In 1996, CARICOM Ministers of Education and Health endorsed the "Strategy for Strengthening Health and Family Life Education in CARICOM States". Health & Family Life Education (HFLE) is a far-reaching, region-wide Multi-Agency Project that involves the CARICOM Secretariat, various UN agencies and the University of West Indies (UWI). Subsequently, UNICEF/CAO integrated HFLE as one of the key projects in the current and upcoming five-year cycles of its Multi-Country Programme of Cooperation. Its strategy reaffirmed the commitment of each government to HFLE as a priority for achieving national development goals. Empowering the youth and developing their capacities to the fullest will ensure sustainability of an efficient and productive Caribbean workforce. So far, three countries have cabinet-approved HFLE National Policies, and six other countries have draft policies awaiting formal adoption.

Policies commonly designate the implementation of the HFLE Programme to National HFLE Coordinating Committees, which bring together all relevant government bodies and representatives from the civil society to collaborate in delivering HFLE at home, school and in the community. The Policy will also ensure that HFLE be taught throughout pre-primary, primary and secondary level education as a compulsory core subject. It is vital that HFLE is delivered consistently in the upper secondary level, as this is the most critical time for adolescents in the area of self-development. This intensification has not yet been observed in the region.

While waiting for National Policies to materialise, significant work has been done to enhance the quality of HFLE teaching by ensuring that the subject has a lifeskills approach. Countries are now working to revise their HFLE curricula within the coming years to make them more comprehensive and skills-based. For instance, Barbados has incorporated age-appropriate HIV/AIDS modules to their revised primary school HFLE curriculum. When providing effective HIV/AIDS education, distributing information and sharing knowledge is not enough - values and morals need to be addressed as a basis to form certain attitudes and bring HIV/AIDS education,
nibbean countries have identified a plethora of threats to the health of their young people, many of which can be prevented - obesity, HIV infection, unintended pregnancy, violence, substance abuse and suicide. Caribbean societies are almost at their wit’s end and they strive to develop mechanisms to address many of these challenges.

It is a fact that health education makes a significant contribution in promoting healthy lifestyles if begun in the early years and is continually reinforced as the child moves through adolescence into adulthood. In addition, a growing body of research has shown that a young person’s health status – physical, emotional, and social – has a direct impact on cognitive performance. This therefore underscores the importance of the school as efficient means of reaching young people to help them acquire the knowledge and skills to make positive decisions about their health and well-being. Given the fact that over 90% of children in the Caribbean past through our primary schools and a significant number also access secondary levels of education, Caribbean schools certainly provide a real mechanism for reaching children and adolescents.

Hence the time for making a case for the inclusion of health and family education in the core curriculum Caribbean schools at all levels has long past. The rhetoric should now revolve around improving the effectiveness of the education system in working with our children and adolescents so that they are not only passive recipients of information but are active participants in acquiring knowledge and the concomitant lifeskills to be make effective decisions about their health.

A blend of informational content, skills-development and interactive teaching methodologies is required to be effective. However whilst the lifeskills component of health education is key, to date this has been one of the weakness links. The question is often asked “What are the critical lifeskills that promote healthy development and minimise harm and risk”? Certainly a combination of social skills (like communications and refusal skills), cognitive skills (such as decision-making and critical thinking skills) as well as emotional coping skills (managing stress and feelings) are required as research has shown that these are linked to behavioural outcomes.

Nevertheless, even as we strive to get HFLE firmly seated as part of the core curriculum in our schools, we must always remember that curriculum alone is not enough. A supportive environment is critical to maximise the benefits of what is learnt within the classroom. For health education to be truly effective it might be supported by appropriate school health services, a healthy physical and psychosocial school environment, as well as strong linkages with the home and wider community. Nutrition and school safety, physical education and recreation as well as mental counselling and social supports are important facets of the necessary supportive environment to maximise the positive effects of health and family life education on the curriculum.

A safe and supportive environment is part of what motivates young people to make healthy choices. Supportive and caring relationships with adults and friends and positive school experiences are particularly significant aspects of a supportive environment for adolescents. Such relationships provide specific support in making individual behaviour choices such as how to handle anger, when to become sexually active and what to eat.

Another critical question would therefore be: “How can we better prepare our parents to be able to contribute to that needed supportive environment?” This not only addresses the importance of parent education programmes, but brings a wider cross section of society into play as it requires a more family-centered outlook, starting in homes and moving through to workplaces. It challenges the mass media and entertainment industry to be more responsible in their contribution to the socialisation of our young people. It reinforces the importance of adequate supervision, recreation and positive outlets for youthful energies as well as appropriate public policies to help provide an environment, which facilitates positive behaviour.

It is therefore important that as a society we do not merely recognise the problem and delegate it to the school to develop mechanisms to address it. All facets of society must take full responsibility for their role in meeting the challenges and it is only when all sectors work together that there will be any meaningful and sustained impact on some of the challenges to the health and well-being of Caribbean youth.

Elaine King
Project Officer,
Health & Nutrition
UNICEF Caribbean Area Office
Q: The School of Education, Cave Hill Campus, was involved with the CARICOM Health & Family Life Education (HFLE) Project from its inception. What are your thoughts on its development ten years later and the role of the UWI in moving it forward?

A: The School of Education has been involved with family life education, certainly from its inception, because we at the School, regarded the HFLE programme as a critical curriculum area which would serve to address the various HFLE needs of Caribbean citizens. From reading press reports and other published documents, one notes that there are all kinds of health and family life related issues affecting and impacting on the society. I thought it was a very good idea when PAHO - initially working with the School of Education - thought it necessary to revise the HFLE curriculum for teachers. This was crucial because the School of Education works with Teachers’ Colleges in the Eastern Caribbean in respect of programme development and moderation, and also in certification of teachers. During the years, we worked towards the development of a curriculum in HFLE which could implement in teacher training institutions, because we felt that in order for the programme to have an impact in the classrooms, those teaching in the schools ought to be the ones to facilitate its implementation in the teaching/learning environment. So, our first involvement was the development of a Core Curriculum Guide for the Strengthening of Health & Family Life Education in Teacher Training Colleges in the Eastern Caribbean.

Q: At one point, instruction in Health & Family Life Education was generally seen as sex education. How far do you feel this perception has changed?

A: Clearly, this perception has changed. When we look at curricula in the schools and in teacher training institutions, there is now no subject called “sex education”. Sex-related topics are in fact addressed under the broad umbrella of HFLE, so we have definitely moved away from that.

Q: The primary aim of the HFLE Project is to equip young people with the skills to cope with some of life’s challenges and make wise choices. Do you think that this objective is being met?

A: It is difficult to say if the objective is actually being met inasmuch as there has been no real evaluation of the process, but I believe we are working towards the achievement of that objective in the sense that the HFLE curriculum now veers more towards life skills education. We feel that if persons are going to function in the society as well-rounded individuals, they should be exposed to wider curriculum and that the life skills element of HFLE would equip them to deal with the many and varied problems. I am certain that the various methodologies being used in the training of teachers will be transferred into the classroom environment thereby facilitating the development of these desirable skills.

Q: Do you believe that teachers are being properly prepared to teach HFLE, and is there a greater role that UWI can play in this regard?

A: I think that the training programmes and various workshops that have been mounted by UNICEF in collaboration with the School of Education and PAHO, are all designed to assist teachers with the development of essential skills for proper delivery of the programme. In all the teacher-training colleges, there are what I would regard as point tutors assigned to teach HFLE. These tutors have been involved in a number of training workshops, and continuing education activities and are aware of the many and varied strategies that can be utilised in order to teach the HFLE curriculum.

The School of Education is currently developing an Associate Degree in Education for teachers in the Eastern Caribbean, which would be delivered by teacher training institutions in collaboration with the University of the West Indies here at Cave Hill. In that curriculum, HFLE features as a critical elective, thereby ensuring that all teachers enrolled in the programme are provided with training in HFLE. One of our difficulties however, is that even though the School of Education monitors the development of HFLE issues and a specific staff member has been assigned to HFLE developments, we need to move in the direction of placing HFLE as a subject on the UWI curriculum. I think this is going to be our next step, but at least we are starting with the Associate Degree, which is approved by the University.

Professor Arthur G. Richardson is the Director of the School of Education of the University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. Professor Richardson possesses over 35 years’ experience in the field of education. He received his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from the UWI earning a distinction in the undergraduate programme in 1977. An Anguillian by birth, he was appointed Lecturer at the UWI Mona Campus in 1982 and after obtaining his Ph.D took up an appointment as Lecturer at the Cave Hill Campus in 1983. On Campus, Professor Richardson has been instrumental in curriculum development and has also played a leading role in the development of Teachers’ Colleges in the Eastern Caribbean. He previously served as Deputy Dean of the then Faculty of Education, Head of the Department of Education Research & Development, and Acting Director of the School of Education before his current appointment as its Head.
Health & Family Life... continued from page 1

distributing information and sharing knowledge is not enough - values and morals need to be addressed as a basis to form certain attitudes and bring and adolescents need to be empowered with life skills necessary for assertive communication, critical thinking and decision making so that they would be able to make the right choices in their actual life situations. A gender-sensitive approach is also required to respond to different risks and needs among boys and girls.

Teachers’ readiness and comfort level to handle the sessions is crucial so as to maximise the effectiveness of the programme.

HFLE needs to be delivered in a positive classroom climate through a participatory approach. Students are encouraged to express themselves and interact. Local capacity-building through teacher training, needs to be further continued in view of the foreseen adoption of revised curricula.

Another important factor to strengthen HFLE is enhanced co-operation between the home, school and the community. A number of training sessions for parents has been held and parents have shown support for HFLE.

Likewise, for the next programme cycle (2003 - 2007), UNICEF is planning to work more closely with community-based organisations and youth groups to expand HFLE into communities. By training facilitators who can deliver life skills in community settings, we will be able to reach out-of-school youth as well as school children. We must always ask ourselves the following questions: “Who would need HFLE most? Are we reaching and empowering the youth who are most likely to be engaged in risky behaviours?” Better targeting of the programme is a challenge for all governments in the coming years.

Changing the World With Children

The following is an extract from the presentation by Clendon Lewis at the Saint Lucia launch of the Global Movement for Children in September.

“We are happy that you are here to celebrate with us today and it is our mission that your presence and involvement in such a forum will continue as a measuring stick for the success of the Global Movement for Children (GMC). To provide you with some insight, I, on behalf of all children of Saint Lucia would like to present you with the issues affecting children with the expectation that these issues will be the baseline to guide new and revised legislation for our beautiful country.

The issues for all children in Saint Lucia are numerous and can be identified on a daily basis, from a variety of sources such as the media (print, television, etc.) the court system, hospitals and other institutions, like the Boy’s Training Centre, of which I am a ward.

• Malnutrition and access to adequate health care continues to hinder the development of children, especially children living in impoverished communities.

• Education, an area where we as a nation have succeeded (having produced two Nobel Laureates) is still not accessible to many children. Children are still not able to attend school, due to lack of facilities to meet their Special Needs or the Special Needs of their families. With respect to early childhood education, which provides the foundation for all future learning, there is still a great need for us as a nation to embrace this area as an integral part of our education system. After all, Sir, early childhood education is the birthplace of genius.

• Violence, Abuse and Exploitation are still major contributors to the demise of children. Devastating acts of crime are often committed against children in their homes by persons who are supposed to be their “protectors”.

• The saying that children should be "seen" and not "heard" is still very much a rule of our society. As children, we are not listened to and even when we speak out we are often not heard. In order to make the world a safer place for us it must start with listening to us, the children. Changing the world with children, which is the theme of the GMC can only be achieved from valuing our voices, and what we have to say.

• HIV/AIDS is not only scary to the adult person; it is scary for us too. We need to know that the plan of action for this deadly disease includes services for children who are born with HIV/AIDS, those who have developed the disease and others who are orphans as a result of the disease. Education for its reduction and or eradication must also be part of the plan.

• "Dead Beat Fathers" continue to have our mothers or we, their children, stand and wait for them at street corners for the small allowance set by the court system to be paid as child support and maintenance and they never show up which is testimony to their empty promises. Similarly, the absence of systems for parents who do not participate in any aspect of parenting their children, promotes a culture of persons who do not think twice of becoming the absent parent, which is very evident in our society.

• Teen-age pregnancy continues to populate our country to the point where these same children keep the cycle of reproduction constant, which contributes to our nations high population of persons living in poverty, and an increase in the levels of illiteracy and unemployment.

• The entertainment style of our nation: block-o-s, community days/weekends and other street jams while providing financially for some households, cheats others of their basic necessities, especially the children. These activities
Voices of the Youth

The following are excerpts from interviews conducted by Ms. Yuko Kusamichi, a United Nations Volunteer with responsibility for Adolescent & Health Education, attached to the UNICEF Caribbean Area Office.

Cynthia St. Hiliaire, 15 years-old
Cynthia, a Form 4 student at Grand Bay Secondary School in Dominica, was interviewed after an HFLE class on Stress Management.

Today’s HFLE class was about stress. Do you feel stress in your daily life?
"Yes, very much so. Life is stressful for me. My parents, friends, school, menstruation, many, many things."

So, how do you cope with all those problems? Do you talk with your parents about your problems?
"Oh, no… at our age, we try to deal with problems among ourselves. I share problems with my friends, but not with my parents."

Do you feel that things that you learn through HFLE classes may help you in difficult situations?
"Yes, I think so. I feel that they influence me. Drugs, violence, teenage pregnancy… these are actually happening around us and HFLE will help us."

Why did you decide to take this course, and so far do you enjoy it?
"Because I like to learn practical skills. Here I can learn woodwork, agriculture, technical drawing and I enjoy these things."

Before having HFLE classes here, did you have HFLE at school, and how was it?
"Yes, I had HFLE in Primary School, from Grade 3 to 5. Well, I didn’t like it. It’s boring. As I said, I like to learn more practical things."

What is your future dream?
"I wish to draw sketches for buildings. After completing this Centre’s course, I want to go the technical college to study technical drawing."

What seems that you are very close to your mother. Do you share a lot of things with her?
"My dad is working in the US, so I am with my mother. I can talk with her about many things. I even talk about my girlfriend with her."

How about your friends? Do you talk about your problems with them?
"No, not with my friends. I just hang out with my friends, and I don’t really discuss things with them."

Dale Augustin, 15 years-old
This school year, Dale decided to take a one-year Adolescent Skills Training Course provided by the Social Centre, a non-profitable organisation in Dominica. The course offers practical skills training such as woodwork and various including Health and Family Life Education.

It seems that you are very close to your mother. Do you share a lot of things with her?
"My dad is working in the US, so I am with my mother. I can talk with her about many things. I even talk about my girlfriend with her."

How about your friends? Do you talk about your problems with them?
"No, not with my friends. I just hang out with my friends, and I don’t really discuss things with them."

Donelle Caines, 16 years-old
Donelle is a Form 4 student at Sandy Point Secondary School in St. Kitts, where he is Head Boy, and a member of the Students’ Council.
Donelle is now taking a Training of Trainers’ Course to become an HFLE focal point among youth.

Nowadays, it is often said that youth in the Caribbean are facing a lot of problems like drugs, violence, and HIV/AIDS. How do you feel about this? Do you think it’s true around you?
"No, I don’t think so. People are just talking and making it a big story. I don’t hear about those things around me."

How about peer pressure? Have you ever felt pressure to experiment with those things?
"No. I just do what I want to do, and there’s no need to follow others. My mother told me so."

As an adolescent, do you feel a lot of stress?
"No. I think stress is for older people, not for me. My mother is working hard but she is not under stress. Then, why should I feel stress? After school, I go home, do my homework a little bit, and after four o’clock, I can play football or ride bicycles and skateboards. I am having fun everyday."

When you come across fellow students doing something not good, as a HFLE youth facilitator, what do you do?
"I always try to speak to them. Sometimes it works, but sometimes they’re just not ready to listen. I am from a religious family and community, so I try to tell others to look to God and find joy of life. In my community, there are many Rastafarians and they smoke a lot. When I try to talk to those young people, they shout to me, like "Fire on you!", or, you know, something like that. I am fearful but I try my best."

When you have problems, from whom would you seek advice?
"I lost my mother 5 years ago and my..."
Voices of the Youth...

father is away so, I'm staying with my grandmother. I have good communications with my grand mother, but you know, I cannot talk with her about my personal problems. If I'm going to talk about something sensitive to my friend, I need a sense of confidentiality. I will not trust girls. You know, once girls break up, they start to abuse one another, and your secret may become public someday. So, it's difficult to talk about a very important thing to friends. If it's really a serious problem, I would prefer going to the counsellor, 'cause at least I can trust that they will keep the secret."

I heard that this school is a model HFLE school. How is the HFLE class for you?

"I had HFLE when I was in Forms 1 and 2 and I really enjoyed it. I learned a lot of things that I never knew about, for example some things like maturing. After school, I used to go on to the street, you know, just liming and cooling out, and that was the way I was brought up. Nobody taught us about these things. HFLE gave me a lot of different life skills and it really helped me. Next month, to become an HFLE trainer, I need to do a session myself for other students. Oh, I'm kind of scared to imagine that, but I'll do my best, because I know this is important for us."

From The Classroom

UNICEF continues to campaign for classroom methods that maximise children's participation, and provide a range of fora for their expression. Such opportunities come during HFLE sessions, as is seen below from the work of a group of Grade 10 students in St. Lucia, on the topic "Human Dignity & Self Esteem".

WHEN I TAKE A LOOK AT ME, THIS IS WHAT I SEE...

Rudeness
Hatred for some people
Violence
Peace where it's needed
Smoke without fire
Happiness
An unborn child, etc.
I see love that substitutes a million things
In me you will find, the kindness
That blows your mind
Look in me and you will see jealousy
That covers the sea
Comfort and loneliness
That travels like the breeze
I see pain that stains my heart
But happiness that is very much apart
I don't see such a beauty
But still I'm some fantasy
The reflection of all put together,
The neglect from all other
Keeping to myself forever
That's what I see in the future.

Happiness
Love
Kindness
Rudeness
Hatred, carelessness
This is all I see.
When I look into myself I see
An ugly fat punk
I see nothing in me
I am just worthless
All I see is disgrace and feel heartbroken
No one cares about me,
I am just not important at all
All I deserve is to be dumped in a bin
And to be trashed where animals
Can jump and step on me
And then leave me there to die
and to bury myself.
I am just what you call noting at all.
That is just "ME".

I see preparation for the future
I see purpose, I see destiny
I see a flower ready to burst out
with potential
But I also see denial, low self esteem,
I see regrets
Someone with a different understanding

Someone who hates making mistakes
I see creativity, talent, ambition.

I see success, hope, beauty, respect, love
I see romance, personality, fun intelligence
Future plans waiting to be dealt with
I see my house, wife and kids,
divorce and remarriage
Fights, prison
I see pain, joy, laughter and big jokes.
also act as a fishing ground for child molesters, and other delinquents who lure children into acts of promiscuity.

- **The Sunday gatherings of Mother’s and Father’s groups** leave many children unsupervised and unattended (making the Hollywood movie, “Home Alone!” a reality) with some of the outcomes too devastating to mention.

- **Unsafe driving** on our roads, especially near schools threatens the well-being of all citizens, especially the young children. This practice of itself seems to have created a culture of persons who demonstrate a certain recklessness or lack of respect for human life.

- **The work conditions** and the lack of employment of our parents/guardians directly affect us, their children. Food, shelter and medicine for some children are not readily accessible. Hunger, homelessness and disease are still a reality for many children in our country.

- **Evidence of the destruction** of our environment is ever so present on our streets, sidewalks, drainage systems, beaches, rivers, forests, and many other areas. The lessons available do not seem to be reaching our elders and children alike. Our survival depends on having an environment that is protected for us.

- **Drugs and drug addiction** has replaced extra curricular activities and other forms of recreation for the youth. Our school environment is no longer the safe haven it ought to be.

- **Profits, personal gratification and competition** have replaced what is best for the well-being of children – television and other forms of consumerism are typical examples.

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, permit me to stop here, as I do not wish to overwhelm you. There are lots more issues affecting children in our great nation. The ones presented to you are merely a representation of the summit of Petit Piton, without an attempt to circle around the base of Gros Piton.

In conclusion, I want to revisit a commitment made to address the needs and rights of children. The Global Movement for Children is an offshoot of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (November 1989), which our country endorsed on 16th July 1993, and to date, not much has changed. Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of the children of Saint Lucia and the world over, I urge you and other policy makers to make every effort to ensure that we as a nation do not allow the lights of the GMC to fade away from the smallest voices of this nation. Sir, a gentle reminder: The small voices of today will be the big voices of tomorrow; and the manner in which our small voices are treated now will determine how, as big voices, we will contribute to our country’s future. Let us therefore work together towards creating a nation fit for children.

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of the children of Saint Lucia, I thank you!
Opinion

Health & Family Life Education can make a difference

By Vincent Lovell

Everyone who works with children and young people would perhaps unanimously agree that they have a difficult and seemingly an almost impossible task of getting this sector of our population to “do the right thing”. Parents complain about their children, teachers complain about their students and both groups tend to agree that the children of today are more difficult to manage than those of the past. In fact society in general seems to agree on this. It is easy to blame the parents for the unwholesome behaviour of their children and sometimes they indeed are to blame but we have to contextualize the behaviour of these children and young people.

While it is true that some parents abrogate their parental responsibilities and allow their children to be involved in detrimental behaviour, this author contends that most parents, while they themselves may be involved in such behaviour, the vast majority do not wish this for their children. Some of them do not know how to engage their children in appropriate behaviour as they were not taught themselves and some seem embarrassed to talk to their children on topics such as sex, hoping that the child would automatically know the appropriate behaviour. Some indeed teach their children the appropriate behaviour, but their own behaviour reflects the opposite.

We can look at the other influences and indeed at times more powerful socialising agents like entertainers to whom the children look up, whose songs and actions and indeed for some, their actual lifestyles, reflect behaviour that to say the least, is quite inappropriate. Some of them make lawlessness, mediocrity and promiscuity appear glamorous to youngsters and that if they are not engaged in such activities they are “not with it”. Even in the seemingly most innocent television shows, we see children fooling their parents about their true behaviour and getting away with it.

One can liken what children face today to some dangerous enemy that we need to engage in combat. Like any dangerous enemy, there needs to be an appropriate and comprehensive plan of action to tackle the enemy. Everyone engaged in the fight must be clear on the goals and objectives. They need to know what they are up against. We need to prepare our young people for the future and the survival of our society, since they are the future and the survival of our society depends on them. A good part of that preparation is contingent upon the life skills that we give them and this can be found in Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programmes.

One can liken what children face today to some dangerous enemy that we need to combat.

The Challenges of Teaching HFLE

Sometimes one can believe that what they are doing to help youngsters by enabling them with life skills such as conflict resolution, problem solving, decision making etc., seem to be a waste of time because they seem not to be utilising these skills. It appears at times that one is fighting and unfortunately losing an ongoing battle. Nothing can be more disheartening than seeing youngsters do counter to what we have taught them, especially when that behaviour is life threatening. It is not easy to remain detached totally, especially when that person has such a love for these children. You get to see their mistakes constantly and you wonder what more you can do. Most of us want the best for these children and they want this too.

There are problems that facilitators face in implementing HFLE programmes in schools, and I can tell you this for sure from my experiences:

1. Many people believe that such programmes focus primarily, if not solely on sex and that as long as sex is a topic being discussed with youngsters, you are encouraging them in sexual activities. Parents and educators need to understand that HFLE is more than sex. It is about learning responsibility generally.

2. Not enough time is allocated to HFLE. Administrators need to understand the importance of HFLE and the benefits it has in relation to academic endeavours. Life skills programmes occupy a small part of the school timetable and in the senior year groups, they become even smaller. There needs to be the recognition that children can make better academic decisions and can engage in more beneficial problem-solving if they are taught about these generally and HFLE can help in this regard. The focus should not only be on academics.

3. HFLE is not only for specialists. If we are to effectively fight the enemy to which I referred earlier, everyone has to be involved. We cannot afford not to have “all hands on deck”. All adults within the school system need to know about HFLE. At different times of the day, various groups of adults come into contact with children more often than others, who may be more influential. We need to recognize everyone’s value in bringing his or her particular perspective to HFLE.

4. Some HFLE practitioners need to be more intuned with the youngsters. One cannot be surprised with what they bring to the sessions. They need to know young people better and the pressures that they face. They need to be “real” to them and not appear too far removed. They cannot
Getting The Message Out

The development of appropriate resource materials is an essential component of the Health & Family Life Programme. These colourful bookmarks and practical exercise book stickers are some of the materials developed by UNICEF CAO and they provide avenues for reaching children and adolescents with positive messages.

To request copies, please contact:
UNICEF/Caribbean Area Office
(see back cover)
Empowering Young People with Skills for Healthy Living

From a regional initiative that started in 1999, Antigua & Barbuda continues to celebrate Health & Family Life Education (HFLE) Month in October. This year activities included interviews on HFLE which were broadcast on two television stations, and an Essay, Poster and Poetry Competition among school children. One of the key activities was the planting of trees at Buckley’s Primary School, in keeping with one of the HFLE themes - “Managing the Environment”. The importance of healthy eating was also highlighted and encouraged as the students such as those of the Golden Grove Primary School enjoyed healthy snacks made from fruits and fruit juices which were prepared by the school cafeteria, along with a healthy three-course-lunch.

BARBADOS

Commission Calls on Children to Abstain

"I Choose to Wait because I'm Worth It" is the theme of the National HIV/AIDS Commission’s Abstinence campaign aimed at primary and secondary school children in Barbados. Designed to empower young people to help them to delay their first sexual encounter, the abstinence programme will target 1st to 3rd Formers in secondary schools and Class 4 students from primary schools. It not only emphasises refraining from sex, but also the importance of abstaining from drugs and violence. The Commission is currently working on billboards, which will be placed in various schools, and are planning to introduce a peer educator programme where young people selected from youth groups and clubs are trained to take the message of abstinence to their peers.

DOMINICA

Dominican Children Urge leaders to address their concerns

In a document entitled A World Fit For Us, Dominican children urged their leaders to address the concerns in order to improve the lives of their peers. Among the issues they wanted leaders to pay particular attention to were: The Sexual Offences Act, The Adoption of Infants Act, and The Children and Young Persons Act. They also called for measures that will stop or prevent children from being abused, and sought clarification on issues affecting their education. This document was presented to the Prime Minister, the President, the UNICEF Area Representative and other Dominican Government officials, who attended the official launch of the Global Movement for Children in Dominica on 23 September. The ceremony also featured cultural presentations by children, all of which dealt with the theme “children’s rights are human rights”.

ST. KITTS & NEVIS

Involving Parents and Community Organisations to Enhance HFLE

The St. Kitts & Nevis Family Life Curriculum is presently being revised to incorporate key skills. Guidance counsellors, who are responsible for teaching HFLE on the secondary level, assisted with its development. When the curricula are completed, teachers in both St. Kitts and Nevis will be trained to use the curriculum as well as to identify learning styles and the use of interactive teaching methodologies.

Parents were not excluded from the process. Nineteen Parent-Teachers’ Associations were sensitised to HFLE, and were involved in the development of policies related to the implementation of

News From The Area
HFLE and the adoption of health promoting schools. Parents will be trained in specific parenting skills that relate to the HFLE curriculum, as a means of enforcing what is taught in the schools. In addition, eleven facilitators including youth from community-based organizations were trained through four consecutive workshops based on interactive methods. They will assist with the training of parents, community organizations and youth groups.

ST. LUCIA

St. Lucia’s Governor General becomes Patron of the Global Movement for Children

At the launch of the Global Movement for Children in St. Lucia, the Governor-General, Her Excellency Dame Perlette Louisy, officially confirmed her commitment as patron of the Movement. Launched by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Marion Mitchell, the ceremony featured speeches by government officials, the UNICEF Area Representative and cultural presentations by children depicting the imperatives of the Global Movement for Children in both Creole and in English. In addition, a student representative outlined many of the concerns and challenges of the children of St. Lucia, which the Deputy Prime Minister in turn addressed.

SURINAME

Child Rights Passports Launched

In commemoration of Universal Children’s Day, the Suriname Child Rights Bureau in collaboration with UNICEF/CAO and Stas Caribe, a non-governmental organization, launched a “Child Rights Passport”. The Child Rights Passport is a passport-size booklet containing the full text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The foreword by First Lady Mrs. Liesbeth Venetiaan, reminds the owner that we all share the responsibility to make the achievement of children’s rights a reality in our communities. By attaching a passport size photo and affixing a signature, the owner also commits to support and participate in the advancement of children’s rights. At the launching ceremony Passports were presented to the First Lady, the Minister of Social Affairs, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Justice and Police.

ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

Annual Schools’ Health Day

Primary and Secondary schools throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines participated in activities to mark the annual Schools’ Health Day. Activities included an Essay Competition on HIV/AIDS, a HIV/AIDS Quiz; and Poster, Poem and Song Competitions highlighting drug abuse prevention, healthy eating and the prevention of violence. Conducted under the theme “Promoting Health through Schools – A Partnership Approach” the objective of the exercises was to evaluate students’ knowledge and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS and to promote health-enhancing behaviours.

The Health and Family Life Unit in the Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports collaborated with the St. Vincent Planned Parenthood Association in conducting the Essay Competition and Quiz. The winners of the various competitions were presented with bicycles, which had been donated by the Association.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Lactation Management Training for Doctors

In an effort to encourage breast-feeding among mothers in Trinidad & Tobago, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with UNICEF Caribbean

Area Office, conducted a series of one-day training sessions on Lactation Management for approximately sixty (60) doctors, who work in the public service. The sessions ran from 30 October - 1 November, and took place in the North West and the South West regions and in Tobago. In addition, to providing information on the benefits of breast-feeding, the sessions also covered HIV and Breast-feeding, Drugs and Breast-feeding and general information on breast-feeding policies and practices. The training sessions formed part of local efforts to reform hospital practices such as the separation of mothers from their babies at birth, and the routine use of infant formulas. The sessions were facilitated by UNICEF Consultants Dr. Rolando Figueroa and Dr. Tanya Destang-Beaubrun, and UNICEF/CAO Health & Nutrition Officer, Elaine King.

TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS

Youth Information and Adolescent Support Centres

The AIDS Secretariat in conjunction with the National Drug Unit, is in the process of establishing two Youth Information and Adolescent Support Centres in Grand Turk and Providenciales, as part of their education and prevention programme. Building on an alliance established between the AIDS Secretariats of Trinidad & Tobago and Turks & Caicos, Trinidad has committed to providing technical and financial assistance in the establishment of the Information and Support Centres. Because the youth arm of the Trinidad AIDS Secretariat Rapport was the first group in the region to operate a youth centre, it is therefore in a good position to share the lessons learned, as well as opportunities and constraints. Already, two peer educators and the Deputy Coordinator of the AIDS Secretariat in Turks & Caicos spent a week on attachment to the Rapport Centre in Trinidad, where they were able to observe the centre in operation.
Induction of CARICOM Youth Ambassadors

Twenty-seven Regional Youth Ambassadors of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and one Associate Member were inducted in a ceremony in Paramaribo, Suriname, on 19 August 2002. The CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Programme was a mandate given by Heads of Government in 1993 as part of the 20th Anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas. This is the second set of Ambassadors to be inducted since the reactivation of the peer-leadership initiative in July 2000. They are expected to give service, promote the goals, aims and objectives of the Caribbean community, model and promote pride in regional diversity and responsible citizenship with a view to empowering the youth of the region. The induction ceremony, which was declared open by H.E. Drs. Runaldo R. Venetiaan, President of Suriname, featured keynote address by Dr. Edward Greene, CARICOM Secretariat Assistant Secretary-General for Human & Social Development. Seated are (l - r) Dr. Edward Greene, CARICOM Secretariat Assistant Secretary-General for Human & Social Development; H.E. Drs. Runaldo R. Venetiaan, President of Suriname; and Dr. Marashetty Seenappa UNICEF/CAO Programme Coordinator.

Readers are invited to contribute their views and items of news of human interest. Please send correspondence to one of the following addresses.

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