

# CHILDREN FIRST AGENCY

## IYF OBRA CONFERENCE JUNE 2011

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**Please briefly characterize violence in your sub-region (the Caribbean, Central America and South America) Scope, particularities, how are you affected (perpetrators/victims of violence), geographic particularities**

### *1. The Caribbean – A region of Contrast and Similarities*

- *Sun, rum, music, white sand beaches, lovely food, unique culture...relaxation*
- *But yet... murders, gang violence, violence against children, women and girls, Homicides, rapes, shootings, ammunitions shootings*
- *“One thing that they all have in common is that they have all been caught in the crossfire of International drug trafficking, despite their diversity and the positive is that the flow is decreasing*
  
- *In addition to Drug Trafficking, kidnapping, corruption and other forms of organized crimes affect the region with Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago taking the lead in Kidnapping.*
  
- *Corruption is difficult to manage but in 2006, Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, had 10 Caribbean countries included in the world ranking with Haiti being the most corrupt and Barbados the least corrupt ranked # 24*
- *Human Trafficking, Child Pornography, Rising Levels of Armed Violence*
- *Migration and Transnational families in search of “better life”*
- *Increased Gang Violence – Guyana “Phantom Squad” Jamaica “ One-Order” to Extradition Requests “Roger Khan” to Christopher “Dudus” Coke<sup>1</sup>*
- *Nick Allen “The Telegraph” in an article noted that Antigua a tropical haven of peace and tranquility has a growing problem of violent crime... Antigua has murder rate per head of population (80,000) its 3 times higher than that of New York<sup>2</sup>*
- *According to the latest statistics, Jamaica has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest homicide rate in the world, with 49 murders per year per 100,000 people trailing only IRAQ, Venezuela, El Salvador, and Honduras*
- *Additionally some other Caribbean regions have murder rates that are higher than the United States<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.stabroeknews.com/2010/features/05/24/violence-loyalty-and-silence-jamaica%E2%80%99s-tragic-caribbean-example/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericandthecaribbean/antiguaandbarbuda>

<sup>3</sup> <http://gocaribbean.about.com/od/healthandsafety/a/CaribMurder.htm>

- *A Caricom report in March 2010, put the murder rate at 30 per 100,000 annually higher than any other region in the world*

*The impact on youth:*

- *According to the Crime Violence and Development Trend Cost and Policy Option in the Caribbean (2007), Death and injury from youth violence constitute a major public health, social and economic problem across the Caribbean, where youth are disproportionately represented in the rank of both victims and perpetrators of violence*
- *Moreover in many Caribbean countries violent crimes are being committed at younger ages.*
- *Loss of family members/close relatives – in many instances their role models or bread winners*
- *Drop out of school*
- *Inclusion or recruitment into gang*

**Note the specific context in which your program works (e.g., violent neighborhoods, gang activity)**

- *In the parish of St. Catherine, Spanish Town a sub-urban satellite community of the capital Kingston*
- *High incidences of crime and violence and hazardous child labour*
- *Spanish Town suffers from low socio-economic indicators, thus poverty is high and there are many social problems.*
- *Major among these problems are high levels of low literacy, poverty, substance abuse, violent shootings and robberies, lack of employable skills, lack of/or inadequate Sexual Reproductive Health services and information as well as extortion, other illicit activities and organized gangs..*

**Include your organizations objectives**

- *Mission - To work with street, working and vulnerable children, to improve their life opportunities and enable their contribution to society, through active engagement with children and young people, their families, communities and institutions which affects their lives.*

**Describe the profile of youth you support, where they come from (neighborhoods), their backgrounds (level of education) etc, and how you go about engaging them, by what means... and how do you engage with violent groups/gangs, negotiate with them (or not) and set limits etc?**

*Profile*

- *Unattached youth (male and females) 17-25 years who have attained in many instances only a Grade 9 level or less of education (middle school equivalent)*
- *Nationally - youths 15-24 years - 26.2 %M and 7.9%F are illiterate*
- *Irregular attendance and under performance at school both at the primary and secondary levels*
- *High levels of unemployment and unskilled youth*

*Where they are from?*

- *Volatile, depressed communities in Spanish Town and its environs*
- *Communities with high unemployment levels and little or no adequate infrastructure and commercial development*

*Recruitment strategy*

- *Word of mouth based on Agency's rack record*
- *Exist Waiting list*
- *Success rate of previous programme – participants referring persons*
- *Visits to church and other communities*
- *Resocialization process – reasoning – expectations rules, one-on-one interviews and counseling sessions*

*Violent Gangs and Groups*

- *Not aligned to any of the political party or gangs*
- *Respected by gang leadership based on work with youths, but sometimes are viewed as “the Competitor”*
- *Limits: No violence in the centre, no “political party colours” , - establish the centre as a “safe-space” off limits to gang related activities*
- *In some cases the gang leadership “enforces” project attendance*

**What are your expectations for these youths once they've completed your program – describe the “Change” or “transformation” expected**

- *Positive outlook on life*
- *Feeling a sense of inclusion, hope and the ability to make meaningful contributions to society*
- *Have a skill and explore further training opportunities or establish own small business venture*
- *Secure job opportunities*
- *Reduction of their vulnerabilities of engaging in illicit activities – gang, violence*

- *Role model for youth from their community*
- *Share the experience with other young people*

**What do you wish these youth (“treatment” in research language) to meet such expectations, i.e., describe the 3-4 critical elements of your programming which are essential to the “change”**

- *Holistic youth programming*
- *Youth Participation “full-participation” in all areas of programming*
- *Life Skills Education, counseling and Psychosocial support*
- *Welfare support – child support, bus-fare, lunch assistance, internship placement support*

**Describe how you have established multi-sectoral partnerships/alliances to support youth to transition from a violent past/present into a healthier and more productive lifestyle/future? What 2-3 lessons can you share to others here present on how to do this? What initial steps?**

- *A multi-sectoral partnership with various groupings – Employers, training agencies, donors, mentors, young entrepreneurs, banks, relevant government agencies, service clubs and community based organizations, schools and churches*

#### *Lessons*

- *Support to project does not necessarily mean money – it could be goods, services, time or even advice*
- *Given the opportunity, these youngsters can make valuable contribution to society*
- *Ongoing dialogue and sharing –the highlights and the challenges*

#### *Initial steps*

- *sensitization and awareness raising sessions on the initiative*
- *Have an open day and encourage them to participate and have dialogue with the participants*
- *Continue the dialogue – update these stakeholders and let them know what is happening. Invite them to special project activities*