Lewis proposes that “there needs to be some recognition that all of the activities of the young will not always be governed by adult norms or motivated by adult visions of development” (p. 14). In addition he notes that while teenage pregnancy, promiscuity and sexually transmitted diseases are important factors in young people’s lives, emphasis needs to be placed on a “holistic approach to social living, responsible parenthood, interpersonal relations, goals, self esteem, respect for others and family life” (p. 15). Sexuality, he insists, should be considered a “fundamental aspect of human social interaction and human social behaviour” (p.15). Adult recognition of adolescence as a time for experimentation and as an important period for social, psychological, intellectual and emotional development is

seen by Lewis to be of vital importance.

The UNFPA report on the 1998 Caribbean Youth Summit on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, echoes some of Lewis' concerns and suggestions about the treatment of adolescent sexuality. It notes that very little has been developed in the area of sexual and reproductive health for young people despite the large number of programmes that have been established for youth development. This gap was addressed during the 1998 Summit, and the Declaration on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights that resulted from debates, discussions, and agreements among young people themselves, lays out the framework for developing holistic programmes to support adolescent development, rights and needs from a youth perspective. It includes a wide range of issues, stressing the need for government, agencies and adults to acknowledge and respect adolescent sexuality more fully. The Declaration and the Regional Action Plan that emerged from the Youth Summit include some of the following ideas:

- That services and information about legal rights, and medical treatments are made available to young people irrespective of age,
- That young people can live free and protected from sexual harassment and abuse
- That sexually active adolescents under the age of consent be allowed access to sexual and reproductive health services without their parents consent under specific conditions;
- That adolescents be free from externally imposed fear, shame, guilt, beliefs based on myths, and other psychological factors that inhibit their present or future sexual and reproductive development and relationships
- That all young persons have equal access to education and information to ensure their health and well being.
- That Family Life education and appreciation is promoted and that all adolescent mothers and father are assured of empowerment in parenting.
- That young people are trained to participate in gender sensitive research and the gathering of information on adolescent sexuality

The strong message from the youth attending the Summit, was that young people must be involved in the development of programmes, interventions and services if activities are to be sensitive and relevant to adolescent needs and rights.

In general the current research confirmed the trends in the literature reviewed above and provides the background against which the findings from the current study can be interpreted. However, important qualifications and/or differences also emerged, that suggest new areas of research, study, and intervention.

## **1.2 Data Collection**

### **Rationale for Methodology**

Focus group discussions were the main data collection method. The choice of this methodology was determined by the sponsoring agencies and served as the primary source of data collection for the adolescent studies on sexuality and violence. Focus groups were considered appropriate

as the studies were primarily qualitative, and this approach allowed researchers to tap the knowledge and expertise of adolescents. Initially used by Kurt Lewin in 1936 in the USA, in the context of small group experiments, and later in opinion surveys, focus group discussions as a data collection method were later used for large scale studies by the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research to study opinions and attitudes (see Sarantakos,1998, p181). They are used extensively for attitude surveys and in participatory research.

### **The Sample**

The sample included 170 adolescents attending in schools in three communities. Eighteen focus group sessions were held, each lasting about two hours. There were nine groups of males and nine groups of females, each gender set spanned the three age ranges of adolescents: 10-12 years, 13-15 years and 16-19 years. Each group had approximately 10 boys or girls, which is considered an ideal size to get a diverse range of views, while still being controllable.

### **Research Questions and Process**

Facilitator for the focus groups was Dr Jean Jackson, who also developed a Moderator's Guide in June 2001. The Guide included several questions about adolescence and sexual activity and adolescents and violence. These are presented in the introduction to the section on research findings. The Guide was developed with consideration being given to the sensitivity of the topic and the need to ensure a high comfort level for very young participants. It was designed to solicit general knowledge, insights and ideas about young people's sexual activity rather than asking adolescents about their personal sexual behaviour. Nevertheless, it became clear during several sessions that some girls and boys were speaking from their own experience and the results reflect both knowledge and practice. What young people think goes on and what actually takes place, is therefore blurred in this study. Nevertheless, these findings help to fill the knowledge gap about adolescent sexuality. They add rich qualitative data on perceptions, attitudes and behaviour that allow meanings and ideas to be more fully explored and elaborated.

The focus groups were conducted in schools in three areas: Maxfield Park in urban Kingston, the tourism centre of Montego Bay, and Clarks Town in rural Trelawny. These locations were selected because they had been used in a previous study on adolescent sexuality by Waszak and Wedderburn and represented the experiences of Jamaican young people in low-income and working class families and communities. In describing these areas, these writers provide insight into the socio-economic character of the three communities. They note:

Maxfield Park is located in one of Kingston's major thoroughfares, linking downtown and uptown areas of the city. It is one of the city's most volatile areas, where disputes among local gangs often threaten the peace of neighbourhoods and occasionally curtail the movement of residents from one side of the street to the other. This volatility has worked against the delivery of public and social and health services to the residents. Montego Bay is the island's second largest city. It is a booming tourist town, and tourism provides employment for many of its residents. Clarks Town is a rural settlement located in the hills of Trelawny. The town and its populace are distributed along a major transportation route. The heart of this rural settlement is Long Pond Sugar Factory, which is the main provider of employment and responsible for the establishment of important facilities

including its own clinic and residential area. Besides the sugar factory there are no other visible means of support (2000, p.6)

Focus group discussions were audio-recorded and later transcribed and the transcripts were used to analyse the data and prepare the report.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Perhaps the greatest limitation of this study is the absence of input by adolescents in the research design, data collection, analysis and recommendations. The project will however provide scope for verification by adolescents. Secondly, the use of focus group discussions to the exclusion interviews or other research methods did not allow for the triangulation of data. Conducting elite interviews with a sample of the young people could have enhanced reliability of the data. Thirdly, there were attendant limitations of using focus group discussions such as the inability to control for 'group think' and some adolescents may also have hidden their true opinions. While the findings may not be representative of adolescents from all socio-economic communities, the quality and depth of information collected has provided valuable insight into the perceptions, attitudes and views of adolescents in this sub-set of Jamaican society.

## 2. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section of the report presents the main findings from the questions posed in the focus group discussions and a comparison of responses from adolescent boys and girls in the three age groups of interest: 10-12 years, 13-15 years and 16-19 years. Findings are presented first for girls, then for boys. Responses are then compared across gender groups to analyse similarities and differences, which would help to guide, programme interventions for both groups.

Consistent with the objectives of the study, the main areas of interest were:

- a) What factors motivated adolescents to engage in early sexual activities?
- b) Who were their first sexual partners?
- c) Where did they have their first sexual experience
- d) What impact did this have on adolescents? What were the consequences?
- e) What were their primary sources of information and messages on sex and sexuality and what were the messages? What was their perception on the role of school and community, popular and street culture and role models and how did this impact their behaviour
- f) What was their level of knowledge about sexual health? What myths do adolescents have in relation to sexual health?
- g) What other issues about sex and sexuality were they interested in?
- h) What are the main reasons why young people do not engage in sexual activity?
- i) What advice would adolescents give to younger siblings about sex?

### 2.1. Factors Motivating Adolescents Into Early Sexual Activity

Responses to the question “Why do you think young people have sex?” were sometimes confused with ideas about why people, in general, are sexually active. Girls’ responses are presented first, then those of boys are presented later.

#### 2.1.1 Factors Motivating Girls

The study confirmed that a combination of factors motivate girls to engage in early sexual activity. Some of these were consistent with findings from the literature review, but the current study also deepened our understanding of ‘push’ factors. Irrespective of age and location, money to meet economic needs and wants, emerged as a dominant motivating factor and there were several cases of transactional sex in which sex was exchanged for money and economic support. Early sexual activity was also associated with:

- a) exploitation by male family members; b) sexual curiosity; experimentation and ignorance;
- a) seeking fun and pleasure; d) seeking love and affection; e) pressure from peers, friends, boys, and adult men; f) fear, force and physical violence; g) establishing gender identify and
- h) reproduction. The latter was sometimes associated with using a baby as a means to gain financial support from a man.

#### Money

Girls in all nine focus groups cited “ money” and this was motivated by poverty, the need for food, going to school, acquiring fashionable clothes, for gifts, or a better life style. Girls aged 10-12 years in Maxfield Park noted that, ‘ Some time dem mother doan have any money an’ dem have sex fi food. Those in the Clarkes Town group said: “They want

money to go to school and nice things”

The responses were similar for girls 13-15 years in all three locations. Here are the responses:

*Some a dem fadda and madda poor and caan afford... is the only way fi go an get it dat is why dem do it (Montego Bay).*

*Boys give girls money, clothes....(Clarks Town).*

*Like I know a girl who does that, like ask boy for money. The same money wher di boys give them, the girls have to give back a certain thing and that certain thing is sex. So, for the girls to get money she have to have sex with the boy (Maxfield Park).*

Those 16-19 years also noted that:

*She want hot (trendy) hairstyle and she want get everything else, like how mi wear hot stuff mi just gwaan fi it (Montego Bay)*

*Some parents nuh really provide anyting fi dem. Dem give dem some shelter and di bear basics and in dis society the girls will go out there. They can get tings from dem for school so yu tend to rely on the men so yu have to give them something in return (Montego Bay).*

*Some a dem want money (Maxfield Park).*

*Sometimes the girls looking material things...lets take a boy for example if they pass on the road and dem a walk or push bicycle and him call out to a girl, she will say, go weh, a who you a talk to boy. Don't chat to me. But mek the same boy start roll up in a Honda tomorrow. You will hear what happen (Laughter). You understand. So it is like material things (Clarks Town).*

### **Pleasure, Fun, Curiosity**

“Fun,” “pleasure” or “enjoyment,” were frequently cited as reasons for early sexual activity, while others said “it nice.” These views were expressed by girls of all ages, although it was not always clear that the girls were referring to female pleasure. Curiosity, adventure and experimentation were also cited as reasons. “Trying out something believed to be fun, came up in five of the nine focus group sessions with girls of all ages, particularly in Montego Bay and Clarks Town, although was not mentioned by girls of any age in Maxfield Park. Below are some of the girls’ views:

*They just want to do it, they like it (Clarks Town, 13-15 years).*

*Di one dem who do it regular say dem like it (Maxfield Park 16-19 years)*

*The nicest part is when you have orgasm (Clarks Town 16-19 years).*

*They (other girls) say it is not very good (Maxfield Park 10-12 years)*

*A mostly di male dem sey it nice ...the ladies say it hot (the trendy thing to do) (Maxfield Park 16-19 years)*

*Just for pleasure or to see how painful or not painful (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*

*Plenty people do it for adventure they want to feel what sex is really like (Montego Bay 16-19 years)*

### **Pressure from Peers and Friends**

Pressure to follow examples set by their girl friends, to “fit in the crowd” or to be popular among their peers was raised by girls in eight of the group sessions.

*They follow friend, like say their friend break her virginity, that friend would follow (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*

*They see their age group doing it so they decide to join ( Clarks Town 10-12 years).*

*Because yu friend tell yu it nice (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*

*Peer pressure can be where yu peers like us here....I would be having sex right an ...encourage them fi have, yu noh....seh it nice, yu noh ...yu see in order to not to feel left out to be a part of the crowd [other student: yeah and dem want talk bout it] dem go ahead and do it (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*

*Some of them peer, their peers, already have sexual intercourse already, so for them to cling with them or par with them (hang out together), they have to go ...do the same thing (Maxfield Park 13-15 years).*

*Some teenagers tink when dem have sex dat is all. If dem don't have sex they are nothing (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*

**Popularity** was also mentioned by some of the older girls:

*Because them want to gain popularity and dem will even go and go try it out (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*

*Most girls have sex for popularity. If they don't involve in sexual activities they feel they don't belong. Now a days if you are a virgin and you don't have sex.... Most girls have sex with how much people just to be popular (Clarks Town 16-19 years).*

Seeking popularity by having sex to keep up with the crowd could also disgrace a girl among her peers:

*The boys are competing to say they have 10, 20. The girls have to make sure they maintain a certain number. But if the girls go over a certain limit they are labelled sketel ... (Clarks Town 16-19 years).*

**Transactional sex**, associated with peer pressure was also mentioned in the discussion among the Clarks Town girls 16-19 years:

*Student 1. Peer pressure in the sense that you go to school and you see your friend with a bag and your mother can't afford one and you are talking to a guy and him have money. You are going to have sex with him to get the bag.*

*Student 2: Or your friend might be bragging. So yeah yu go pimp yusef. Yu want something. Mi go want dis and dat. Mi going want name brand shoes and mi, go want to do mi nails and do mi hair.*

*Student 3: Sometimes you don't even ready to have boyfriend but because your friend talking about the things her boyfriend giving her, you curious..*

**Age** emerged as a factor modifying the impact of peer pressure on girls. Those aged 10-12 years did not perceive peer-pressure as playing as strong a role. Among the Maxfield Park girls in this age group, it was not mentioned at all. Girls over 13 years were more susceptible to peer pressure

and perceived it as intertwined with keeping up with trends, and finding money to pay for fashionable clothes. Among the oldest age group, peer pressure was also linked to popularity.

**Pressure from school boys or boyfriends:**

- *Boy want to tek your virginity, den dem say dem will leave yuh, so because yuh love dem, yuh give in... (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*
- *... and some listen to boyfriend (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*
- *Most times girls have sex for the first time with their boyfriend, boys pressure girls to have sex (Clarks Town 13-15 years).*
- *... like a girl she will have a boyfriend and is like the boy will keep pressure har to do it and she don't waan to do it an is like im seh im go leave har... she nuh waan im leave... she jus do it (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*
- *If a guy takes a girl out and you go out and have lunch with him, him expects you to go back to your house and get something ... have sex (Clarks Town 16-19 years).*

Pressures from boys to have sex was sometimes understood as force:

- *They are pushed to do it, like somebody for example their boyfriend (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*
- *Dem say di bwoys push di girls an' force dem fi have sex wid dem (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*
- *When you go out with a guy for example on your birthday night and he takes you out and he has been sponsoring you all evening... he would yuh nuh ... naturally force you to have sex (Montego Bay girls 13-15 years).*

Force and pressure were sometimes accompanied by fear, with a threat of physical violence:

*Some girls are afraid, like they talking to a guy and him seh, "Have sex wid yuh... have sex wid mi." Yuh 'fraid fi say no, yuh know. 'cau yuh know 'im wi lick (hit) yuh an' stuff like dat. So, yuh have to go by his rule (Maxfield Park 13-15 years).*

Being forced by a boy as a reason for why young people have sex was discussed and raised more often among the younger girls ages 10-15 than among girls over the age of 16 years.

Women raping boys with a threat of physical violence was mentioned in one group:

*Yu know a lady can rape a boy? ... This lady went to boy and she said do it and he said 'NO' and she said "If you don't do it I'll kill you", and then she give him \$500 and push him down and went on top of him and make him do it (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*

The boundary between forced and consensual sex was not always clear, for younger girls. One aged 13-15 years from Maxfield Park remarked rather hesitantly that:

*... some girls... they don't want to have sex but because their boyfriend... and they say they love their boyfriend, so because their boyfriend force them into it... is stuff like... rapist things or thing like that. 'Bit' of them want to do it, some 'bit' want and 'bit' don't*

want. So, when you boyfriend say, come lets have sex ... one part of them say no and a next part say yes, but after a while after them have sex they regret it, so some of them... some girls will go and say they get rape, but it wasn't actually rape they actually gave it, but they never wanted to gave it.

### **Reproduction/Children**

Girls in six of the nine focus groups gave “to have a baby,” “to reproduce,” “to have children,” “to create love ones” as reasons why adolescent girls enter into sexual relations. In two groups, however, having a baby was expressed as a way to keep a relationship with a boyfriend or to satisfy a boyfriend:

- *Dem want to keep that person, dem want to hold that man. So dem think if dem have a baby, they can hold the man. (Clarks Town 16-19 years)*
- *Boyfriend want a child, so she have it (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*

All the girls aged 10-12 years and all age groups in Clarks Town (rural) mentioned sexual activity for reproductive purposes. It was not cited by girls 13 years and older in Maxfield Park or 16 and older in Montego Bay.

### **Other Reasons**

Girls, particularly in Clarks Town also mentioned thinking they are in “love” as one of the motivations. Older girls in this area, however qualified their notion of love. When one girl claimed young people had sex for love, the response from others in the group was as follows:

*Student: That is puppy love.*

*Student: Puppy Love.*

*Student: I think it is infatuation on both male and female partners...It is a infatuation thing it is not really love. You will see this person and you like him but when you go out there you meet this other person you forgot the person who you were with in the beginning.*

*Student: Just to support what she is saying In my opinion, most people have sex when they think they are in love with a person. When it is really infatuation and after having sex and bringing all that passion that is when they found out that it is not love after all. Because you start finding out things about the person you don't really like and she should have given herself the chance to know the person*

### **Ignorance of Biological Factors a**

This also emerged as a factor among some of the younger girls aged 10-12 years:

- *When they get period, they think they can have sex (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*
- *Because it is normal (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*
- *Boys will say is jus' a part of life an' we are built that way (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*

**Physical development** was perceived by these young girls as a reason to engage in sexual activity. Older girls had clear coping strategies for dealing with the changes they associated with physical development and physical sexual urges (horniness). In the focus group with Montego Bay girls aged 13-15 years they noted the following:

*Student: Just control yu self.*

*Student: jus get up an start dance an know yu a fi control yu self (Students: Yeah, yeah.) ... yu just start play out it with yu friends dem or tek it out a you mind yu nuh...jus get it all wiped out.*

*Student: all some a dem a fi do a hold a fresh. (take a shower)*

*Student: Masturbate.*

Older girls acknowledged the reality that sexual urges were natural but did not regard biological changes as an important reason for engaging in sexual intercourse.

**Wanting to lose their virginity** motivated some younger girls to engage in sexual activity. Responses were: “Fi bruk dem ducks” or “they are still virgin and dem feel sad about it”.

**Problems in the home**, such as abuse from a father, lack of attention, poor communication, and pressure from a mother to contribute financially were also mentioned by girls 10-15 years.

- *Problems in the family and he will take the 12 year old and have sex with her instead (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*
- *My friend mother run out har daughter to go an' look man an' get money (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*
- *Some don't get attention from home (Clarks Town 13-15 years).*
- *... she don't get enough love in har family. (other student: From har parents.) So she come to school and like dis boy...di boy talk to har an yu know the bwoy tell har dat him like har an dem get close . because she don't get enough love at har house, seh har parents not talk to har and the bwoy give har love and everyting, so the time will come...when di bwoy seh alright ... (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*

In summary therefore, the factors motivating girls to engage in early sexual activity were many and varied. Most confirmed the findings of previous research outlined in the literature review. Money was the main motivation, to meet economic needs. Other factors were pleasure, curiosity, popularity, pressure from peers, boyfriends as well as physical pressure from adult and young males. Other important factors were the search for love and affection, reproduction, not knowing how to manage sexual urges, wanting to lose their virginity and problems in the home.

### **2.1.2 Factors Motivating Boys**

#### **Pleasure**

Pleasure was the overriding reason given by boys in all the groups, at all age levels, in all settings. Responses were: “for pleasure,” “for fun,” “because it’s nice for us guys,” “it feel good,” and “some love the enjoyment.” Boys 16-19 years in Montego Bay had this to say:

- *Student 1: Well the first time you do it you feel great.*
- *Student 2: It's so emotional, you holding somebody all the ecstasy, you know...*
- *Student 3:... it's pleasure beyond all pleasures. It's just a different kind of fun and I think it's the closest we get to heaven on earth.*

### **Children/Reproduction**

The second most common response among the boys was “to have a baby” or “to have children” This was mentioned frequently in eight of the focus group sessions. Only in the Montego Bay group with 16-19 year old boys was this not mentioned. In a few sessions the boys elaborated upon why young people would want to have sex for reproductive purposes, although it wasn't always clear who they were referring to - their own gender group or girls:

- *Their friends have baby and they want baby too (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*
- *They want to have more children, expand their family, that when they get old they have children to help them; so that when they die they can bury dem (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*
- *Some want to show off dem baby on dem friends (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*
- *To carry the family name (Maxfield Park 13-15 years).*
- *Dem waan prove seh dem big. Dem tek har virginity an' guh fi it again. Dem waan breed di girl... (Maxfield Park 13-15 years).*

Boys also held the view that it was girls who desired children and some explanations were tied to the idea that the girls wanted a baby to get or keep a man:

- *To give a baby to the man with money (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*
- *Some girls love to have babies. So that the boy will always be around dem (Clarks Town 16-19 years).*

### **Peer Pressure**

Peer pressure was equally important and this emerged in eight of the boys' groups. Boys felt that other boys encouraged them to have sex. Pressure to not be seen by their friends as a “chicken,” or wanting to fit in with the group or “to play the game” by showing that they could get girls emerged as motivating factors. Sex with girls was perceived as a way to show they were “normal” young men:

- *The reason in Jamaica, today, why young people are having sex is because of peer pressure, that's the most reason, because your friend might be coming to you and telling you this and that and you not listening to what other people say, and then you go and get yourselves involved in these things... Most times is peer pressure, yu get tempted after your friends come and tell yu. (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*
- *They want to fit in with the group, if your friends having sex and they giving you all those reasons, an yu say no, they would want to call you a chicken and sometimes you feel bad (Montego Bay 10-12 years)*
- *If 'im nuh bruk 'im virginity 'im a go feel embarrassed an' 'im friend a go seh,*

*“Move from yahso, yuh nuh get nothing yuh a virgin.” (Maxfield Park 13-15 years).*

- *And also to play the game, like you bet you can get a girl and they bet that you can't get dat person, so yuh go get har (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*

Early sexual activity was also associated with boys wanting to impress their male members of their peer group, to “big up” themselves, or to appear “big,” (adult/mature):

- *You see a lot of them want to impress, to impress friends and if they don't impress de friends, dey lose dem (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*
- *They feel dey big, dey want boast about it, like dey say “Yu see dat girl over there, me do this and me do dat” (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*

Boys aged 16-19 years in Clarks Town claimed to be sexually active to boost their image in the eyes of their friends, but sexual intercourse with girls did not always take place.

- *Student 1: Yu just trying to bring up the number of girls. You can say to your friends bwoy is plenty girls I deal wid yu know and dis mek mi look good in front of dem.*
- *Student 2: Yes because yu seh yu have ten, twelve, although it no really true. But yu wah look big.*
- *Student 3: But some a wi lie to big up wi self.*

Younger boys felt the pressure to have sex came from girls.

- *An den some a dem go cane field an deh call to yuh (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*
- *Some girl will jump in the bed an' tell yuh fi come (Maxfield Park 13-15 years)*

Young boys aged 10-12 years in Clarks Town felt that the pressure from girls to have sex was linked to not wanting to be seen to be outside of what was considered “normal” among peers.

- *Student 1: Sometimes di girl dem want it, deh tell yu it is going to be nice an yuh will enjoy it and pushing di bwoy to do it.*
- *Student 2: An when yuh no listen to dem, deh talk bout yu a chi chi man (man who has sex with men).*
- *Student 3: An fool and idiot...*
- *Student 4: And laugh after yuh an call yuh chi chi man.*

Early sexual activity using force, rape and battery were sometimes mentioned in connection with peer-pressure. In all instances boys talked about this in relationship to what happened to girls and was more noted among younger boys aged 10-12 years.

- *Some would rape girls because it nice (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*
- *Yes yuh have rape, dis bwoy wanted mi to drag di girl in di cane piece but mi nah do it (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*
- *Yes, him friends encourage him to let dem drag the girls in the cane piece when they passing ... deh talk about holding her down (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*

- *Some man force woman fi have sex (Maxfield 13-15 years).*
- *Mi tell dem seh you be careful and nuh work no battery squad ... When you have one gal an a whole heap a man... like one go in de room and him friends dem outside alright, and when dat one having sex with har all adem come in a de room (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*

Playing on a girl's vulnerabilities was also cited by an older boy as a ploy that a boy could use to subtly pressure a girl into sexual activity:

*Yuh have some girls. If them father abuse dem or anything, sometimes it easy for you to play on their emotion. Dem need a shoulder to lean on. But you are going to take it further than that (Clarks Town 16-19 years).*

Younger boys aged 10-15 years were more likely to focus on forces sexual activity than boys over 16 years, although it was raised by all groups in Maxfield Park. While some boys thought girls did put pressure on them to have sex, others were encouraged by friends to force a girl to go with them, while still others spoke about being aware that men forced girls and women into sexual activity. They may have been following the examples of older men.

Although some boys expressed awareness that girls were raped, the youngest boys in Clarks Town felt that girls used rape falsely:

- *Sometimes when di girls gi di boy dem, go back an report like tha boy rape dem*
- *First di girl an boy did it an after he told har he did nt want har, so shi go tell everybody dat it rape*

### **Money**

Transactional sex, for money, material goods or status, was mentioned in several of the boys' focus group sessions. Younger boys, aged 10-12 years tended to emphasize transactional sex for girls more frequently than did older boys. Among the Clarks Town 13-15 year old boys or those over 16 years in Maxfield Park were not mentioned.

- *Some people go around selling themselves (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*
- *Sometimes dem poor and need lunch money or want to buy something nice so they can do it for the money (Clarks Town 10-12years)*
- *Or you find a man with money...(Montego Bay 16-19 years).*

Boys perceived that that this was something girls did:

- *The young girl dem work it fi money (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*
- *Sometimes yu like a girl and you tell her yu like her an she would say "move and go way you have no money" (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*
- *Most ah dem they just want to have money especially younger women (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*

Yet on the other hand:

*Man do it for free (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*

### **Biology**

In many of the boys' groups, natural, physical urges were named as reasons why boys have sex. Having to relieve these urges was seen as one reason for sexual activity. **Myths emerging were the notion of “storing up energy” or getting an “oily back” because of not relieving these physical urges was expressed.** The Montego Bay groups were particularly vocal about boys' physical urges:

- *...like if yuh horny, yuh try have sex (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*
- *It's a form of releasing stress, releasing certain pressures (Montego Bay 16-19 years)*
- *And them a go seh dem have oily backs and that they don't have the experience (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*
- *Cause the oil just stan up in a dem back ... Dem not having any sex (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*

Boys also indicated that they were motivated to have sex because girls aroused them:

- *The girl dem temp' yuh an' mek yuh nature rise (Maxfield Park 13-15 years)*
- *The young girl jus' tek off dem clothes an' yuh see them whole body, yuh get horny, yuh*
- *get tempted an' yuh haffi dweet ... Yuh haffi dweet, 'cause yuh body feel it when dem tek*
- *off dem clothes (Maxfield Park 13-15 years).*
- *It hard pon a man. You know a man can get an erection every five minutes. You can just see a girl and she look alright and you just strip her with yu eyes (Clarks Town 16-19 years).*

Early sexual activity for boys was also attributed to the girls' sexual urges:

- *Dem hard fi control demself cause they have a lot of energy... woman have more urges than man yu nuh (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*
- *Dem caan do wid two man dem ha fi have 4,5,6,10, nuf man (Maxfield Park 13-15 years).*
- *I know this girl and without sex she can't study ... some girls just can't study without sex. (Montego Bay 16-19 years)*

Satisfying their physical urges was perceived as a factor for sexual activity mainly among boys 13 and older, and heavily stressed by boys over 13 years in Montego Bay, but none of the boys 10-12 years raised this as an issue. Another **myth was that some of the boys were under the impression that it was necessary to engage in sexual activities in order to satisfy girls' sexual needs.**

## Love

Sex for love appeared in several group discussions, particularly among boys 13 and older. It did not appear a strong factor for any of the 10-12 years olds. In some cases it was linked to marriage:

- *It's nice for a married couple, to show their love (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*
- *To unite as one, like in a marriage, biblically speaking... You know sex is suppose to be something holy, holier than marriage itself, more binding than the ring on the finger. Like when a man break the hymen in a woman who is a virgin, that's a blood covenant, so it is something that we should try and respect (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*

In two groups of 16-19 year-olds, discussions took place about a distinction between sex and love. In Maxfield Park "love" was connected by some of the boys to an emotional tie with a girl/woman:

- *Student 2: Sex is just knowing somebody an' just going into it an' just sex the person for sex sake. When you reach to making love, is something different, you just don't sex so, yuh start from stages. When you love somebody you don't let them feel pain.*
- *Student 2: It take a longer time to know the person intimately and emotionally. Not really just slam, bam, thank you madam an' it done.*

## Other Reasons

Engagement in sexual activity was also associated with "power," "to pass on AIDS," for promotion in a job, and "curiosity," were mentioned in one group but were not expanded upon.

In summary therefore, pleasure was the main motivation for boys followed by reproduction, peer pressure, money, satisfying biological urges, love, power, passing on AIDS, job promotions, and curiosity. A number of myths were also identified as factors motivating young males to engage in sexual activity.

### 2. 1.3 Comparison of the Responses by Girls and Boys

A comparison of findings from the focus group discussions with boys and with girls showed similarities and differences in what motivated them to engage in sexual activity. For girls, money was the main motivating factor and this was a means to achieve economic needs and wants. Pleasure was the main factor motivating boys, which was also important for girls but was not as important. Peer pressure also emerged as an important factor for both girls and boys. Girls experienced pressure from boyfriends and adult males. For both genders, peer pressure was perceived as being particularly important among the youth 13 years and older. While boys of all ages expressed the idea that having sex was a way for boys to impress and gain stature among their peers, girls 16 years and older saw it as a way of gaining popularity among peers. Girls cited curiosity as another motivating factor as well as searching for love and affection, not knowing how to manage sexual urges, wanting to lose their virginity and problems in the home.

Boys and girls both cited reproduction, money, satisfying biological urges and love. Boys also noted power, passing on AIDS and job promotions as factors and mentioned a few myths and misconceptions that motivate young males to engage in sexual activity. The most significant of these myths was the view that oil in their back had to be released through sex.

In general, the young people shared the common view that people have sex for fun and pleasure. Boys were very vocal about this and presented a uniform set of responses on this issue. Girls however differed and some shared the view that girls experienced sex differently. Nevertheless, the association of sexual activity with enjoyment was firmly embedded in their minds.

The study also confirmed themes in the literature review that some girls' first experience of sex was not voluntary but forced. Younger girls and boys raised forced sex, predominantly by those under the age of 16 years. The groups mentioned forced sex or rape, most commonly perceived such acts as being exerted by boys/ men who pressured or forced girls/women into having sex. Some pressure the other way around was raised. Only when it involved a threat of physical violence by an older woman was it cast as rape. In some situations where boys felt that girls forced boys into having sex, this was also associated with pressure boys felt to be seen by their peers as a "real" or "normal" boy/man. The "force" they described, then came from having to secure for themselves a reputation or image of being a boy/man. The abuse from the girls was presented in these accounts as an attack on their male identity not their bodies.

Adolescents understanding of the adolescent body and its physical urges also emerged as important factors. Young girls aged 10-12 years, expressed the idea that the physical development of their bodies was a reason for some young people to engage in sexual activity. Older girls acknowledged that sexual urges were natural but did not necessarily see this as a reason to have sexual intercourse with a boy. Among the boys a quite different picture appeared. For those 13 years and older, having sexual intercourse with a girl was seen as a natural response to male bodily urges. Some boys were under the impression that intercourse also played a role for girls, helping them to relax and study.

Love as a reason to have sex was cited by boys and girls in several groups with the exception of children in Maxfield Park. Some boys distinguished between sex and love: sex involved pain, violence and no emotional attraction, and love was an intimate, emotional, caring act. Girls in contrast, distinguished between infatuation (a temporary emotional attraction) and love - a deep, lasting feeling. Consistent with earlier research, boys made a clear distinction between sex with someone they love and sex as a physical act. Girls clearly distinguished infatuation and love which was separate from sex.

Also consistent with findings from the literature review, the study confirmed the home and family environment posed threats for girls to have sex. These are further explored later in the report. Other issues confirmed were the fact that men feel that they should have multiple sexual partners, and that many engage in sexual activity to appear 'normal.'

## 2.2 First Sexual Partners

Responses to the question “Who do you think young people have sex with the first time?”<sup>1</sup> are presented below. The first observation is that they were not uniform. Some adolescents talked about the persons with whom they thought, or knew, first sexual activity took place, others talked about sexual activity more generally. Nevertheless, the responses give an indication of who the young people perceived to be their sexual partners.

### 2.2.1 Girls’ First Sexual Partners

#### Family Members

In general, most girls spoke about someone in the family. Those in the 10-12 year Montego Bay group also mentioned sex among siblings: “I know a brother and sister have sex on the veranda.”

Most girls had their first sexual experience with adult males in their homes as the following excerpts show and younger girls (10-15 years) were most vulnerable and that incest was quite widespread. This again confirms findings from the literature review mentioned in the introduction. Girls mentioned “Fathers” and “relatives” (Clarks Town, 10-12 years).

*Student 1: Sometime is dem father.*

*Student 2: Sometime is a close frien’ of their mother.*

(Maxfield Park, 10-12 years)

*Student 1: ... some a dem will have sex with they family members, try it out with them family members first, then they’ll try it out on their family members friends, and their friends...*

*Student 2: Some of them have it with their father*

*Student 3: Yes, sometime they have it with their father, or because sometimes their father force them...*

(Maxfield Park, 13-15 years).

Confirmation that this pattern was widespread emerged from responses to the Moderator’s question: “How often you think that happens where it’s a father?” Responses from several students in this Maxfield Park group suggested that this was a common and frequent occurrence, as they commented: “Many times, many times,” and “Nuff times.” Responses also identified other male family members: “Yuh brother” and “mother husband.” When some students expressed disbelief about sexual activity with a father, others remained adamant that this was the case. There were similar responses from the other focus groups:

*Student 1: Some fathers have sex with their children.*

*Student 2: And uncles, even brother and stepfather and cousin.*

(Clarks Town, 13-15 years).

“Dem fadda, dem brodda”. (Montego Bay, 16-19 years)

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<sup>1</sup> In one focus group session (Clarks Town boys 13-15 years), the question was not asked.

*Student 1: Some wid all them family. Dem an' dem little cousin a play 'dolly house'.*

*Student 2: Sometime is a stepfather who say 'im nah fatten fowl fi nuh mongoose!*

*Student 3: Sometime yuh live inna certain home, mother have sex wid di son, daughter have sex wid di father...*

*(Maxfield Park, 16-19 years).*

In conclusion, fathers were the most commonly mentioned family members in all but one of the girls' group responses, followed by stepfathers, cousins, uncles and brothers.

### **Men in the Community**

The second most prevalent category mentioned for first sexual activity was a "big man" and adult men in the community. The "big man" was talked about quite extensively in all groups except the Montego Bay group with girls 13-15 years.

*My sister tell me that some girl in the community is thirteen an' she is pregnant an' she call di name of a big man (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*

*Girls like usually older men (Clarks Town 16-19 years).*

Age differences between adult men and girls were was not clear from the responses, but indications are that men were significantly older some as much as "20 and 50 years":

*So she was dere saying her boyfriend is 38 yu know (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*

*Student 1: No little girl not talking to any little boy right now*

*Student 2: From the age of thirteen dem start talk to twenty-six year old.*

### **Others**

A range of other options also emerged from the findings on the first sexual partners. These included "boyfriends" "the first guy yu have feeling for" and "your first love." Masturbation was also mentioned by girls in two groups (Montego Bay 13-15 years and Maxfield Park 13-15 years), with the comment "Some a dem a dweet fa demself." Sexual activity with other girls, called "lesbians" and "dykes" was raised in the Montego Bay group 13-15 years. In one instance it was thought that boys first have sex with an older woman (Montego Bay 10-12 years).

## **2.2.2 Boys First Sexual Partners**

### **Family Members**

Boys first sexual encounter with a family member was with a **sister or cousin**. Boys also confirmed the reports of girls, that a girl's first sexual experience was in the home with fathers, brothers, step-fathers, uncles, and brother. Boys noted:

*Student 1: Some young girl have sex fi di first time wid dem father*

*Student 2: Some with dem stepfather (Maxfield Park. 10-12 years)*

*Student 1: Sometime it tha father.*

*Student 2: An one time it was the uncle too... (Clarks Town 10-12 years)*

*Student 1: Some boy will start with them little sista*

*Student 2: With their little sista.*

*Student 3: Eeh, all cousin too. (Montego Bay 13-15 years)*

*“Girls start with sexual activities with their fathers, cousins and uncles”*

*Student 1: The brother thing nuh common but the stepfather that common.*

*Student 2: Sometimes is the father mess dem up -Clarks Town 16-19 years:*

### **Girl Friends**

Many boys expressed the idea that boys their age have their first sexual experience with girls who were “friends.” They also gave insight into the kinds of girls chosen:

- ... they would have a hard time to get the popular girls, so they would choose somebody who is **stupid**. (Montego Bay 10-12 years).
- **Older girls** sometimes and sometimes we try it with a **popular older girl** (Clarks Town 16-19 years).
- Older girl for me, she was five years older (Montego Bay 16-19 years)
- Usually it’s some one in their **same age group or younger girls** who are tight (Montego Bay 16-19 years).
- Somebody my age. (Maxfield Park 16-19 years).
- A **virgin** (Kingston 16-19 years).

### **Older Men and Women**

Many young boys perceived their peers as having sex with older girls and women as well as older men.

- *Roun my way, the girl dem nuh waan nuh big man a pure little bwoy, mi have sex wid a big woman (Maxfield Park, 13-15 years)*
- *Sometime de boy dem get too, because big man caan find girl to have sex wid (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*
- *Some man will go after the bwoy dem instead of the girl dem. When him know sey ‘im can’t get nuh girl im guh have sex wid the bwoy (Maxfield Park 13-15 years).*

Boys also held the view that girls their age had sex with older, richer boys or men. This however, was not necessarily talked about as a first sexual activity.

*some a dem (girls) go look big man - could a be dem fadda - bout them want experience (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*

*Some men fool up the girls and sey dem love dem, show dem money and then dem have sex wid dem. (Maxfield Park 10-12 years)*

**Montego Bay boys aged 13-15 years, as the person who first initiated them into sex also named helpers.**

### 2.2.3. Comparison of the Responses from Boys and Girls

A comparison of responses from boys and girls revealed several consistencies with previous research, some of which is outlined in the literature review. There was consensus among girls and boys that **fathers, other male family members** and ‘big men’ were the individuals with whom most girls had their first sexual activity. While girls placed the focus of these sexual encounters in the home, the boys placed more emphasis on girls having sex with men in the community.

There was also a convergence of views that boyfriends and girlfriends were the first sexual partners for males and females. Most boys, especially the younger ones aged 10-15 years were more likely to mention “boys” and “girls” as the first sexual partner. Boys in Maxfield Park did not mention this category. The ‘big woman’ was mentioned by boys 13-15 years and the youngest girls in Montego Bay. Boys also mentioned having their first sexual encounter with older women with female helpers being named by boys in one Montego Bay group.

Younger girls (13-15 years) masturbated (Montego Bay and Maxfield Park) but boys did not report this as part of their sexual experience. Both girls and boys reported homosexual activity as their first sexual experience, with girls in Montego Bay mentioning Lesbian sex and younger boys (10-15 years) in Maxfield Park pointing out that they thought some boys were sexually active with men.

### 2.3 Location of First Sexual Experience

Where did girls and boys have their first sexual experience? Irrespective of parish and age, the home and family context emerged as a prime location for early sexual activity among adolescents. This emerged from the reports of sex with fathers, step-fathers, cousins, uncles, brothers, sisters, and helpers.

Reasons were offered by girls in particular included: the older man’s lack of sexual satisfaction with the girl’s mother, money, a lack of care and love in the family, and the girl’s appearance:

- *Mostly some of the faddas say that the maddas nah gimmi mek mi get from di pickney. (Montego Bay 13-15 years).*
- *Sometimes you can’t blame the father because sometimes the wife is not satisfying the father, so he’ll turn and go with the daughter (Montego Bay 10-12 years)*
- *Sometime yuh grow up in a home where there is no love an’ yuh stepfather a molest yuh...all yu father too (Maxfield Park 16-19 years)*
- *In my opinion, maybe she attractive with shorts and the father admire her (Montego Bay 10-12 years).*
- *Some a dem say a di stepfather a give dem di money, so, dem have sex wid ‘im (Maxfield 16-19 years).*

The reality that incest and sexual harassment in the home were confirmed by the findings from the focus groups, confirms earlier findings from studies in the literature review. Most notable is the link with the studies by Wazak and Wedderburn (2000), and Williams (1999) noting that girls did not feel safe in the home and community, their first sexual contact was often forced, and

they were exposed to sexual harassment in the home and community.

It was also interesting that some girls blamed the wife or mother as the reason why men had sex with their daughters or stepdaughters. Underlying this is a myth that men cannot take responsibility for satisfying their sexual urges in a responsible manner.

#### **2.4 Impact of Early Sexual Activity on Adolescents**

Responses from the focus group discussions highlighted girls' awareness that early sexual activity can be harmful to a young girl. One young woman in Clarks Town recounted the **physical and psychological impact:**

I know of a story that concerns a girl and her stepfather ... She was living with her mom and her stepfather. They are married and he being molesting her for five years. He's the first person she had sex... He lives in Kingston and come down on weekends. She says him will leave from over him bed when every body a sleep. Sometimes him tek off him belt sometimes him treaten her...Him give her money and anything she wants but after a while it start getting to her. When she comes to Clarks Town she no wah go home. If she goes to the bus stop she stand up till every bus pass. So I was wondering what is it. But every time I said what is it she said nothing but she jus no wah go home... She used to be fat and shapely but she started to get slim. One day she come and tell mi to carry her go hospital. She tek sumting (Long pause) She, she drink something. (slight sobbing) It is not a joke it is not a joke. Mi hate talking about it...

She vomit up some corn meal and she want to run away. And she jus wouldn't say jus what is it ... I start to say you have to go home. Then she started to tell me. She was like a mad person when she started to tell me. All when him start drag the sheet off of her. She was crying. When a took her to the doctor she saw a psychiatrist for a month and start to pick up back.

She neva tell her (*mother*)... she seh nothing. She was going to leave him but she is still with him. She live wit him still (Clarks Town 16-19 years).

Many adolescents, even younger ones, suggested that the term "incest" be used to describe sexual relations among family members and understood how it shaped their subsequent sexual behaviour. Incest often led to some girls continuing to have sex at a young age with both men and women or contemplating suicide:

- *... like seh the fadda or de stepfadda so molesta the child .... So dem seh if a can do it inside a can do it outside so dem go an do it (Montego Bay 13-15 years)*
- *Some of them just sexually abused from them small, so them cannot control themselves. When them growing them just keep on having sex. (Maxfield Park 16-19 years)*
- *When yuh see dem sexually abused mostly by stepfather, it lead to two things. One yuh just lock of wid man an' turn lesbian **or kill yuhself**, or sey, if dem stepfather can have sex wid dem anybody can have sex wid dem (Maxfield Park 16-19 years).*

Adolescents did not always see incest as the fault of the older man and some even understood the relationship to be initiated by the girl. Whoever was to 'blame' they did understand the need to

conceal sex with a family member as a secret. As one boy in Clarks Town explained

*one time .... de father went to bathe and he forget his towel and he ask his daughter to bring the towel an the towel fall off him waist and she said she saw his penis and used to dream having sex wid her father and she said one day when her mother and brother went to church she was left at home with her father and she said she was washing up the plate, den she went to her room put on di shortest skirt with no underwear. And den she say she was making a lot of noise in the kitchen purposely for him to come out and she said when har father came in she put his hand under her dress and held his penis an they start doing it and he put har on the counter and when her mother come back she hide in her room and the father went in his room hide the evidence (Boy 10-12 years).*

Divisions between mother and daughter and a breakdown of trust were also created as a result of incest and sex in the family. Responses from several girls and boys also confirmed the findings of earlier studies that a mother's response to reports of such sexual activity would be to not believe the girl:

- *An' when yuh tell yuh mother, she a talk 'bout a lie yuh a tell!!!*
- *(Montego Bay girl 13-15)*
- *If yuh tell yuh mother, she tell yuh fi shut up yuh mouth a lie yuh a tell pon yuh stepfather, an' a 'im a give har money. It worst when she not working, don't badda go back go tell har nothing like dat, 'cause she'd a eat yuh raw (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years).*
- *The father have sex with the daughter but di mother don't believe the girl (Clarks Town boy 10-12 years)*

Girls aged 16-19 years in Maxfield Park however thought that some mothers would act differently:

- *Student 1: Some mother do something about it.*
- *Student 2: Carry him to court.*
- *Student 3: Chop 'im too!*
- *Student 4: My mother woulda stretch 'im.*

Older girls in three locations also raised incest linked to abuse but boys were silent on this issue.

## **2.5. Factors Motivating Sex Between Adolescents and Adults**

Several inter-generation liaisons emerged from the focus group discussions. Older men were attracted to younger girls and older women and younger men and boys were attracted to each other. Both sets of relationships as previously noted revolved around transactional sex: sex was exchanged for money, status, power and material goods. These relationships were also associated with issues of coercion, abuse, harassment, as well as men's power over adolescent boys.

### **“Big Men” and Young Girls**

The 'Big Man' could be any older boy or man who earned a living and was not in school.

Consistent with the findings that many girls were motivated by money, this section confirmed that their preference for sexual activity with “big men” over school boys was primarily based on what the men could provide other than sex. Young boys, it was thought, did not have the financial wherewithal to attract girls and the theme of the inadequacy of the schoolboys’ lunch money was repeatedly raised:

- *My friend say she don’t want any school boy because dem money finish on Friday, so some girls go with the big men... (Clarks Town 13-15 years).*
- *Well, at school two girls in my class were having a discussion and one seh mi no wah no likkle bouy because they can’t give me what mi want. Dem young boy deh can’t gi mi nuttin. All him can tell yu bout is sex but him can’t really gi yu nuttin. (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*
- *Especially the girl dem who just turn thirteen, dem say schoolboy carry lunch money and big man work. Schoolboy caan mind them because them lunch money dun from 12 o’clock (Maxfield Park 16-19 years).*
- *Because they (school boys) cannot satisfy the girls needs, on Saturday and Sunday, because there lunch money done pon Friday (Clarks Town girl 16-19 years).*
- *Dem (school girls) want somebody pickit up an put it down lunch time dem nuh want nuh little bwoy (Clarks Town boy 10-12 years)*
- *Dem (girls) sey school bwoy money done from Friday, ah di big man dem want. Big man dem get salary (Maxfield boy 13-15 years).*
- *Some girls go with man who working an’ have car so they can look hot at all time an’ get more lunch money (Maxfield Park boy 16-19 years)*
- *The young girls don’t want school boys .Dem say school boys carry lunch money but big man carry salary (Clarks Town boy 16-19 years).*

For some girls, the type of big man did not matter and not all “big men” were considered bad or involved with young girls. As one girl noted:

*Wi call dem bad man down here but is mostly the bigger women who would be involved wid dem not the young girls. The young girls only want money (Montego Bay girls 13-15 years)*

Some ‘big men’ were drug dealers and taxi drivers and were considered particularly attractive because of their access to cash:

- *Student 1: in dat case yu know money is there*
- *Student 2: Financial attraction and popularity and the opportunity to travel. Yu have some girls dat just want to say I’m wid a drug dealer (Clarks Town girls 13-15 years).*
- *And taxi man too, so free ride (Clarks Town girl 13-15 years)*

Girls were also attracted to “Big men’ because of their material assets, perceived status, and the protection they could provide. Material assets were often measured by the kind of car the man

drove, (Honda, Lexus, Mercedes, BMW), and status and protection by his reputation as central figure within the community:

- *The man dem have flashy tings like Lexus an' dem tings ... Some of the drugs man, an' some moneyman an' some robber (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years)*
- *The rich bwoy, the so-called drugs hot boys. Now a days dem drive the big Benz and Lexus and the Montero and the Goutier (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years)*
- *Everybody fear him, an' look up to 'im, an' when she have a relationship wid 'im, she know sey she wi get attention an' nobody caan trouble har 'cause har man a bad man (Maxfield Park boy 16-19 years).*

Responses from the boys also demonstrated their understanding of priorities of women and girls:

- *Student: ...the older guys drive car...*
- *Student: They have money and the vehicle.*
- *Students: It's the status, some have good jobs.*
- *Student: It's the looks.*
- *Student: Na we not talking looks because we all have it (Laughter).... but its more popularity.*
- *Student: It's whole heap ah tings, some go for pretty hair, background, status (Montego Bay boys 16-19 years).*

Another attraction between younger girls and “Big Men” instead of younger boys was their physical size, while adult men were attracted to the firmness of a young girl’s body:

- *They don't want to have sex with boys their age... they say the boys too weak (Montego Bay girl 10- 12 years)*
- *Dem sey di little bwoy ting nah go work dem waan di big man something (Maxfield Park boys 13-15 years).*
- *Some a dem (little girls) sey dem nuh want 'cheese trix' (little boy's penis) dem want 'anaconda' (big man penis) (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years).*
- *Most men go for younger girls because they are pretty and tight (Montego Bay boy 16-19 years).*

Despite these seeming advantages, girls also talked about the disadvantages of the physical misfit between a Big Man’s penis and a young girl’s vagina:

- *Student 1: Dem little and the man dem big an' the man penis big and the girl vagina little.*
- *Student 2: Yeah, and dem mash dem up very early!*
- *Student 3: Sometime di man dem a jook too hard.*
- *Student 4: Sometime the girl dem very small an' di man dem big... So yuh find sey di girl dem have to bawl (Maxfield Park girls 16-19 years).*

### **Big Women and Young Boys**

Some boys, particularly those in Maxfield Park, felt that older women were seeking them out for sex:

- *The big woman dem sey dem nuh want nuh big ol' man (13-15 years).*
- *Most of the big woman dem going for the young boys now (16-19 years)*

Other boys felt that sex with an older woman was desirable and some perceived older women as wanting to have sex with young boys because of the young boy's physical abilities:

- *Student 1: An' some you't a sey, "a bare big woman mi waan from all today, 'cause a dem alone can mind mi".*
- *Student 2: Yuh si sometime yuh see some big woman a walk, yuh sey, "Jah know, mi woulda waan tek har on".... Dem hard fi start but once dem start dem hard fi stop. (Maxfield Park boys 16-19 years)*
- *Some big woman a sey, "a some little boy dem want fi feature dem." Like yuh an' dem a go out... an' dem sey big man water scratch an' 'im caan sex the goods. Young boy can service the goods an' satisfy the goods (Maxfield Park boy 16-19 years)*

### **Power of Men Over Boys**

Boys expressed resentment about what they perceived as incursions on 'their' territory by older boys and men. Adult men were seen to hold a power over the boys by being able to take "their" girls away, and the adolescent men seemed to feel quite powerless to contest this.

- *Di big man dem taking what belong to us an' we caan tek what belong to dem (Maxfield Park boy 16-19 years).*
- *Certain girl inna di school, yuh caan romp wid dem too hard, 'cause all di littlest one, a bare big man dem talk to ( Montego Bay boy 16-19 years)*
- *Yuh see wen dem dun use up dah girl ... dem gwaine come right back to you cause is you dem love, cause Man gwaine always have one more than everyone, yu nah (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*

### **Other Reasons**

- *Financial security for a child: an' if them get pregnant the man can mind it (Kingston girl 16-19 years).*
- *Secure a future: Because they are older they can help yu, because most girls coming out of school now can't get a job. Most of the times dat is how yu get the job is who yu now and who pulling the strings (Clarks Town girl 13-15 years).*
- *Discretion: Older men, because the young ones will go back and talk (Clarks Town girl 16-19 years).*
- Coercion: *Sometime big man try fi give dem sweety an' grab dem (Maxfield Park girl 10-12 years)*
  - *This girl in my class said she get raped by a big man (Clarks Town girl 10-12).*
  - *Yu si di thing is the younger girls are more vulnerable and the older men*

- know this. They know that the younger girls want to be in everything so dem bribe dem and seh mi give yu money (Clarks Town girl 13-15 years)*
- Abuse and harassment: *Di big man dem in the community... dem use the little girls (Maxfield Park girl 10-12 years)*
  - *They say they don't want the girls, they jus' want to have sex with dem an' leave dem (Maxfield Park girl 10-12 years).*
  - *When you doan talk to dem, dem cuss yuh an' say how much man walk up inna yuh an' dem ting deh (Clarks Town girl 13-15 years)*
  - *An den some of the man leave dem with the baby an deh have to batter wid it or throw it in garbage bag (Clarks Town boy 10-12 years).*
  - *One man park 'im car across the road out deh so, a' the school gate an' a 'back 'im fist' (masturbate) fi all di girl dem see (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years)*
  - *Some a dem have them wife an' family an' still a trouble di little girl dem (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years).*
  - *Some of the men dem caan get women so dem rape off the girl dem. (Maxfield Park boy 10-12 years)*

## **2.6 Primary Information Sources and Messages on Sex and Sexuality**

Some questions sought to gather information on sources of information that adolescents perceived to influence their ideas about sexual activity. Adolescents were therefore asked about where, other than among their peers, young people heard about sex. The family, school, the media and church were explored during these sessions and responses are presented below.

### **Adult Family Members**

Responses show that adolescents received mixed messages from family members. Earlier in this report it was noted that many young people felt that sex with a family member, particularly an older man, was common practice. However on a more positive note, the majority of responses to the question “What do your parents tell you about sex?” focused on the mother. The main message reported by most girls and younger boys was that she told them to **WAIT before having sex:**

- *She say to wait 'till marriage (Montego Bay girl 10-12 years)*
- *Some of us here start our menstrual flow and my mother tell me say no boys when yu start (Montego Bay girl 10-12 years).*
- *Don't rush, the world nah end. (Clarks Town girl 13-15 years).*
- *Stay away from it (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years).*
- *Wait until you old enough (Montego Bay boy 10-12 years).*

**AVOIDING PREGNANCY AND DISEASE** were the reasons Mothers gave to wait:

- She told me that you might end up getting the wrong thing when you go and push it so early. She tell me that I should wait until I leave school (Maxfield Park girl 13-15 years).
- Don't have sex because you going to get pregnant (Clarks Town girl 13-15 years).
- She don't want mi to get pregnant at such an early age and with the disease dem out deh and later on in life I might regret it (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years).
- some mother did tell mi say "no boots no ride" (no condom, no sex) (Montego Bay boy 13-15)
- Mi auntie sey you can catch AIDS. Mi auntie always tell her daughter she tek her education and don't run down man (Clarks Town boy 13-15 years).
- If a jus' meet a girl an' she beg yuh fi dweet, dem sey mi fi wait 'cause she may have disease (Maxfield Park boy 16-19 years).

**PRACTICE SAFE SEX** was another strong message from parents

- Well my mother will say yu no really suppose fi have sex but if yu do it yu mus use protection yu haffi face reality she seh ... if I'm doing it I mus use protection (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years).
- Try not to get pregnant. My father seh make sure yu don't bring nuttin come in ya (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years).
- Use condoms to prevent disease (Montego Bay boy 10-12 years).
- Dem say to watch out for disease... dem disease is dangerous and would tek we life (Clarks Town boy 13-15 years).

**FEAR OF LOSING PARENTAL AFFECTION AND THEIR HOME** were also messages:

- My mother say the day she hear say I am having sex she dun with me (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years)
- Most of the parents will tell dem that if they bring a belly, they would run dem out of the house and they would have no place to go (Montego Bay boy 10-12 years)
- Yuh grandparents say anyhow yuh come in yah wid any baby, yuh a go out a door (Maxfield Park boy 13-15 years).

**EXCHANGE SEX FOR MONEY** also emerged as a message a few young girls reportedly received from some parents or grandparents to get a better life:

- *Her grandmother was the one who was influence her, tell har, “go deh wid di bwoy, ‘cau di bwoy have money”,(sleep with the boy because he has money) and stuff like that (Maxfield Park girl 13-15 years)*
- *When dem don’t have it (when parents don’t have money), dem tell yuh dat, “ ‘im have money so deh wid ‘im, so yuh can get di money fi go school” (Maxfield Park girl 13-15 years)*
- *Because dem don’t work...dem say, “gwaan wid ‘im, yuh nuh see say a nice man. Yuh waan go look fi di idiot bwoy whe naw give yuh nothing?” (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years).*
- *The mother would force her to have a baby wid the rich man; so she can get money (Clarks Town boy 13-15 years).*

These views echoed findings from previous research by Williams (1999) and Dunn (2000).

**MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS** was another message several boys 13-15 years in Montego Bay, reported as advice from their grandmothers. They urged them to be aware of risks but to ultimately make their own decisions about sexual matters:

- *Student: when it come to sex mi jus reminiscent an jus tink very hard. Mi grandmother always seh you see the choice weh yu mek now go effect in life so a always try mek the right one*
- *Student: my grandmother told mi sumptin - “ weh don’t kill you mek yu stronga” and everybody has to die - sumptin have to kill yu. Maybe AIDS kill you, maybe you get shot, so choose one way. It takes many ways to die.*
- *Student: mi grandma always say if a no AIDS a go kill you a something else a go kill yu*
- *Student: she just say live mi life.*

### **Communication in the Family**

Responses confirmed that many young people felt there was minimal communication and information-sharing between older family members and young people about sexual matters:

- *Sometime the mother not playing wid the child or the parents not communicating wid the child enough ... deh not speak to their child ... an expect dem to know everything jus like dat (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years)*
- *My father no really like talk bout dem something dem (Maxfield Park girl 13-15 years).*
- *I can’t really talk to her about it and I don’t (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years).*
- *Dem (grandparents) caan tell mi ‘bout dem ting deh (Maxfield Park boy 13-15 years)*
- *Mine don’t talk about it (Maxfield Park boy 16-19).*

Boys and girls therefore received different messages from parents, especially mothers and grandmothers. Most girls were told to “wait” and avoid sexual activity until they were older and boys were told to “take care”. Sex appeared inevitable for boys at a young age, which was consistent with the data from the literature review. The messages from family members predominantly linked sexual activity to something that would get them into trouble, and as something to fear because of the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy or AIDS.

## 2.7 Adolescents Perspectives on the Influence of the Church

Responses to the question: “What do you hear about sex in Church” indicated that the Church is another institution that was seen to offer advice to young people about sex, although the girls had more to say on the matter than the boys. The main messages from the church were: “not to have fornication” “not to have sex when you go to school,” to “not have sex until marriage,” and “not to commit adultery.”

The Montego Bay girls aged 16-19 years stated:

- *Student 1: Well if you belong to a church and you are a Christian you will feel bad afterwards.*
- *Student 2: My pastor was saying if you talking to a bouy him liable to put words to you and you a go fall for him and everything ...*

Sexual activity was often cast in a negative way, as something that young people should avoid. Some adolescents mentioned that such negative messages about sex were unhelpful or were not helping to prepare young people properly:

- *Some of them will make you tink seh if you out there doing it it is something bad. Remember now, you might not know about it you might not get the necessary teachings (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years).*
- *Student 1: dem refer to sex as “it”. Some nah call the word... seh dat word belongs to the bedroom. Everything is just “it” “it”.*
- *Student 2: I think those young people are not prepared for this world (Montego Bay girls 16-19 years).*

The Church was also a source where some older girls felt was a place where they learned about sexuality and sexual behaviors in a positive and helpful fashion:

- *Some of them have become very open... some of them will tell dem (young people) the proper way of doing things (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*
- *Our teacher at Faith Temple talks about sex openly she tells us not to do it. She goes in to everything about sex. She don't mek it look bad ... (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*

Perceived contradictions between church teachings and actual sexual behaviour were raised in

Montego Bay among girls 13-15 years. They described the discrepancy between a pastor's preaching and his children's behavior to illustrate their point:

- *The pastor dawta pregnant an no tell no baddy (didn't tell anyone)*
- *Yu see wen dem deh a dem yard, dem sing Jesus song whole day, yu see wen dem come a school yu no waan dem. Yu couldn't believe a pastor a dem fadda...*
- *Mi know dis pastor an im son weh live ina my community. Di son come a dis school ... yu see wen him a sing, it coming like him a lif aff di rooftop an wen him a bawl out halleluia and Jesus yu caan believe it. Yu see when him come a school....him a one change person.*

Perhaps the most eloquent expression of this contradiction was the comment:

*Saint pon Sunday but living Satan from Monday to Saturday (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years).*

Other contradictions focused on the messages being taught in church about sex and actual behavior in the church as a place where people go to find a sexual partner:

- *Some young girl dem nuh go a church fi praise God dem go look man (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years).*
- *Pastor don't talk about sex, but the boys go to church to get girls (Clarks Town girl 13-15 years).*

Several girls and boys stated that they heard nothing about sex in Church. Boys in all locations over the age of 13 were noticeably quiet on this issue.

## **2.8 Adolescents' Perceptions on the Role of the School**

Apart from the messages that young people get from their peers at school, we asked about what they were taught about sex by teachers and guidance counselors at school. Boys and girls of all age groups, concurred that the focus was on sexually transmitted diseases and safe sex practices:

- *That you must use a condom (Clarks Town girl 10-12 years).*
- *One tell us all about diseases like HIV and AIDS, and what to do if you get disease (Clarks Town girl 13-15 years).*
- *Do your HIV blood test because some people sell themselves and get HIV (Maxfield Park boy 10-12 years).*

Guidance counselors appeared to be the main sources of information on sexual activity for schoolboys and girls in all locations, and counselors and teachers echoed parents' message of **Waiting**:

- *We too young to have sex, and to have sex when we married (Montego Bay boy 10-12 years).*
- *Wait until you old enough, eighteen. An wait until yuh marred (married) (Maxfield Park boy 13-15 years).*
- *Dat the boys and the girls always going in cane piece an have sex, and she say it is wrong to do it cause by the time we become big man and woman, we'll be finished (Clarks Town boy 13-15 years).*

Parents' safe sex message was also echoed in school, as Montego Bay girls 16-19 years reported. Guidance counselor encouraged them not to start having sex, but advised them that if they were already sexually active, they should practice safe sex.

Protection from Sexually Transmitted Infections was another message mentioned in the majority of responses in all groups. Younger boys aged 10-15 years in Maxfield Park reported that guidance counselor also told them not to have children at a young age, about sexual harassment, abuse & self-control:

- *Don't have baby before time because some people have baby and nothing to support dem (10-12 years).*
- *Don't force anybody to have sex with you (13-15 years).*
- *An' when you feel the urge fi have sex, how fi deal wid the problem (13-15 years).*
- *'Bout sexual abuse. An' how we mustn't touch di girl pon dem breast (13-15 years).*

In only one instance it was suggested that sex education in school prompted young people towards sexual activity:

*When teacher start teach you about it you start wonder and want try it out (Montego Bay boy 16-19 years).*

## **2.9 Adolescents' Perceptions on the Role of the Media**

During the focus groups sessions, various media were mentioned that made an impression upon the young people regarding sexual matters. The most commonly named among younger girls and boys, particularly in Montego Bay and Clarks Town was "blue movies" seen either on cable television or on a video cassette:

- *We talk about blue movies (with friends) (Montego Bay girl 10-12 years).*
- *On cable, lot so movies with sex (Clarks Town girl 13-15 years)*
- *My friends deh talk about the blue movies (Clarks Town boy 10-12 years)*
- *Sometimes dem parents borrow the cassette, an when de parents not there they tek a little look. (Clarks Town boy 10-12 years)*
- *Whole heap a porno (on cable and cassette) (Montego Bay boy 13-15 years)*

Television soap operas, movies and music video programmes also provided adolescents with different types of messages:

- *I was watching at 'Bold and Beautiful' last night and Bridgett and Deacon made love and she is so much younger than him (Montego Bay girl 10-12 years).*
- *Especially on the cables like when spring break come and show yu dem fantasize on the beach (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years)*
- *I saw a movie and the father raped his daughter and she tried to tell her mother and her mother neva hear...(Maxfield Park girl 13-15 years).*
- *On the video songs. Yu si some of the video songs, lets say they don't portray nuttin decent (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years)*
- *On TVJ dem showing an advertisement which is a rum cream advertisement... everything they do now is about sex. (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years).*

Newspapers, books and the radio also provide messages:

- *You read it in the papers (Montego Bay girl, 13-15 years).*
- *I watch a lot of TV and read a lot of books about these things (Maxfield girl 13-15 years).*
- *On the radio (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years).*

Some adolescents felt that the media influenced them to want to try out or to have sex:

- *One friend do it with the doll after she see a movie (Montego Bay girl 10-12 years)*
- *They watch the cable in America dem want to follow and do what dem see on the cable (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years)*
- *If a guy is singing there must be some girl in there rubbing him down and you know that young people follow whatever dem see ... (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years)*
- *Dem see it on TV. When dem see dem having sex and so, dem sexual hormones rise an' dem feel horny (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years).*
- *Sometimes, when you look at TV and you see all that kissing and so on you get turn on (Montego Bay boy 16-19 years).*

Mass media also reportedly had a positive impact, A few younger girls felt that they learned how to deal with sexual and gender relations more generally.

*It help to teach you morals, help you learn how boys are (Montego Bay 10-12 girl) and The story make yu wise... it show how they trick females (Montego Bay girl 10-12 years).*

A few boys reported that the media did not have a strong influence on them:

- *Tell the truth when me watch it me no feel nothing (Montego Bay boy 13-15 years).*
- *“Mi no really feel no way.” (Montego Bay boy 13- 15 years)*
- *I’m going to show you how the media don’t come into it ... when I was small I never have a TV and I never saw my mother or father having sex. ...I never hear ‘bout sex, my next door neighbor never hear about sex either, but we just start and she tell meh let me see what yuh have in yuh pants. And I tell her let me see what you have under dey and before you know it we start have sex.... I was nine and she was twelve or so (Montego Bay boy 16-19 years).*

Influence of the media, particularly “blue movies,” appeared to play a role in shaping ideas about sexual activity among all girls and younger boys in Montego Bay, and to a lesser extent for girls and boys under the age of 16 in Clarks Town. It was hardly raised as an issue for girls or boys in Maxfield Park of any age. It also influenced fashion, music choices.

## **2.10 Knowledge About Sexual Health**

In focus groups, the issue of how young people could have healthy, safe sex was raised. This was predominantly linked to protection against STIs and HIV/AIDS. Knowledge about sexual health practices was high. Responses from all focus groups highlighted protection by using a condom,” “never ride bare-back” “use nuff protection” and “have regular health checks.” Abstinence was suggested in three of the eighteen groups among older boys and girls. A few thought the wisest thing to do would be to “tek little time fi know the person more” before having sex.

### **Myths and Attitudes About Sexual Health**

Several myths emerged in the focus group discussions and many related to dealing with HIV/AIDS: One girl stated: *“If you don’t want HIV, drink bleach.”* This was met with disbelief from her peers and the correction made that *“Bleach will cut up your inside, yu mean use condom”* (Montego Bay girls 10-12 years). Other myths heard among the Montego Bay girls’ group aged 13-15 years, were being able to catch STIs from non-sexual activities such as sitting on a chair or in a taxi where someone who had lice had sat before. Another was developing chlamydia from not drying underwear outdoors, as well as from oral sex.

Myths also emerged among Maxfield girls group 13-15 years, who were confused about whether the pill or an injection could protect against STIs, and concerns whether condoms could burst, fill up and spillover. Other issues focused on whether or not AIDS could be treated and about how long it took for AIDS to fully develop. One girl put forward the idea that “AIDS was made by white people to kill out the black people” and that since it had been man-made, it could also be reversed through human efforts. Others ridiculed this idea.

Among the Montego Bay girls aged 16-19, one student noted that “some people feel that it is safe and some people don’t care. They are just lackadaisical because dem don’t get the AIDS yet, ... so dem tend to leave themselves careless.” Montego Bay boys group aged 10-12 years, expressed concern that STIs could be spread easily, either consciously, “some try to spread it,” or unwittingly “sometimes yu don’t really want to spread it but you don’t know you have it.” One

myth was that HIV/AIDS could be spread through mosquito bites, from sharing utensils, and from toilet seats and that “only big people have dem something de.”

The Montego Boys aged 13-15 years expressed great concern over the possibility of condoms breaking and that a condom did not provide 100% protection. The conversation revolved around how someone can contract HIV/AIDS without knowing it and that both men and girls spread it. Despite the general agreement in the group that AIDS was deadly, several adolescents were convinced that there was a cure. One voiced the opinion that the cure was being deliberately withheld from the average person “cause the world is getting so populated dem wah some a di people dem fi dead off.”

Some boys expressed the idea that Big Men were the cause for the spread of AIDS, and that some of them did not use condoms because “im nuh like it” or that the men deliberately want to get a girl pregnant. Older women and girls were also held suspect by the boys for spreading disease, and as one boy explained: “The big man give the young girl and the young girl jus’ spread it because she nuh waan she alone die.”

STIs/AIDS were most discussed in the girls’ groups age 13-15 in Montego Bay and Maxfield Park, and by the 10-12 and 13-15 year old boys in the same locations.

Responses suggest the need for more precise information about how HIV/AIDS could be spread and how it developed and ways of individuals protecting themselves from HIV/AIDS. Boys emphasised how others’ carelessness put them at risk and targeted men and girls for blame. And while several young people refused to accept that no cure exists for AIDS, this was expressed strongest among the boys.

### **2.11 Other Ideas About Sex and Sexuality**

During the focus group sessions, the young people spontaneously talked about other issues related to sexual activity of adolescents. Same-sex relations, masturbation, and oral sex were the common re-occurring themes, with heterosexuality being assumed to be the norm.

### **2.12 Reasons for Young People Not to Engage in Sexual Activities.**

Responses to the questions “why do some young people not have sex?” were interesting. The main reasons focused on fear of STIs, HIV/AIDS and pregnancy, followed by ideas about not being ready, waiting for marriage, religious beliefs, and securing an education.

#### **Fear of Contracting STIs & HIV/AIDS**

- They ‘fraid of STDs (Montego Bay girl 10 - 12 years)
- Children should not have sex, they wi ketch STD (Maxfield Park 10-12 girl years)
- Sometimes they are afraid of the diseases ... AIDS, HIV (Clarks Town girl 10-12 years).
- STD’s, gonorrhoea, syphilis, lice... AIDS .the big A (Montego Bay girls 13-15 years).

Boys over 13 years in Maxfield Park did not bring up this issue.

## **Fear of Pregnancy**

Regardless of age and location, girls were particularly concerned with not wanting to get pregnant and this was raised as a reason in eight of the nine girls focus group sessions:

- *It nuh right to have sex because you can get pregnant (Clarks Town girl 10-12 years).*
- *Because having a baby right now go set yu back and it a jus hard fi reach yu goals (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years).*
- *Don't want to have baby (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years).*

Some boys also pointed out the harmful consequences for the child, or the girl:

- *Sometimes if yu have sex and yu go and have a child and yu don't want the child, most people turn to adoption or leave the child...*
- *Or abortion ... which can have certain effects (Montego Bay boys 10-12 years)*
- *They fraid dem get pregnant an when they have baby di men no going to feel di pain (Clarks Town boy 10-12 years)*
  
- *An when they in school an have baby, di girl she have to stop school an di boy don't have to stop school, but di girl get kick out a school (Clarks Town boy 10-12 years)*

Most boys associated pregnancy with girls' behaviour. Neither the boys in Maxfield Park mentioned unwanted pregnancy, nor the boys or girls 16 years and older in Clarks Town.

## **Not Ready**

Both girls and boys expressed the idea that some young people were not ready or mature enough for sexual activity:

- *Cause they don't feel is the right time (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years)*
- *Deh seh yu too young for those things and not because you menstruate you think yu a big woman (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years).*
- *Some of us is just not ready, dem just not ready, dem don't really think about it (Maxfield Park girls 13-15 years)*
- *Some not ready (Maxfield Park boy 10-12 years).*
- *Some people jus don't do it cause dem no ready fi do it (Montego Bay boy 13-15 years).*

Younger boys, associated not being ready with sexual inadequacies, fear of not being able to perform, not being physically able to have sex, not being able to attract girls, or not being able to find the right opportunity.

- *Some a them fraid cause dem nah go perform well people gwain laugh after them (Montego Bay boy 13-15 years).*
- *Dem who not having sex, can't get any woman (Clarks Town 13-15 years)*

In three boys' groups, including Montego Bay, boys 10-15 years expressed the view that not having sex was a positive sign of strength, self-control, and self-respect. In one group of girls, waiting until the legal age for consensual sex was raised, with the concern that the boyfriend would end up in prison:

*Like at 15 they will have a boyfriend at 20 odd like 25, they will have sexual intercourse with their boyfriend but that would be wrong 'cause if anyone found out he'll be put in prison. So some... of them will wait until they turn 18, that mean they are adults, that mean they cannot be put in prison because she's already reach the age of maturity... adulthood (Maxfield Park girl 13-15 years).*

### **Waiting for Marriage**

Younger girls were more likely than boys to want to wait until marriage before having sex. This was a factor in five of the nine girls' focus groups sessions (more among the ages of 10-15 year olds while it was raised in only one group of boys (13-15 years):

- *She want to save her body for her husband (Montego Bay girl 10-12 years)*
- *Sometimes people don't want to have sex before dem are married (Clarks Town girl 10-12 years).*
- *Waiting for marriage (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years).*

### **Religion**

In less than half (seven) of the eighteen groups, did young people give religion as the reason for not wanting to engage in sexual activities.

- *Caah de Bible seh sex outta marriage is sin ... mi go feel dirty and shame (Clarks Town girls 13 -15years).*
- *Some are in church and being a Christian yu not suppose to have sex. Being a Christian you don't have sex out of wedlock (Montego Bay girl 16-19 years)*
- *Some are Christians and want to avoid fornication (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years)*
- *For religious reasons. They come from a Christian home and they stick to the Christian principles... it's how they were socialized (Montego Bay boy 16-19 years).*

Boys and girls in Clarks Town seemed the least inclined to believe that sexual activity should wait until marriage.

### **Virginity**

Girls and boys in Clarks Town, and girls and boys 16 years and older in all locations, did not indicate that they thought virginity was a reason not to be sexually active.

It was the younger girls, particularly those 10-12 year olds in Montego Bay and Maxfield Park, and 13-15 year olds in Montego Bay, who gave keeping their virginity as a reason.

- *She's keeping her virginity for her special someone (Montego Bay girl 10-12 years)*
- *They don't want to loose them virginity (Maxfield Park girl 10-12 years)*
- *When like yu a virgin... the future is better for you ( Montego Bay girl 13-15 years).*

The few comments made by boys about virginity mostly related to the girls wanting to keep it: "some are virgins and don't want to break it" (Maxfield Park boy 10-12 years).

### **Education**

Staying in school and completing their education was perceived to be of importance:

- *Yu nuh suppose to concentrate pon sex now, yu suppose to concentrate pon yu school work to get subjects... become a good person and after that... (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years)*
- *I'm a very serious person. Yu see my school work dat has to come first above everything else (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years)*
- *When you put sex on hold you have a higher grade at school, your mind not focused on sex (Montego Bay boy 16-19 years)*
- *Sometimes sex compete with them schoolwork (Maxfield Park boy 16-19 years).*

The incursion of sexual activity on schoolwork or getting an education was raised infrequently. However, it was boys who mentioned it more often than girls. Neither boys nor girls in Clarks Town raised this an important reason to delay sexual activity.

### **Other Reasons**

Many girls over 13 years cited fear of pain, battery, scandal, or their parents' anger as reasons:

- *'Cause they heard about it and they heard that it is painful (Maxfield Park 13-15 years)*
- *Mi fraid cause if mi do that Miss and my madda find out she kill me (Montego Bay girl 13-15 years).*
- *Afraid of scandal (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years)*
- *Afraid boys will battery them (Maxfield Park girl 16-19 years).*

While none of the boys mentioned such factors, some older boys mentioned not having sexual urges because of a bad diet and the use of “snow,” drinking soda or eating salt, or because boys had “no use” for sex. In one instance, a Clarks Town boy in the age group 16-19 stated that his dislike of oral sex was a reason not to engage in sexual activity.

Younger girls aged 10-12 years did not want to disappoint their parents. Lack of opportunity to get out of the house was raised in three groups, while self-control, waiting for a friend to do it first, feeling dirty, or not finding the right person to have sex with, were mentioned. And as one girl concluded: “There are a hundred ways to say no” (Maxfield Park girl 13-15 years).

## **2. 13 Perceived Appropriate Age for Sexual Activity**

Although many of the young people in the study declared that they were already sexually active, many had in mind a “right” age that sexual activity should begin, but lacked consensus on what this should be. Girls’ responses varied from 13-15 years, “because you get a little horny”. Others felt it should be 16, 17, or 18 years.

The right age for boys also varied. Some linked it to marriage and securing employment and material possessions first, while for others it was linked to absence of force. Among the Maxfield boys, ages 13-15, the right age for sex was “When yuh have big work an’ yuh have yuh house an’ yuh know say yuh have everything what yuh want. Yuh have yuh beautiful wife right there and have yuh beautiful car, yuh can talk ‘bout baby and the plan for the future.” Not many young people actually waited for this however. Absence of force was the main issue for a boy 13-15

years in Montego Bay: “As lang as... nobody force yu fi do it and ... yu do it a fah yu own will”

Among older boys (16-19 years) in Montego Bay, one suggested 25 years and was ridiculed by others. This was understandable when they reported that boys normally started being sexually active, around 9 or 10 years old. This again confirmed earlier reports that boys started sexual activity at an earlier age than girls. Girls tended to give specific ages, mostly in the late teens, but boys were less precise. For the girls this was not as clear. Most of the girls in the 10-12 age group let it be known during the sessions that they were not sexually active. Among the 13-15 year olds this was less obvious, and not many openly claimed sexual activity. Some older girls proudly declared that they were sexually active. However, the fact that many set a much older age to begin sexual activity, and saw this as desirable, suggests that many would prefer not to have sex at an early age.

## 2.14 Advice

The question was posed, “what advice would you give to your younger brother and sister about sex” to get a clearer idea of what adolescents felt they should do about sexual activity:

Younger girls aged 10-12 years overwhelmingly responded that they would tell a sister to “wait until she get big” (around 18 or until they were married); “not to give in to peer pressure,” “not to follow trends set by friends.” Girls 13-15 years said, “it is wrong” “not good,” “not safe” or that “she could get pregnant. Girls’ advice to younger brothers was similar but also included “use a condom,” and “Not to have sex with a lot of girl... I would tell him safe sex is better, like hugging and kissing” and “use protection at all times.”

The older girls’ advice was a little more substantial:

- *I would tell her dat there is nuttin to run down. It is not running away - there are STD out there yu can get pregnant, there are people out there who want to use yu ... Don’t follow frenz because they will say they are doing when they are not doing (Montego Bay 16-19years)*
- *I will tell her tings like you might see a little boy you like but... make sure it is not infatuation but real love. I will try to motivate her let her tink about school what she want to become other than boyfriend ting (Montego Bay 16-19 years).*
- *If me have a sister mi woulda warn har bout the kind of boys she should date... Dem a talk to yuh an’ dem hand deh all over yuh body (Maxfield Park 16-19 years).*

Older girls 16-19 years would give the following advice to their brothers:

- *It don’t mek sense telling my brother that because he’s already having sex. I try to tell him to stop it. He’s on the V cup team...so yu know him don’t have to look girls, dem come. I told him him must make sure him use condom at all times ...Him will listen to the condom part but him not listen to the rest of it. I will say “Marvin yuh are just fifteen. What is going to happen to you when you grow big and married, yuh not going to have any use”... (Montego Bay)*

Advice from the youngest boys to a younger sister would be “to wait,” (one suggested until 14 or 15), “don’t do it” or to stay in school. Some felt they could threaten a younger sister by telling

her that if she did have sex, she could not come back into the house (Montego Bay), and “not to let seven o’clock catch dem on the street.” Others felt that they should warn their sisters of the dangers that men posed:

- *Don’t go with all the men dem, cause they will use her (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).*
- *“I’ll tell her that she must not go out ... cause big man would get her pregnant (Clarks Town 10-12 years).*

Young boys advice to an even younger brother would be to “to wait,” to “have safe sex” and “to be careful” and “You must not go rape girls” (Maxfield Park 10-12 years).

Advice from 13-15 year old boys was similar to younger sisters, was similar to that noted above. One boy said he would tell a sister to wait until she was mentally and physically mature enough “because doing it carry a lot of stress really, it not a casual thing” (Clarks Town). Another wanted to caution a sister about being too sexually active: “Don’t go out with two man at the same time. Too much nuh good ... (Maxfield Park).

Advice of boys 13-15 years to younger brothers, was to use a condom, and a few recommended waiting, adding from personal experience:

*To be honest this may sound wrong as I love sex, I can’t tired of sex; but I’ll tell him the longer him wait, the longer yuh postpone it, the nicer it would be. I’ll tell him it nice and everything but knowing now that I settle with one girl, now I just wish that I was a virgin and everything was being given to her now (Clarks Town).*

Several thought however, such advice would fall on deaf ears, “you can take the horse to the water, but yuh can’t force it to drink” or that advice to boys about waiting was just not practical.

Advice from boys in the older age group 16-19 did not differ significantly from those of the younger groups. The emphasis was on advising a sister to wait (until 19 or 20 or was married), and not to drop out of school. One added that he would tell a sister “don’t let no man beat her” (Maxfield Park), and another that she should “ Go after who love you nuh after who nuh love you” (Clarks Town).

Both older boys and girls would advise younger sisters to wait and not let themselves be fooled or harmed by boys or men. Boys would emphasize the harm men could do to them. Younger brothers were advised to use condoms, practice safe sex and preferably wait. The advice that was proposed corresponds to the ways in which adolescents spoke about the age they perceived to be appropriate for sexual activity. For girls this was to wait until their late teens and for boys the message underscored being sexually active but safe. The responses also supported the general assumption that emerged through the entire study: that boys are free to engage in sexual activity at any age, and that girls should not, until a “proper” age or in the context of love or marriage. That this underlying assumption, particularly for girls, did not reflect the reality of many of the young people in the study, suggests that a pervasive ideology exists about girls and boys sexuality that is distant from what they experience and do.

### 3 Conclusions

This concluding section of the report tries to bring together several elements of the study that should provide greater clarity on factors that determine early sexual activity among adolescents and ends with recommendations. Several themes outlined in the literature review were re-emerged in the findings of the study. Among these were sexual practices of adolescents, the sexual behaviour of young women, concerns about teenage pregnancy and adolescent reproductive health, adolescent sexual activity and the transmission of infections and disease, masculinity, prostitution, and child labour.

Two main themes are addressed: The first is greater clarity on the main factors that motivate and inhibit adolescents' sexual activity. This includes information on their first sexual partners, where they had their first sexual experience and what factors contributed to the delay the onset of early sexual activity. The second theme is the primary sources of information and messages for adolescents, including their level of knowledge and myths about sexual health.

#### 3.1 Factors Motivating Early Sexual Activity Among Adolescents

Consistent with trends in the literature review, the study confirmed that boys start sexual activity earlier than girls: boys appear to start between 9 and 10 years whereas girls tend to start about 12 or 13 years. The ideal age to start was usually older than the age of the adolescent and even those that were sexually active appeared to place the ideal age as older than their actual age, suggesting they may have preferred to wait. Consistent with this was their advice to younger siblings to wait, protect themselves, practice safe sex and make sure they are not abused.

Several factors appear to influence the onset of early sexual activity. The most commonly cited reasons were considered the main motivating factors and these were somewhat different for girls and boys but pleasure was the common factor. These were money and pleasure, fun and curiosity for girls, and for boys, sex was mainly for pleasure/fun and reproduction.

*For girls, in rank order, the main factors were: money (transactional sex to meet basic needs as well as an improved quality of life); pleasure, fun and curiosity; peer pressure (to fit in the crowd and be popular); pressure from boys (which was sometimes forced and accompanied by the threat of violence); children (sometimes to keep a man or satisfy a boyfriend); love; inability to manage sexual urges at puberty, wanting to lose their virginity and problems at home.*

*For boys, in rank order these were: pleasure, children, peer pressure/establishing male heterosexual identify, money, myths about biological and sexual urges, sexual arousal by girls and older women and love. This study indicates four main factors that prompt early sexual activity.*

Masturbation (for girls) and experimentation with homosexual activity (for girls and boys) and oral sex were also raised as part of the first sexual activity for some adolescents. Inability of girls and boys to deal with their natural sexual urges also emerged as an important factor motivating early sexual activity, suggesting that ignorance and absence of effective coping skills were factors. These perceptions were confirmed by evidence of a few myths such as boys needing to engage in sexual activity because there is 'oil in the man's back that needs to come out,' or girls thinking that they could cure AIDS by drinking bleach.

### **3.2 Peer-pressure to Prove Gender Identity**

Peer pressure emerged as an important motivating factor and findings confirm reports from earlier studies in the literature review. They also give new insights- all linked to gender identity. Peer pressure was associated with the meanings of sexual activity for adolescent and adult masculinity. Sexual pressures on adolescent boys established in various studies were also confirmed. For boys, sexual activity with girls (or older women) is fundamentally linked to establishing male heterosexual identity among peers, to prove they are a “real” man.

For girls, peer-pressure at puberty (over 13 years) is strong, and sexual activity was linked to following the example set by girlfriends, ‘fitting in the crowd’ and being popular among their peers. Girls’ sexual activity did not appear to be strongly tied to having children to prove or claim womanhood. Indeed, many of the girls claimed that pregnancy was a reason NOT to engage in sexual activity and sexual activity in itself, was considered important to the girls once they reached puberty. What is new in this study is that girls feel they have to be sexually active to claim their feminine identity, independent of a desire for children, love or money, and have to lose their virginity to be seen as a “real girl.” These new dimensions have only previously been hinted at in studies of adolescent constructions of gender identity in Jamaica and need further research to be understood more holistically.

### **3.3 Sexual Demands of Men**

Sexual demands of men in the home and community also featured prominently in adolescents’ first initiation into sexual activity. Most boys and girls had their first sexual experience in the home and family, indicating that incest may be widespread. For girls their first sexual experience appears to be primarily with fathers, stepfathers, uncles, cousins and brothers. For boys, it was with older sisters, cousins and possibly female helpers. The dominant role of incest in adolescent sexual behaviour is new as it is not prominent in any earlier studies outlined in the literature review, although it is currently the subject of research by the Bureau for Women’s Affairs. The findings however confirm those from the VIP Baseline Survey, that up to 12% of the young people, girls in particular, felt unsafe from sexual harassment in the home.

The findings indicate that men and boys often pressure girls into sexual activity and both girls and boys raised the issue of girls being forced into having sexual activity. Older women pressuring boys because of their perceived sexual prowess was also raised but this was much less prevalent than adult males pressuring girls.

Competition between older men and younger boys also emerged as an issue with adolescent males feeling that adult males were ‘invading their territory’ which put them at a disadvantage because they lacked comparable financial resources to meet the economic needs of girls.

Underlying male pressure was the concept of men’s “nature.” The specific construction of masculinity that emerged insists that men and boys are sexually active with girls/women. Heterosexual activity is thus not just a norm for masculinity, but central to a man’s identity, for without it he cannot take his place or command respect in society. Boys are exposed to this gender model continuously in the family and community, and in some instances justify rape, incest, battery and force in order to secure their “rightful” place as a man. This idea of man’s nature could also encourage adolescent men to disregard laws around the age of consent, incest

and rape. The findings in this study also confirm earlier studies, particularly those that have focussed carefully on constructions of masculinity. However, little has been done to examine the ways in which the sexual demands of adolescent and adult men violate national laws when it comes to sexual relations with adolescent girls.

### **3.4 Pressure to Meet Economic and Social Needs of Adolescents**

Transactional sex to meet economic and social needs also emerged as a motivating factor for sexual activity, and both girls and boys held this view. This confirms conclusions by Waszak and Wedderburn (2000), Chevannes (2000), Williams (1999), Dunn (2000) de Bruin (2001) about the role of economic factors in determining young people's sexual activity. Among low-income groups, which characterised the three locations, sexual activity emerged as a resource for economic transaction to meet young people's needs to be fed, clothed, educated and "kept up to date with fashion."

### **3.5 Mutual Sexual Attraction Between Adults and Adolescents**

A mutual sexual attraction between young girls and older males was linked to meeting perceived economic needs in exchange for sexual activity. Young girls, had sexual activity with a 'big man' in the community, who was seen as a being able to provide access to money, food, clothes, fashionable items and to a lesser extent, a higher social status and protection. Candidates were adult men or older boys with access to financial resources and who held a strong position in the community. Among these were married men, community dons, drug traffickers and taxi drivers. In return, girls were expected to provide sex.

Mutual sexual attraction between adolescent boys and older women also emerged. Boys were motivated to have sexual activity with older women (and also men) and this was also sometimes based on having access to the position and resources held by these individuals. The findings led to the conclusion that for many girls and some boys, sexuality was perceived as one of the few resources adolescents have to meet their economic and social needs.

In conclusion, peer pressure linked to establishing a perceived sex and gender identity, demands of adult males (and some females) as well as meeting economic and social needs therefore emerged as the main factors motivating adolescents in low socio-economic circumstances to engage in sexual activity. In addition, the mass media also played a role of stimulating adolescents through erotic visual images, music, soap operas and pornographic (blue) movies. However, the media also educated them about sexual health, safe sex and inter-personal relationships, which influenced their own behaviour.

### **3.6 Factors Inhibiting Early Sexual Activity Among Adolescents**

Several factors inhibiting early sexual activity were identified. Adolescent girls and boys spoke of the fear of contracting STI's including HIV/AIDS, being unprepared for pregnancy, not feeling ready, waiting for marriage, following religious teachings, not wanting to lose their virginity (younger girls) and pursuing education goals (boys). Younger girls also cited fear of pain related to sex, fear of being battered and raped and the associated scandal if they got pregnant as well as fear of their parents anger and disappointment. The study also hinted (but did not elaborate on drug use ('snow') among older boys and boys dislike for oral sex as an inhibiting factor.

Other important inhibiting factors included establishing a close communication with parents and their openness to discuss sex. Not surprisingly, mothers emerged as primary sources of information about sexual activity. Their messages to adolescent were clear but with different emphases for girls and boys. The consistent message to girls, was to wait until they are older, avoid pregnancy and disease, practice safe sex. They used fear of losing parental affection and their home as motivators to delay sexual activity. They were not however specific about what to do to deal with the sexual urges adolescents experienced. Boys were consistently encouraged to protect themselves by practising sex. suggesting that they assumed that boys would engage in sexual activity.

### **3.7 Messages and Information Sources**

Primary sources of information and advice to young people about sexual activity included the media, school guidance counsellors, and older family members (parents, aunts, grandparents) and to a lesser extent, the church. The media was primarily cited as a place for messages about sexual activity as pleasure and enjoyment (particularly for men). Guidance counsellors and teachers reinforced the messages given at home to wait, practice safe sex and avoid STIs including HI/AIDS. School counsellors may be sending different messages to girls and boys, telling girls that early sexual activity was wrong and risky, but acceptable for boys once they protected themselves.

The church was far less influential in the young people's lives regarding information about sexual activity and presented certain contradictions for the young people. Less than a half of focus groups mentioned its role and they identified several gaps between beliefs and practice.

The family also gave contradictory messages about sex. Mothers and female family members told girls to wait and protect their bodies from men by not having sex at an early age. Adult males in the family contradicted this message by exerted forced sex on daughters, stepdaughters, and nieces. The clear message was that male family members had sexual access to girls in the family but it should be concealed. Mothers who were in denial or took no action made them co-conspirators.

Regardless of the source, few messages provided **practical coping skills to manage natural sexual urges**, deal with the contradictions and discrepancies between ideals and practice, or adolescents rights to explore and learn about their sexuality in safety. In general these findings confirm themes from previous studies but stress different messages girls receive in the family context. Whereas de Bruin points out that there is often a discrepancy between a mother's message and action, this study suggests that it is the combination of various family members messages and practices - a father's step-father's brother's, as well as the mother's - that could cause confusion.

### **3.8 Messages and Myths on Sexual Health and Abstinence**

The findings confirmed that adolescents seemed knowledgeable of the threat of HIV/AIDS to their well being and want to know more, which could be an inhibiting factor. Younger girls and boys were particularly concerned about the impact of the pandemic and how to deal with it. There was anxiety as they saw evidence of unsafe sex being practised around them and knew that there was no cure or foolproof protection method. They faced the contradiction of the deadly reality of HIV/AIDS and STIs, the reality that sexual activity meant pleasure, enjoyment, and

fun. Further research is needed to fully explore how adolescents made sense of this contradiction in practice, and to conclude whether the “disconnect” or gap between knowledge and practise noted by de Bruin, occurred in the young people’s lives.

Several sexual risks were however identified that need to be addressed. One is that only penetrative sex is risky and given the fact that oral sex appears to be an increasing practice for adolescents there is need for intervention to clarify this myth. The aversion of adult males to condom use has been well documented, coupled with the perception that many adolescent girls are engaged in sexual activities with older men, raises the concern that adolescent girls, despite their awareness of STIs, are at high risk of contracting sexual diseases. This scenario, taken together with the knowledge that HIV/AIDS is more easily transmitted from men to women than vice versa, could help to explain the Ministry of Health’s conclusion that adolescent girls in Jamaica in 2001 have a higher rate of HIV/AIDS than adolescent boys.

This study further indicates that positive messages to wait are inadequate, ineffective and unlikely to positively impact behaviour and practice. Younger adolescents hold the ideal of waiting until they are married and have a house, but in practice other pressure dominate. These include pressure from peers to be seen as “big” and mature, incestuous desires of males in the family, the centrality of sexual activity to masculinity, the demand for sex by boys and men in exchange for material and social benefits, girls need or interest to obtain money or secure popularity. These combine to propel young people into early sexual activity and indicate that it may be very difficult for adolescents to live up to their ideals about sexual relations, irrespective of how hard they are convinced they are right.

*Adolescents awareness of their rights was noticeably absent from their discourse. None seemed aware of the legal age of consent in Jamaica, or that sex among family members violates the law, and only some named forced sex as an illegal act. Programme interventions therefore need to improve their awareness of these issues and encourage delaying sexual activity as a right, rather than fear of the consequences*

### **3.9 Constructions of Gender Identity**

The study underscored the need for greater understanding of gender constructs and their role in adolescent sexual activity. Girls' involvement in transactional sex for economic support, reinforced traditional gender roles of female dependency on males for support. This contradicted messages from home, church, school and the media about what sex should mean in a girl’s life. New constructs of gender identify emerged from the study, particularly that of sexual activity as a defining characteristic of ‘real adolescent femininity’ and sexual activity for pleasure and fun. Other emerging issues related to abstinence, masturbation, sex with other girls, and refusal (saying no to sex) being linked to sexual and gender identity. Gender identity was therefore both heterosexual as well as homosexual.

For boys, establishing masculine identify to themselves and the community was closely linked to heterosexual activity with girls or older women and this identity was reinforced by messages peers, girls at school, the home, school, in the media, but not necessarily the church. Their need to establish this identity, sometimes had to be met through force, which confirm early studies which show how boys and young men relate to girls/women in sexual relations.

### **3.10 Inequalities of Power**

Unequal power relations also contribute to early sexual activity among adolescents. Girls emerged as being very vulnerable and ‘at risk’ on several fronts. They are pressured, forced (especially girls under 16 years), or raped by adult males and boys in the home and community, which indicates an inequality of power between adolescent boys and girls, between adult men and girls. Unequal power relations between adult men and boys for the attention of girls are also an issue.

Young girls under the 16 years age of consent that are most ‘at risk’, vulnerable and in need of empowerment and support to survive in the sexual jungle described in the study. The over-16s came across as more secure and assured of themselves, more able to manage the sexual world in which they live. However, girls of all ages are vulnerable because of inequalities of power between men and women in society, the spread of HIV/AIDS, men’s well-documented dislike for condoms, girls’ perceived economic dependence on men, as well as evidence of the high incidence of sexual harassment and abuse reported. These issues raise the question of how much power girls can exercise in sexual activity and relationships with men, to either refuse sex or to insist on safe sex. Interventions must therefore empower young girls and challenge gender inequality between males and females.

### **3.11 Geographical Differences in Responses**

The main differences in responses across geographical areas were in Montego Bay where the boys provided lengthy and detailed responses about sexual activity and the girls focused on transactional sex to keep up with the latest trends in fashion and appearance. The Clarks Town groups stood out for their extensive mention of oral sex and provided fewer reasons for delaying sexual activity. In Maxfield Park the issue of men’s sexual activity with boys was more pronounced, as was the silence on the subject of HIV/AIDS. The youngest boys and girls (10-12 years) were less affected by peer-pressure than in the other two locations for this age group.

## 4. Recommendations

Based on the confirmation of findings from the literature review and the additional insights provided by this study, several programme interventions are recommended to delay adolescent sexual activity and improve coping strategies. These revolve around using a rights-based to programming, adolescent participation in interventions, public education, training, research and strengthening the legal and institutional framework to support children's rights. In addressing these issues, it is strongly recommended that UNICEF and UNFPA take account of what programmes already exist and seek to complement rather than duplicate these programmes which are more well-established. Several local initiatives have been cited in the 'Introduction' and these (as well as others) are natural partners for supporting programmes on adolescent sexuality. Against this background, a **partnership** approach should therefore be used to implement the following recommendations. This means that the information should be shared and used to enhance existing programmes where possible.

### 4.1 Promote Education and Enforcement of Children's' Rights

Encourage all agencies working on adolescent reproductive health to adopt a Rights- based Approach to Programme Interventions. Use the rights of children and adolescents as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Recommendations of the Caribbean Youth Summit and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW as relevant Action Plans as guiding principles. UNICEF and UNFPA should continue to **encourage early enactment of the Child Care and Protection Act to support to this process as this legislation embodies several laws to protect children's rights. This strengthens the policy framework for programme interventions.**

### 4.2 Ensure Adolescent Participation In Solutions

Organise a forum for adolescents to review the study's findings and recommendations and to establish strategies and priorities for interventions. This will help to redress the limited involvement of adolescents in the design and conduct of the current study.

### 4.3 Establish a Zero Tolerance Public Education Campaign

Target the public and government agencies and invite the latter to a policy forum to develop strategies to strengthen institutional mechanisms, to improve information sharing, monitoring, reporting as well as the conviction of offenders who violate the sexual rights of children and adolescents. Publish and disseminate copies and summaries of the study to adolescents, the media and agencies to build greater awareness, dialogue and revised interventions.

### 4.4 Establish Legal Literacy Programmes for Adolescents.

In a user-friendly format, inform adolescents about their legal rights (Child Care and Protection Act, the Juveniles Act, the Offences Against the Person Act, the Incest Act). This would empower them, to be more confident in exerting control over their bodies, and better informed to develop a peer culture and discourse that allows sexual activity to be seen as attached to rights, as opposed to "wrongs." Such a programme should also include assertiveness training in negotiating demands from adult males (particularly); confidence building to speak out and report on sexual abuse, especially incest which has emerged as a major factor influencing early adolescent sexual activity and violence (including rape).

#### **4.5 Develop Child Rights Education Programmes for Adult Males:**

This would inform males about the CRC and their role in protecting children and adolescent girls (and boys); remind them that incest, rape and pedophilia, are illegal and violate the rights of children; and remind them that the age of consensual sex in Jamaica is 16 years and violation is punishable by law.

**4.6 Develop Communication Training on Adolescent Sexuality: Collaborate** with the Association of Guidance Counsellors, the Jamaica Council of Churches, Parenting Education , the media and Family Life Education Specialists to train adults to be more effective in counselling and communicating with adolescents about sexual activity. The programme should: establish children’s right to sexual information; clarify existing myths about sexual health, establish that “its OK to Say No” and share practical coping strategies to help younger adolescents (especially girls) to manage sexual urges associated with the onset of puberty. They should be equipped to communicate, comfortably discuss and organise education and sensitisation programmes that focus on:

- a) The positive aspects of abstinence and masturbation for adolescents under 16 years with special attention to the boys;
- b) Sex in all its forms (penetrative, oral, homosexual and heterosexual)
- c) Sex for pleasure vs reproduction, the dangers and variations of sexual activity;
- d) Parental responsibilities
- e) The role of church, school and media in shaping adolescents views on sexuality.

#### **4.7 Expand Media Messages and Programming on Adolescent Sexuality**

The study confirmed the important role of the media in shaping sexual identity and behaviour. Convene a strategic meeting with the Broadcasting Commission (regulation), the Advertisers Association and Media Managers/Owners to solicit their support in providing programming that promotes and protects children’s rights. Share current thinking on managing the influence of media which includes banning programmes considered to be against social norms and values vs ensuring diversification and pluralisation of programmes to broaden the range of ideas and possibilities. (See for example, the work of the Media Education Foundation USA and the Women’s Media Watch, Jamaica). Encourage adoption of the latter position as this could lead to an emphasis on the production and transmission of television programmes that counter current stereotypical and dominant ideas about sexual activity and present constructive and positive images of adolescent sexuality.

#### **4.8 Encourage Sustained Poverty Reduction Programmes within Poor Communities.**

Share the findings with agencies involved in the Government’s poverty alleviation programme, to increase awareness of the consequences of poverty emerging from the study and the need to improve targeting of poverty interventions to protect children’s rights. This would respond to the findings that money was a primary motivating factor of many adolescent girls to enter into sexual activity with adult males. Encourage public and private sector involvement in providing opportunities for work-study programmes to provide girls as well as boys in junior and high school with opportunities to legitimately earn their own lunch and spending money without interfering with their education.

#### **4.9 Gender Identity Training**

Establish a wide-scale public programme targeted at boys and men about alternative conceptions of masculinity and at girls about alternative constructs of femininity to counter the identity issues emerging from the study. *The Male Identify Programme* should reinforce children's rights, examine the male "need" for heterosexual activity to establish identity; challenge the role of man as provider; the negative and harmful impact of the use of force, violence and rape within the sexual act and unequal power relations between men and women. Support should be given to FAMPLAN Jamaica in St Ann's Bay to expand their programme designed for boys and men on gender identity and sexuality.

The Female Identity Programme should reinforce children and women's rights, provide constructive role models of "success" for woman, that establishes their economic, social, political and domestic independence as citizens. It should seek to reverse the dominant identity of their economic and social dependence on men, the need to establish femininity through sexual activity and discourage the use of sexual activity as an economic resource.

#### **4.10 Emerging Areas for Further Research**

**a) Research on Incest:** The seeming 'incest epidemic' implied by the findings and confirmation from the literature review that relatively little research has been done in this area, further research and action are needed to address this issue. It is strongly recommended that this be done in collaboration with the Bureau for Women's Affairs which is currently conducting research on incest and has produced public education materials. Breaking the silence on sex in the home should include research on incest in all socio-economic groups and its impact on the health and happiness of adolescent girls. Interventions should include support for young victims

#### **b) Research on Adolescent Gender Identify and Sexuality**

This study indicates that while there does not appear to be a great difference between boys and men about the meanings of sexuality in their gender identity, a generation gap exists between adult and younger women. Adolescent girls gender identity and the role that sexuality plays in that construction appears to be quite ambiguous and complex. These constructions require much more attention, to better understand early sexual activity for Jamaican youth. **Future research should also seek to understand more fully, the influence of religious beliefs, popular and street culture music, fashion and role models.**

#### **c) Research on the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Adolescent Sexual Activity**

The impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on adolescent sexual activity; adolescents engaging in sexual intercourse as a potentially fatal activity, their idea of sex as fun and pleasure and broader social ideals, needs to be more clearly understood. Understanding how adolescents make sense of this difference in their social and sexual life and how they negotiate this difficult terrain, can provide insight into helping them make more informed decisions about sexual activity.

**Training adolescent researchers to be involved in conducting such research was agreed in the 1998 Caribbean Regional Action Plan on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights and should be implemented.**

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## Appendices: Tables 1-6

**Table 1. The main reasons given by girls for young people to have sex, by focus group.**

	10-12			13-15			16-19		
	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT
For children	X	X	X	X		X			X
For money/ “nice things” /food	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fun/pleasure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Curiosity	X		X	X			X		X
Boy pressure/ force/rape	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Lose virginity/ for experience	X		X					X	
For love			X		X	X			X
Peer pressure	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Physical urges	X	X	X					X	

**Table 2. The main reasons given by boys for young people to have sex, by focus group.**

	10-12			13-15			16-19		
	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT
For children	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Fun/pleasure/ enjoyment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
For love	X				X	X	X		X
Money/food/ material things	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
Peer pressure/ to impress/ to feel big	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Force/rape	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Marriage		X					X		
Curiosity	X		X						
Physical urges				X	X	X	X		X

**Table 3. Sexual partners (for the first-time sex), by focus group: girls**

	10-12			13-15			16-19		
	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT
Father	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Mother's friend/ stepfather		X			X	X		X	X
Man with girls	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Relatives	X		X		X	X		X	
Boyfriend/ first love			X	X	X	X	X		
Brother	X				X	X	X		
Boys		X			X				X
Self				X	X				
Woman with boys	X								
Other girls				X					

**Table 4. Sexual partners (for the first-time sex), by focus group: boys**

	10-12			13-15			16-19		
	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT
Relatives with girls	X		X	X					
Men with girls	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Father with girls		X	X	X			X	X	X
Stepfather with girls		X					X		
Men with boys		X			X				
Girls	X		X	X					X
Girlfriend			X	X				X	X
Sister				X					
Helper				X					
Woman with boys					X		X	X	

**Table 5. Reasons given by girls for adolescents to not engage in sexual activities, by focus group**

	10-12			13-15			16-19		
	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT
Fear of STIs/ AIDS	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
To keep virginity	X	X		X					
Fear of pregnancy	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Don't want to let down parents		X	X						
Waiting for marriage	X		X	X	X			X	
Not right time/ not ready	X			X		X		X	
Religion					X		X	X	
Fear of pain scandal, oral sex, battery				X			X	X	X
For education				X					
Fear of parents				X				X	
No opportu- nity				X		X	X		

**Table 6. Reasons given by boys for adolescents to not engage in sexual activities, by focus group.**

	10-12			13-15			16-19		
	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT	MoBay	MaxP	CT
Fear of AIDS/ diseases	X	X	X	X		X	X		X
Fear of parents	X								
Virginity		X			X				
For education		X					X	X	
Not ready		X		X			X		X
Religion			X		X		X	X	
Fear of pregnancy	X		X	X		X	X		
No opportunity				X					
Fear of men (among girls)				X					
Self control/ self respect/ strength	X			X	X				
No urges/ no use/no curiosity				X		X	X		