MOVING THE AGENDA FOR CHILDREN FORWARD IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

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OVERVIEW

The UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean held its End of Cycle Review Meeting, under the theme of ‘Moving the Agenda for Children Forward in the Eastern Caribbean’, at the Sherbourne Conference Centre from 5–6 December 2007. It was attended by government and civil society representatives from the 10 countries that are part of its programme of cooperation, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and various United Nations agencies, as well as secondary school students from Barbados and youth from Barbados, Grenada and St. Kitts and Nevis. The meeting was intended to provide an opportunity to engage in dialogue to discuss key issues that affect children in the region and explore new ways of working in the upcoming 2008–2011 cycle. It mainly took the form of panel discussions.
OPENING CEREMONY

Chair: Mr. Kirk Humphrey, Director of Social Policy, Research and Planning, Barbados

The opening ceremony featured remarks by Ms Karin Sham Poo, UNICEF Special Envoy to the Caribbean; the Honourable Mr. Sam Condor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Youth, Social and Community Development, and Gender Affairs, St. Kitts and Nevis; Mr. Hamilton Lashley, M.P., Advisor on Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Barbados; and Mr. Tom Olsen, representative of the UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean.

The keynote address, entitled “Barbados’ Vision for the Children”, was delivered by the Reverend Joseph Atherley, Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s Office, Barbados. He called for the creation of a positive culture of child rearing in the region where children’s rights were respected, saying that a socially just environment was needed for children to develop their talents to meet the demands of society and the competitive world. He stated that the country’s vision for children was captured in the Barbados National Strategic Plan (BNSP), which saw the island becoming a prosperous society over the next 20 years through government programmes (particularly education) that protected and nurtured children and youth. Reverend Atherley also spoke of some of the problems facing young people, which included HIV and AIDS.
PANEL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Chair: Dr. Rosina Wiltshire, Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Panellists: Dr. Henry Hinds, Head of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean Education Reform; Dr. Halima Saadia Kassim, Deputy Programme Manager, Caribbean Community (CARICOM); and Ms Roberta Clark, Regional Programme Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Following up on the UN Secretary General’s Study on Violence against Children, which was presented to the UN General Assembly in October 2006, this session looked at violence in school, violence in families and communities, and gender-based violence. The Chair said that the study had shown that systemic violence against children was frequently the norm and that sexual violence against boys was missing from many legislative frameworks and therefore not seen as a crime. She noted that there was an acceptance of domestic violence in the Caribbean, probably linked to the brutal history of slavery.
VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS
Dr. Hinds presented a study conducted on school discipline in 2004–2005 which targeted students, teachers and principals in nine countries in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The study revealed, among other findings, the need for clear and comprehensive school policies; additional resources, especially for counsellors to guide school children; and improved school environments. Additionally, it concluded that facilities were lacking to appropriately handle student misbehaviour and that students were often victims of interpersonal strife due to the establishment of social ranks, especially those created by bullying. The survey also found that teachers were less aware of the severity of the problems than students, who saw misbehaviour as one response of an individual to his/her environment. Although corporal punishment was still prevalent in many schools, the study concluded that teachers generally preferred a remedial solution to discipline problems.

Outputs of the study
Dr. Hinds said following up on the study a counselling handbook was developed and some countries were helped to streamline their counselling systems. However, he said more counsellors were urgently required and teachers also needed to be fully trained. He said a policy framework, which identified the need for students to be on discipline committees in the schools, had also been developed. In addition, the following recommendations were put forward to OECS Ministers of Education:

- Provide support at the national level and at the school level
- Improve the capacity of principals and teachers to effectively manage discipline, using strategies over and above the administration of corporal punishment
- Ensure adequate teacher recruitment, training and professional orientation
- Develop and enforce clear policies
- Improve collaboration between schools and Ministries of Education
- Develop special programmes that would avoid the negative effects of exclusion
- Improve the school and classroom environments
- Improve supervisory practices within schools.

Suggestions from the floor
The discussion covered issues such as friendships at school between children and teachers and the need for mutual respect. Suggestions were also made that, being aware of the strong influence which peer groups possess, it was important to learn how to use them in a positive way. It was suggested that teachers be trained to deal with disruptive students and that parents needed to be involved beyond the PTA meeting.

VIOLENCE IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
Dr. Kassim provided a definition of violence and its determinants such as poverty, gender, power and status, as well as the physical and psychological consequences. She spoke to the fact that countries’ commitments with regard to child rights and institutional systems needed to be reviewed and monitored and there was a need to develop preventive measures and engage children in decision-making rather than focusing on reacting to situations. She said that people needed to reflect on the causes of violence, such as power differentials between women and men, children and parents. She also suggested that research was needed into “cyber-bullying” and how cell-phones were being used to transmit pornography.

Strategies and recommendations
Dr. Kassim identified a number of strategies for change, including a child protection register; law reform; retraining lawyers and judges; public advocacy; children’s budgets; a cultural shift in the perception of the child; population-based surveys; and participation by children. She also made some national and regional recommendations, which included:
• Improve legislative and social policy frameworks and processes
• Identify and put in place more cohesive preventative practices
• Strengthen social work by improving methodologies, protocols and intra- and inter-agency coordination, and establishing better collaboration between government agencies and civil society organizations
• Improve the standards and care practices in alternative care options for children, including foster care and institutional care, with more research and monitoring of kinship care
• Improve support to parents and families to care for children
• Improve monitoring, information systems, evaluations and case management.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
Ms Clarke said the Caribbean had a history of violence, oppression and exploitation and she noted a current permissive value system on the use of violence. She said that there was little acknowledgement or discussion about sexual abuse of children or consideration of the effect of “licks” on children who had insecure families, or the context of children who were presenting behavioural problems. She argued that it was important to think about these issues instead of simply blaming children for discipline problems.

An issue of power
Ms Clarke said indifference to child abuse was even more problematic in terms of gender. She described the society as male-dominated and built around both male (strong, controlling) and female (soft, demure) stereotypes that were perpetuated throughout childhood. This contributed to a high percentage of women across the region reporting their first sexual experience as unwanted. Among the recommendations she made were:

• Develop a culture of peace in the Caribbean that emphasized good child rearing
• Encourage more paternal care and positive peer-influences
• Ensure a more positive role by governments in child development (e.g., strengthening of the justice system and allocating resources for social work);
• Establish an ombudsman for children
• Introduce community child-watch schemes and train child monitors at the community level to be used for interventions.

The UNIFEM official also said that to tackle child abuse in the Caribbean, it had to be recognized as systemic and dealt with from a power perspective. She said for as long as there were men who would not be refused when they wanted to have sex, there would be abuse. She said the problem would continue while there was gender inequality.

Child prostitution and abuse by older men
The discussion brought up issues of child prostitution, with the citing of research that showed parents sending their children to other islands to have paid sex. The importance of an integrated web of response was highlighted, with immigration controls enforced and officers trained in sexual abuse and exploitation. The suggestion that some sexual abuse of girls aged 13-14 was “consensual” led to calls for investigating why older men were soliciting such young girls and what type of environment caused the girls to accept their advances.
PANEL ON CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILDREN

Chair/Panellist: Ms Lara Vu, Private Sector Division, UNICEF Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

Panellist: Ms Debra Johnson, Head of Corporate and Internal Communications, First Caribbean International Bank, Regional Headquarters

CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE OF CORPORATE AGENDAS

Ms Vu said that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was a way for companies to give back to the community and to their employees while assisting in moving the children’s agenda forward. She stated that in order to achieve development goals, including the MDGs, it was important for UN agencies such as UNICEF to work closely with the corporate sector. She said while many businesses had used the idea of CSR programmes in the past as “halo effects” to cover up their unethical practices, nowadays corporations were responding to “ethical consumers” who would not deal with businesses that had ties to child labour, environmental degradation and the like.
With the emphasis on children, Ms Vu suggested that a better term than CSR would be the 3 Cs – Corporate and Consumer Social Responsibility for Children – so that both ends (business and consumer) of the corporate machine could contribute to the overall solution. She added that the point was not to focus on business as such, but on business as it was relevant to children. Ms Vu also noted that while UNICEF was usually approached by the corporations, proactive thinking now suggested that the agency approach them and even set up a CSR division. In this regard she recommended that going forward efforts be made to:

- Educate the private sector on the plight of children around the world (through policies such as the National Pact for a World Fit for Children);
- Merge the worlds of child development and companies;
- Put CSR models to work using the successful ones to enact more evidence-based policies.

Engaging the private sector in youth development
The discussion brought up the need to distinguish between CSR for gain and CSR for good. It was suggested that corporations needed to be more engaged with the development of youth and less concerned with how they could make a profit in the process. It was also put forward that there was a need to look to how programmes that assisted vulnerable sectors could be marketed. It was noted that often the private sector did not know how to spend its money, but if models were presented in an integrated way such a challenge would be welcome.

FIRST CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL BANK’S CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY
Ms Johnson noted that although First Caribbean International Bank (FCIB) was a relatively new institution, it had been active in community/social development and had a number of core programmes that advanced CSR. She said these were directed at children, students and the community as a whole. In this regard she said that, as part of its Career First programme, FCIB provided young people with an interest in banking with the necessary training and it also nurtured entrepreneurship in young people through a programme that partnered with Caribbean youth entrepreneur trusts. In the area of product development, the FCIB executive noted that there was a Sure Start programme (junior saving programme) that encouraged financial responsibility in young people. Discussions had also been opened on how UNICEF and FCIB could work together on several areas of education such as curriculum reform, she said.

Ms Johnson revealed that the Bank had a policy not to lend capital financing to any project that would be harmful to the environment. In addition, the Bank was actively involved in ensuring that its employees, many of whom were women, enjoyed an acceptable work/life balance. There was a memorandum of understanding with the University of the West Indies (UWI), as well as with the University of The Bahamas, for the development of scholarships, debates, case writing, etc. Ms Johnson said there was also an internal FCIB programme that allowed department units to select a school/community and, with a budget, enter into and improve/further develop the area.
PANEL ON GENERATING AND SUSTAINING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE CARIBBEAN – THE ROLE OF THE UWI

Chair: Professor Leo Mosely, Deputy Principal, UWI Cave Hill Campus, Barbados.

Panellists: Professor Christine Barrow, Professorial Fellow, the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES); Dr. Jennifer Obidah, Director, Education Evaluation Centre, School of Education; and Dr. Letnie Rock, Head of the Department of Sociology and Social Work (all from the UWI Cave Hill Campus)
Professor Mosely stated that the UWI was very concerned with the agenda of the child and its project on child support, poverty and gender equality was the largest of its kind in the Commonwealth. All UWI faculties – Law, Medicine, Humanities and Applied Sciences – could address the issue of child welfare. There was also a summer school for young children at the UWI run every year by student volunteers during the summer hiatus.

**RESEARCH AND POLICY FOR THE REALIZATION OF CHILD RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT**

Professor Barrow said the relationship between research and policy could be improved since there was currently a “disconnect” between the two, resulting in idealistic, non user-friendly research and off-target policies that led to wasted resources. She said research tended to be carried out for publication in scholarly journals and as such was theoretical and conceptual rather than practical and policy focused. She said that the UWI was ready to forge links between the university, UNICEF, the private sector and others in order to bridge this gap between research and policy.

**Professor Barrow suggested that there were three central points to consider:**

- Remodelling the process. Everyone involved needed to work together throughout the process and communicate on ways to translate the findings into policy-making so that research began to be produced that was user friendly.
- Establishing a special protocol for research on children. Participatory methodology that involved children in doing research – as opposed to seeing them as objects of research – was important but could bring to light hidden and unpleasant truths concerning child abuse. Special ethical protocols on how to handle such cases were necessary.
- Changing the type and quality of research. Most research had looked at the “what” rather than answering the “why” question. While there was a fairly good picture of children in the Caribbean, the “why” question on the situation of children needed to be asked if effective policies were to be developed.

**Changing the culture**

Prof. Barrow said there were three main reasons for child abuse/corporal punishment: normalcy, with it seen as part of the culture, as evidenced in language such as “lashes” or “licks like peas”; fear/apprehension of doing corporal punishment differently; and cultural construction, with children portrayed as victims or little devils, as objects rather than subjects of rights. She said that until it was discovered why these stereotypes continued to exist, the situation of children would not change. Prof. Barrow opined that while corporal punishment was seen as a privileged right of adults, in fact it was a denial of child rights and there was a need for cultural changes in practice and to convince parents and others that alternative methods worked and did not leave scars. Prof. Barrow also suggested enhancing the office of the ombudsman to accommodate child issues.

**THE ROLE OF THE UWI IN MONITORING AND EVALUATING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS**

Dr. Obidah described how the Education Evaluation Centre (EEC) had been established, as well as its current primary role and mission. She outlined the components that were being monitored and evaluated at that time, including civil works, which dealt mainly with the infrastructure of school buildings; information and communication technology; human resources, mainly teacher training; curriculum reform; and student academic achievement at both primary and secondary students in Barbados. She gave a brief explanation of each of these components and presented a comparison between two top primary and secondary schools and two other schools, where the top schools received better teachers, to show that if the focus was to be on preparing students then there was a need to get more prepared teachers.
Dr. Obidah said the crowning achievement for the EEC was the Academic Achievement Report, which was being proposed as a model for education. She said the EduTech investment could only be maximized through empirically based research and for that there needed to be a culture of information gathering. However, she questioned whether there was a willingness to ask the hard questions that were necessary to make the educational system better for all children.

**THE ROLE OF THE UWI IN BUILDING SOCIAL CAPACITY FOR CHILD PROTECTION**

Dr. Rock presented the UWI’s mission and vision and briefly covered its strategic planning. She also spoke to the fact that the university had the potential to influence and share information with the youth to assist them in making informed choices. In this regard, students were requested to read the different national policies as well as international agreements regarding child welfare, participate in programmes and projects and carry out research that supported child well-being. She asked UNICEF and other UN offices to invite faculty and students of the UWI to meetings such as the forum in order to help keep them better informed.

Dr. Rock said the curriculum of the UWI had grown tremendously over time to reflect a number of degree offerings in all faculties. Courses had been designed to help students address issues related to the family such as abuse, divorce, foster care and adoption. She said these students were also taught the importance of changing community views on abuse and neglect, to examine policies on child welfare issues and to be advocates on behalf of children. The University was also trying to plan and develop policies that could be implemented in the region, she said.

Dr Rock said over the years social work students had developed several community plans to help disadvantaged youth. The Caribbean Internship Programme allowed students from the three campuses to participate in projects that helped children in communities. Students had also completed research in many areas including issues affecting children, youth and families. She stated that the UWI needed to become a leading institution on child protection that was internationally recognized and in turn help move the child protection agenda forward. To make this a reality she welcomed collaboration with all UWI campuses, the private sector, regional governments and civil society.
Ms Niloufar Pourzand, Deputy Representative for the UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, highlighted some of the key achievements made in the programme cycle just ended:

- Development of four draft model family law bills for the OECS region with OECS, UNIFEM, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and other partners
- Development of policies and delivery models in the area of early childhood development
- Knowledge base for children enhanced through various studies including World Fit for
the Caribbean Child, Violence in Schools, Vulnerability Studies, a Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, and a social mapping CD with over 500 studies and reports on children, adolescents and women in the sub-region

- The introduction and adaptation of DevInfo under CARICOM leadership;
- The launch of HelenInfo (a national adaptation of DevInfo) in St. Lucia
- Initiation of a pilot project on Alternative Disciplinary Practices in Barbados, to be scaled up in other countries of the region
- Enhanced knowledge of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the concept of a protective environment for children among various stakeholders.

She also listed lessons learnt, including:

- More focused, strategic and inter-sectoral interventions were needed for the achievement of greater and more sustainable results for children at national, sub-regional and regional levels.
- Strategic partnerships and participatory processes needed to be further strengthened, especially with child and adolescent-centred organizations.
- The office capacity in early childhood development and behaviour change communication needed to be strengthened to fully respond to the programme goals/objectives.

Ms Pourzand revealed that the new cycle would have one overarching Programme, called “Social Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation” with four distinct sub-areas:

- Social Policy, Partnerships and Advocacy for Children’s Rights;
- Child Protection;
- Early Childhood Development; and
- HIV Prevention and Lifeskills.

She outlined the overall goal of the Programme, which is to contribute to the realization of children’s rights by fostering an enabling and protective environment, reducing children’s vulnerability to social risks and enhancing their participation.

Ms Pourzand said cross-cutting priority themes for intervention in the new programme are gender mainstreaming, HIV/AIDS and emergency preparedness.

She drew attention to several key partnerships that would be further developed, including with national governments of the sub-region, CARICOM, OECS, a variety of sub-regional organizations, other UN sister agencies, various donors, civil society organizations, universities, faith-based organizations and the media.
PANEL ON SOCIAL POLICY FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

Chair: Ms Amory Hamilton-Henry, Coordinator, Support to Poverty Assessment and Reduction in the Caribbean (SPARC), UNDP.

Panellists: Ms Francillia Salomon, Sociological Data Capture Project, Ministry of Economics Affairs, National Development and Public Service, St. Lucia; and Mr. Richard Carter, Social Development Adviser, UK Department for International Development (DFID) Caribbean

Ms Hamilton-Henry opened the session by giving a brief overview of SPARC, which she described as a multi-donor initiative in collaboration with CARICOM that had emerged as a result of the need for capacity building in social data generation and analysis and poverty-monitoring capabilities with respect to the Caribbean.

(from left) Ms Francillia Salomon, Chair Ms Amory Hamilton-Henry and panelist Mr. Richard Carter.
**DEVIINFO TO THE RESCUE**

Ms Salomon presented the software DevInfo, which was used in data analysis and monitoring. It was based on UNICEF’s ChildInfo and had been further developed with the cooperation of the UN system. As an advanced database management system, it can be utilized to keep track of commitments and subsequent progress towards human development goals. In moving forward, it was intended to develop specific indicators that would then enable its various users to advance the cause of children. She said that DevInfo:

- Disseminates data effectively using tables, charts and thematic maps
- Is a monitoring tool that was a free and user-friendly means of allowing agencies to continuously share vital information
- Is a networking tool, and as such allowed agencies to easily export data by using a (Microsoft) Excel template to facilitate a variety of fields to be populated and returned
- Aims at providing information to policy makers, social workers, families and stakeholders
- Moves the children’s agenda forward – this objective being the basis for its creation.

A local adaptation of DevInfo – the HelenInfo project – had been developed in St. Lucia. At present, this housed information on the traditional sectors of the economy, in addition to data in areas of special importance such as child vulnerability, youth and sports and education. Ms Salomon explained that DevInfo could protect sensitive information for specific users because it was possible to define who could have access to the data and block other users. In addition, DevInfo had a component of metadata that offered the option to define ages and also provided standardization so that data could be compared across countries and nations.

**SOCIAL POLICY AND YOUTH IN THE CARIBBEAN – MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF RIGHTS**

Mr. Richard Carter highlighted four imperatives for effective youth policies: social – where youth bore a disproportionate burden; political – where young people could feel marginalized; cultural – which was an area where he noted that young people could challenge the status quo; and demographic. He said that social policy in relation to the youth had generally followed a “social welfarist” approach; however, the model that was now being proposed was an assets-based or “developmentalist” approach, which had the advantage of recognizing the human resource potential that young people represented. However, he pointed to certain challenges that this approach faced, including:

- A tendency towards traditionalism
- A possibility of the proliferation of “youth experts”
- The sometimes low profile of ministries of youth
- An overly economistic approach to development
- The need for an imperative of visibility
- The possibility of compartmentalized social programming
- The threat of inadequate resources.

**Tapping the unrealized potential of youth**

Mr. Carter pointed to the largely unrealized potential of youth and stated that, despite some social problems, the fact remained that young people represented a considerable societal asset/investment whose potential/returns were currently not being tapped or realized. With this in mind, he described it as an important question whether small developing economies such as those in the Caribbean could afford a situation where millions of dollars worth of investment were lying idle and outside the boundaries of national socio-economic development. His opinion was that the way forward in those circumstances was to get young people to fulfil their potential through research/data-driven policy formulation; youth empowerment for policy development; shifting the
terms of engagement with young people; developing and implementing national youth policies; and effectively illustrating the ‘costs’ of failure to implement a youth policy.

**From rights and responsibilities to influencing the government**

In the discussion, Mr. Carter said that the participatory model seen in the development of the youth policy in the Antigua model was the type of approach that he was proposing. He also agreed with the point made by several participants that it was not possible to have a rights-based approach without also having responsibilities. For example, if a school was built for children, then they had to be responsible for its care. When asked how to convince governments of the importance of taking a certain course of action, Mr. Carter offered two suggestions. The first was what he called a very compelling economic argument detailing the result of no action or improper action, since research showed that a failure to develop proper policy would threaten growth and development in the Caribbean. Hence policy makers should be informed about the financial gain of investing in young people. The second was to utilize the power that young people presented. He said that a large proportion of un-aligned votes in the Caribbean were those of young people, and if they could organize around an agenda they would be a strong force that policy makers and politicians would have to listen to.
PANEL ON SUPPORTING CHILDREN’S OPTIMAL DEVELOPMENT: BIRTH THROUGH ADOLESCENCE

Chair: Ms Judy Williams, General Secretary, Grenada Community Development Agency

Panellists: Dr. Jackie Bird, Paediatrician and Manager, National Child and Adolescent Health Programme of the Ministry and Human Services, St. Lucia; and Dr. Henry Hinds, Head, OECS Education Reform Unit, St. Lucia.
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SUPPORTING OPTIMAL DEVELOPMENT OF ST. LUCIA’S CHILDREN
Dr. Bird described optimal development as a complex, idiosyncratic process in which factors such as inherited physical traits, innate character, environmental quality, intellectual stimulation and educational experiences came into play. Many children were at risk and faced food insecurity, but they are not visible to the existing child health services in St. Lucia, which were often complex and confusing and involved “turf protection” barriers, etc. within the system.

He said the expected result of the new strategic plan was to improve the situation. The various problems had been discussed and it had been decided that a new approach should be tried. It had also been decided that the team that needed to tackle this was best placed in the Ministry of Health. There was an attempt to redesign community child health services where the core team was led by patients and family rather than by health-care personnel; this was an extension of the basic life-caring services. Nurses went into the community to find children who required care. Staff had been trained; however, the need to refresh or retrain more personnel had also been recognized.

Dr. Bird explained that a healthy home was one where there were attitudes of partnership and mutual respect, and parents represented a “reliable ally” for their children. She also emphasized that there was a need for a “perfect marriage” between primary health care and secondary specialist services. She noted that if everyone worked together, and all segments of the Caribbean were reached, then the sum of total benefits to be derived would outweigh those of the individual segments.

CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION TO CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT
Dr. Hinds described learning as a social and cultural phenomenon that was influenced by both the family and the neighbourhood. Language was also an important influence on thought processes. He said that a child came to the school environment bringing local cultural ideals and values that were, in effect, contextual. Moving between the home and school environments had implications in terms of how issues such as class size, the need for fair and consistent sanctions, and rules/codes of behaviour were handled.

Dr. explained the impacts that a crowded classroom had on both the teacher and student. He noted that for teachers these included issues surrounding immediacy – the teacher “must” respond at once; simultaneity – many events in the classroom occurred at the same time; and spontaneity – there was no advanced warning of a classroom event/child’s behaviour. The consequences for students were also explored. These included the development of a culture of waiting; the denial of desire – waiting in vain; increased interruption and segmentation of the school day; and the phenomenon of isolation – learning to be alone in a crowded world.

He pointed out that important norms were learnt in school very early in life. These included norms of independence, achievement, universalism and the fundamentals of cooperation (such as common goals/outcomes, trust and respect, leadership recognition and the sharing of skills and knowledge). He was also of the opinion that Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) qualified as a core subject as this approach embodied the practice of key thinking skills as a foundational component. In addition, he noted that on the transition from school to the workplace, many children did not know anything of what happened in the work environment. Schools were often accused of doing a poor job of preparation, and children sometimes made unrealistic career choices. There was thus a need for a stronger system of career guidance.

The problem of bored and lonely children
The discussion noted as disheartening the fact that many children were lonely, bored and not seeing the relevance of school. Data collected from a hotline in Trinidad and Tobago that was very popular with children between the ages of 10–12, as well as teens, showed that youth were calling because they were bored or alone. Approximately 2 per cent of the calls were related to suicidal feelings. The implications of early child initiation in sexual activity and incest were also being investigated.
Early learning and the family
Another issue raised was the importance of the early learning period (birth to 3 years old). It was suggested that attention was not being paid to what happened to children in the home and the community during those formative years and how they could be equipped with tools to make them more rounded in their development. It might be too late to assist young people when they had passed that age. In response, Ms Clarke made an appeal to reinsert the family into discussions on children, noting that the family should not be bypassed in child-centred policies. She said the government, NGOs, etc. usually did not intervene in families until things went really wrong and evidence of abuse or exploitation came to light. Then the child was removed from the family, which continued to break down. She pointed out that the only time the family had been mentioned in the forum was in terms of violence. She said that it was necessary to work with families, recognizing their strengths and developing policies to increase those strengths and tackle the challenges.
PANEL ON REFORMS IN LEGISLATION, PROGRAMMES AND PRACTICE: WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

Chair: Mr. Richard Williams, Chief Magistrate, Turks and Caicos Islands

Panellists: Ms Jacqueline Sealy-Burke, Director, Legal Air Counselling Clinic, Grenada; and Dr. Adele Jones, Director, Centre for Applied Childhood Studies, Huddersfield University, England.
Mr. Williams said that judges needed tools such as adequate legislation and infrastructure and lawyers who specialized in family law to enable them to do their work. It was vital that legislation was put forward and for there to be a network in place. Currently, the legislature failed to prioritize child support, and it was important that legislation changed mindsets.

**REFORMS IN LEGISLATION, PROGRAMMES AND PRACTICE: WHERE SHOULD WE BE HEADED?**

Ms Sealy-Burke identified five thematic concerns that compromised the ability of the region to deal effectively with children’s issues:

- Fragmentation and deficiency of the law as it related to children, which had seriously compromised the efficiency of the overall child protection system.
- Inadequate or non-existent legislation specifically designed for the care and protection of children. Frameworks were not designed to address detection, treatment and rehabilitation of child abuse.
- Absence or inefficiency of policies and protocols for ensuring the safety and well-being of children, so that efforts were not well coordinated thus leading to gaps.
- Inadequate social service intervention and general infrastructural support for children and family in difficult circumstances, who required access to a wide range of services (specialized medical or legal interventions, family court, etc.).
- Poor or non-existent data collection, which meant that the nature of the challenges confronted was unclear.

**Inadequacy and deficiency of the laws**

Ms Sealy-Burke explained that legislation was noticeably absent or not comprehensive across the Commonwealth. Where it did exist, it was fragmented or disbursed. For example, access to legal remedies in child protection cases in Barbados was frustrated because there were three relevant pieces of legislation. She said that people in the country had told her that they did not get involved in child protection because they simply did not understand the law. There was thus a need to bring pieces of legislation together in a way that made sense and enhanced legal responses.

Noting that legislation on domestic violence was under-utilized, Ms Sealy-Burke suggested that combining the Domestic Violence Act with the Child Protection Act would be an important remedy. The former allowed the perpetrator to remain in the home and removed the child, while under the latter it was possible to remove the perpetrator. She said that it was important to understand that the inadequacy of the laws was not only in terms of family law, but was true of other areas such as adoption laws and criminal law. For example, something known as the “honest belief” defence meant that even though someone had sex with an under age person it was a defence to state a belief that the person was over the age of 16. Laws also did not protect boys when they were the victims of rape. Ms Sealy-Burke said the within the OECS, the family law reform initiative was welcome. Five draft bills had come out of that initiative; however, it had not been completed as several issues linked to child welfare were still outstanding.

**Creating a safety net for children**

Ms Sealy-Burke noted that children’s safety and security required a comprehensive, consistent and well-managed approach to systemic responses. It had to be understood that the law, on its own, would not remedy children’s situations. Even where there were good laws, implementation might be lacking. She said that stronger policies on inter-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration were urgently required in order to find a meaningful way to have a safety net for children. She also stressed that even if policies and protocols anticipated the right external conditions such as social services, good data collection, etc. it was not possible to move ahead successfully on this issue by addressing one component. The direction to head in was one that fully supported inter-
MOVING THE AGENDA FOR CHILDREN FORWARD IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

connecting laws, policies and programming to respond to the needs of children, which could only be handled within a multi-faceted approach. Reform initiatives had to fully embrace the legal, policy and programmatic elements of effecting positive change.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN CARIBBEAN CONTEXTS

Dr. Jones also agreed on the importance of legislation as a framework. She identified the need for mandatory reporting to ensure that child abuse was taken seriously, that there was a professional responsibility and duty to act, that expertise to recognize symptoms of child abuse had to be developed, and that it was clear to whom abuse should be reported and what action would be taken. She said this would be making public a private matter, which made detection difficult. It should be that when a child told a friend about abuse, that friend rolled the ball until a case was made for criminal prosecution and the child was provided with therapeutic support and protection. However, another scenario might be that the child told someone but was not believed. If the allegation concerned someone of power, then there would be denial. This would leave the child feeling isolated and alone, and with the abuse continuing there was a risk of intergenerational abuse. The child would be subject to abuse by the system; her family would experience the guilt and shame of abuse if the perpetrator was jailed, and the child would be unable to get therapeutic services because this would be considered “tampering with evidence”.

According to Dr. Jones, the law could not be depended on to protect children and proving a case in court was difficult. Referring to the situation in the UK, she said despite many years of developing child protection systems, children were no better protected than they had been years before as resources had been spent protecting the system as opposed to protecting the children. She said the UK had data with which they could use to identify the most at risk children and monitor the support provided. However, she stressed that a child protection register was costly to maintain and reduced the abused child to a mere statistic. She described it as alarming that dependence on child protection data to define who was at risk meant ignoring a large group of children at risk.

Catch, prosecute, punish or prevent, harm, heal?

Some alternatives mentioned by Dr. Jones included working on empowering families and children to protect children, as well as promoting legislation to enforce protection. She said since it was not possible to remove every perpetrator from the home, it was necessary to work with them in the community. She stressed moving from a retributive forensic approach to one based on restoration and healing, saying that prevention, empowerment and support tended to be neglected. She also pointed to a difficulty in the Caribbean in determining the difference between physical chastisement and physical abuse. She said that only its extreme manifestation was addressed, while people wanted to hold on to the right to physical punishment. However, she said that focusing too narrowly on child abuse sometimes led to other issues that really mattered for the welfare of children being forgotten. She identified some of these as neglect, poverty and deprivation and said they all had a major impact.

Dr. Jones highlighted the need to develop macro-level regional approaches and look into things like Internet child abuse. Discussions were needed on how to work with schools and communities to provide safety. She also suggested that it was important to decide whether the aim was to catch, prosecute and punish or to prevent harm, heal and go for a restorative approach. She suggested that while the aim might be to do both, there might not be adequate resources for this. A first step was to ensure that children were at the centre of the response by identifying those who were at risk, including those that were in institutions, whose parents had migrated or were incarcerated – those who did not have the benefit of protective factors or family life. Returning in conclusion to the subject of corporal punishment, Dr. Jones noted that four young people had stated earlier that it was neither good nor effective. She said that it had been used on slaves years ago and suggested that what was considered acceptable had surely changed since those days.
PANEL ON ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION: WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE WANT?

Chair: Ms D’Andra Howard, Student, UWI Cave Hill Campus

Panellists: Mr. Klieon John, St. Kitts; Ms Abigeil McIntyre, Grenada; Ms Je-Meila Maloney, Emerging Youth Leader, Barbados; Kevin Small, Ellerslie Secondary School student; Renée Seon, Foundation Secondary School student; and Kyle Selman, Alleyne Secondary School student

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SEXES AND AGE GROUPS

Mr. John pointed out that since the estimated 1.2 billion youth (persons aged 18–24 years) globally represented the largest proportion of youth relative to other segments of the world’s population in history, the needs of this demographic could not be ignored. He noted
that the youth were critical stakeholders and should be given opportunities to be equally involved in decisions and actions that would promote their best interests based on respect for their views. He further noted, however, that this should be balanced by the age and maturity of the person(s) in question.

On the issue of youth and HIV, Mr. John stated that a quarter of those living with HIV worldwide were between the ages of 14 and 24. In 2003, the Caribbean had had one of the highest rates of HIV infection, and the spread of the disease was believed to be linked to cultural practices associated with the region. He emphasized that there was a need to build mutual respect between the sexes because there was a close correlation between sexual violence towards women/girls and the spread of HIV. He suggested that education on sexuality should be provided to young people in a way that allowed them to obtain information about safe/correct sexual practices while maintaining their right to privacy.

Violence against and among youth
On the issue of violence Mr. John noted that it occurred both against and among youth. He said that in 2004 a forum had been held concerning violence among youth at which several issues had been raised as particularly pertinent factors. These included the adverse effect of inappropriately trained staff/teachers/counsellors; the role of gang violence; the negative impact of teachers insulting their students (student/ teacher relations); and the types of welfare services provided for the family. With respect to violence among and involving youth, he said many incidents went unreported for a variety of reasons that ranged from cultural influences to fear among those involved. He also noted that in these circumstances there should be frequent evaluations of the children involved to determine their progress and condition. He suggested the need for clarification on the legal distinction between adult and young offenders and that special considerations might need to be taken into account when dealing with juvenile offenders, such as providing psychological care to assist those offenders who might not totally comprehend the extent of their crime or the gravity of their situation. Mr. John also wanted to see the relevant authorities who attended to cases that involved juvenile offenders, such as judges and magistrates, doing so in an appropriate manner.

Youth and unemployment
Turning to the high unemployment rate experienced by youth in the Caribbean, Mr. John indicated that estimates for this figure ranged between 40 and 60 per cent. Given this scale of unemployment, he suggested that there was not only a need for employment training programmes to be implemented, but that these should cater to both academic and non-academic/technically oriented individuals.

WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE WANT?
Ms McIntyre offered her perspective on youth participation, which she saw as critical in the development of any Caribbean country. She said that youth should be involved at all levels. However, most of the time only young people from the better off communities were given the opportunity to participate, while the voices of those in poverty-stricken areas were seldom heard. She then listed a number of ways in which to promote youth participation:

- Available and accessible adolescent and youth-friendly interactive activities, forums and discussions, especially in rural areas
- More incentive-based programmes to encourage volunteerism (too many youth groups were dying out)
- More support and encouragement from the home, church, school and particularly senior citizens
- Genuine role models – persons who did not just speak of the positive but also practiced the positive
- Television or radio programmes that really allowed young persons to voice their opinions, grievances and concerns.
Strengthening opportunities
She recognized that there were existing opportunities such as church groups that assisted youths, school council bodies, and youth parliaments with monthly discussions, although a drawback she mentioned was the lack of representation of rural young people. These opportunities could be strengthened by other initiatives such as more support to the National Youth Council Programme; making the Youth Ambassador Programme a national priority; setting up a youth parliament; youth representation in the Senate; programmes and opportunities that allowed more adult and youth-friendly interactions; and gateways that encouraged young persons to express, explore, develop and showcase their talents.

Ms McIntyre stated that adults were not the enemy; young people wanted to learn from them. Young people could also be supported and encouraged by adults, as in the space given to youth in the UNICEF forum in which avenues were provided for their participation. Youth also needed to realize that governments had invested millions of dollars towards their development.

EXPERIENCE
Ms Je-Mella Maloney, Emerging Youth Leader of Barbados, spoke about experience. She said that experience was not about what young people wanted, but what young people needed. She added that everyone was seated at the forum because of experience, be it bad or good. Young people needed experience and when young people were humble they were taught to be responsible adults. She said that people needed to come together in order to make things happen. Young people needed each other to stand together for everything or fall for anything.

OTHER INTERVENTIONS
Reneé Seon, Kyle Selman and Kevin Small each made short interventions. Overall, they emphasized the need for young people to be heard, loved, respected, trusted and given positive attention. Young people needed open interaction with adults, to know what was expected of them. They had goals and needed motivation and inspiration to achieve them. They could play a role in development if they were given the opportunity. They also needed to know that many programmes were in place that supported their rights. These should be publicized in the media, which should also highlight the positive things that the youth were doing. The national youth parliament also needed to be visible. Young people should to be at the forefront of everything that was going on since they were the leaders of tomorrow.
CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS: THE ROLE OF EFFECTIVE STUDENT COUNCILS

For this session, Ms Elaine King, the facilitator, began by defining basic ground rules: respecting other’s opinions, respecting time and only giving constructive criticism. All 23 of the session’s participants then briefly introduced themselves before three young people were selected for a role-playing exercise: to give brief speeches as part of a campaign in order to win votes and be elected president of a student council. The facilitator requested that votes be given based on the impact of speeches and not on school colours or friendships.

After the three had each given a speech targeting a selected problem, the other participants gave their opinion on the speeches and the speakers. Some of the points that were highlighted were making eye contact; stating the problem clearly; defining what should be done about the problem; making oneself stand out; speaking authoritatively; connecting with the persons one was going to represent; being wary of slogans; and portraying confidence.

The next step was for the “president” to meet with the “teachers” in order to discuss a specific problem (which had to do with the school canteen) and try to reach a win-win situation. Following this, the opinion of the other participants was again requested. Some of the observations were that problems needed to be well presented; the case should be argued in a respectful way using a well-modulated voice; being transparent and polite was a must; a detailed plan of action should be prepared before going to the meeting, and students needed to be part of the solution. The facilitator then asked what the alternatives would be if nothing was done to solve the problem. The responses were to involve the PTA; to stop buying from the canteen; to involve parents directly; and to use the media (as the absolute last resort).
DEVINFO
The DevInfo workshop, facilitated by Ms. Francillia Solomon, enabled participants to receive more in-depth information about the linkages between DevInfo and the MDGs. St. Lucia is one of the first Caribbean countries to launch a national version of DevInfo. HelenInfo v1.0 was released on 13 April 2007 to monitor progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) within the country. Based on DevInfo v5.0, the database system is a joint collaborative arrangement between the CARICOM Secretariat and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Assistance was also received from the European Commission (EC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). According to the presenter, the process of developing HelenInfo was challenging in that it involved the coordination and consolidation of data collection and compilation efforts from a large number and variety of private and public sector sources. Nevertheless, the process offered the opportunity to fortify the inter-agency collaboration that is most crucial to the efficient, relevant and sustainable provision of domestic indicators on social, economic and human development.

During the session, the participants were also able to manually explore the software on computers and learn more about its key features for presentation and dissemination purposes.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: POSSIBLE MODELS FOR THE CARIBBEAN
This session – facilitated by Dr. Adele Jones – provided the opportunity to discuss the issue of restorative justice in a workshop setting. Dr. Jones noted that in relation to child abuse, the difficulty was in seeking ways to effectively restore families after an incidence. An especially difficult case was that of sexual abuse, and one must take care not to minimize the problem for children. She also said that it seemed inconceivable in some circumstances to imagine the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation, yet this had happened. Examples she noted in particular were in war-torn areas such as Mozambique, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.
Dr. Jones said that interventions were not always effective. The fact that one third of all abuse occurred within institutions compounded the problem. Another important factor to bear in mind was the community and its contribution to the case or incident. She also suggested that many solutions that were actively promoted actually represented a disservice to children and did not promote their welfare; for example, the focus was typically on the person breaking the law, and thus the quest for justice tended to displace the victim from where they were supposed to be: at the centre of the case. As a result there was a need to encourage more creative approaches. One needed to determine what was ultimately best for the victim, the family and the community. She advocated that the victim should be able to receive answers from the offender, who should be given the opportunity to make amends to the victim.

**Learning from traditional methods**

Dr. Jones suggested drawing on the problem-solving methods that had existed for centuries. She also recommended looking at what laws had been broken, who had committed the offence, what harm had been done and to whom the harm had been done. After those issues had been addressed, a range of approaches might be considered. She noted that these included the use of conflict resolution and restorative justice. Children should be taught how to resolve conflicts peacefully from an early age. In some places, restorative justice was actually tried first before approaching the conventional justice system. For example, the Maori in New Zealand had systems that placed the decision of finding an appropriate remedy in the hands of the victim’s family. This method brought together everyone with a vested interest in the protection of the child, in the form of an extended network of kinship. The family had to come up with a solution to protect the child, but must be made aware of all the relevant circumstances – who the offender was, what exactly had happened, etc. After all the facts had been presented then the family would be left to come up with a plan. As all this was occurring the needs of the child were not ignored – s/he was given special attention. After it had been formulated, the family’s plan was taken to court and given a chance to be implemented. However, this was not expected to be a “blanket” decision.

**When to use restorative justice**

In a wide-ranging discussion, it was first noted that the same family members might have ignored or denied the abuse in the first place, and that a professional would be needed to highlight the indicators that the family had originally ignored. Restorative justice was said to only be effective if the family admitted or recognized the truth about the situation; otherwise, the judicial system should take over. There would thus need to be skilled coordinators to determine which cases were appropriate and which were not. Professionals also had the responsibility to give information and resources to the family to assist in their decision.

Other points included that the “confidentiality” model offered confidentiality in exchange for the opportunity to change. Removing the threat of prison could assist those children for whom fear of telling and causing the offender to go to jail was foremost in their minds. Keeping the justice requirements within the family, in terms of resources, was much more cost effective. The types of cases should shape the legislation rather than allowing the legislation to shape the situation.

It was mentioned that youth in some countries were being criminalized for even petty crimes. Alternative sentencing was suggested as an essential option. Restorative justice was also said to have been used with some young offenders. However, it was noted that this method was likely to be more effective in smaller and more rural communities where kinship was still tangible than in more developed communities. There was also some debate over whether the institution of the family court could borrow some of these principles of restoration.
CLOSING REMARKS

Closing remarks were offered by Ms Je-Meila Maloney, the Honourable Mr. Sam Condor and Mr. Tom Olsen. Ms Maloney thanked UNICEF for hosting the forum and allowing the youth to actively participate. Hon. Condor also expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to attend the forum. He noted the number of challenges that came with development, but urged the youth to work in collaboration with older folks and with communities and not to be cynical but to get involved in political systems in order to change them. Mr. Olsen extended a thank you to everyone present, saying that nothing could have been achieved without the full participation of all. He then suggested that if the problems that had been discussed were not addressed soon, they would become harder to deal with in the future. He emphasized that UNICEF was not trying to do everything differently, but more to engage young people, politicians, universities and others since nothing could be achieved in the region if they acted alone. He said the meeting had helped to put the vision for the new UNICEF programme in practice. The aim was that if anyone wanted to know about children in the Caribbean, they should come to UNICEF, as they had the data, information and capacity to analyse data but in order for this to come about, people needed to actively participate.
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First Floor
UN House
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Barbados
Tel: (246) 467-6000
Fax:(246) 426-3812
Email: bridgetown@unicef.org
Website: www.unicef.org/barbados

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