



JAMAICA: REDUCING VIOLENCE THROUGH THE VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION PROGRAM

A proposal for UNICEF Next Generation

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OVERVIEW

Jamaica is well known for having some of the most beautiful beaches in the Caribbean. But beyond this beauty is another Jamaica with extreme inequity and disparity, and an epidemic of violence that can have a severe long-term negative impact on Jamaica's children.

Violence against children in Jamaica exists against a backdrop of widespread homicide and discriminatory attitudes against women and girls. For example, while all other crimes decreased from 2014 to 2015, the homicide rate went up by 20 percent during this time. High rates of homicide have been seen in Jamaica since 2005, with children often being the victims, and at times, the perpetrators of criminal acts. In 2014, 8% of victims of violent crimes were children. The Ministry of National Security's Jamaica Crime Observatory reported that during 2011-2015, males between the ages of 11-17 were more likely than females to be murdered, robbed or shot; whereas females within the same age cohort were more at risk of being sexually assaulted.

According to the Jamaica Constabulary Force statistics for 2014, 44 children were murdered during that year, 138 were the victims of shootings and aggravated assault, and 447 girls were victims of rape. A gun was the main weapon used by perpetrators to attack victims. Police reports from 2014 indicate that adolescent males were at increased risk



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of participating in murders, shootings and robberies, as well as other major crimes. During 2014, 29 children (28 males, 1 female) were arrested for murder, 83 (76 males, 7 females) for shooting and aggravated assault and 63 (all male) for rape.

UNICEF is concerned about the increase in homicides in Jamaica and the prevailing impunity for these crimes. In response to the Government of Jamaica's concerns regarding the homicide rate, UNICEF has supported the Ministry of National Security (MNS) and Peace Management Initiative in implementing the **Violence Interruption Program (VIP)**.

UNICEF IN ACTION

VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION PROGRAM (VIP)

The Violence Interruption Program (VIP) works to break the cycle of violence for youth in Jamaican communities through using trained Violence Interrupters (VIs), who are community residents highly-respected by the children, youth and adults in their neighborhoods. The Violence Interrupters (i) identify and detect potential shooting events (ii) identify and detect individuals and groups at highest risk of involvement in shootings/killings (iii) interrupt potential violence by mediating conflicts and preventing retaliation (iv) influence the behaviors and norms of those at highest risk of involvement in shooting/killings, and (v) use data to inform daily efforts and make necessary changes to interruption strategies.

The VIP uses the approach of the Cure Violence program, a Chicago-based initiative that treats violence as a public health issue. Jamaica's VIP collaborates with Cure Violence to train community workers as VIs, share data-gathering methodology, equip the police to deliver more child-friendly services, and assist the MNS in providing reliable data on crime and violence that impacts children.

In 2015, a phased roll-out of the VIP began in twenty 'hot spot' communities across the island. These are communities that have accounted for the highest rates of homicides and shootings in the country. Currently, there are 42 VIs working in the program in these hot spot communities across 3 of Jamaica's 14 parishes.

SAMPLE PROGRAMS

UNICEF recognizes the effect Jamaica's epidemic of violence has had on women and girls, and is working to create safe spaces and means of empowerment to break the cycle of violence, including sexual violence. UNICEF's partnership with the Jamaica-based NGO **Eve for Life** is one example of this work. Through this partnership, Eve for Life provides counseling, psychosocial support and testing services, as well as training for women in life skills and sexual and reproductive health and rights.



EduSport session in St. Elizabeth
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Another partner in UNICEF's anti-violence work is **EduSport**, a novel program that creates structured physical education, improves learning and boosts key life skills for children in the rural parish of St. Elizabeth. The program is implemented by BREDS/Treasure Beach Foundation, a local NGO committed to providing sport and play opportunities for children in rural communities. Each week, a team of trained coaches infuse EduSport sessions with opportunities to teach listening skills, discipline, teamwork, self-esteem building and conflict resolution. With the program currently expanding, EduSport is well on its way to becoming a regular offering for some 11,000 children in 61 rural primary

schools around Jamaica, including 5,000 children in 75 percent of the primary schools in the parish of St. Elizabeth.

THE IMPACT OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP

Since program commencement, the VIs have engaged over 6,500 community residents through general canvassing, over 1,400 high risk youths have benefited from over 1,000 mediations, and 100 referrals have been made to therapeutic services and community activities, such as sports clubs and membership in community associations. Personal development services have been provided for over 58 community participants, and stakeholder consultations have been held with key government and civil society organizations to familiarize them with the roles and functions of VIs in their respective communities of operation. In addition, ongoing norm changing community-based activities have been improving community integration and developing positive social values. These activities include football competitions, community rescue group projects that support the vulnerable members of the community, women's empowerment groups, and community safety action planning.

The activities of the VIP over the 2017-2019 period would seek to extend services to new parishes and communities while also expanding and enhancing services to currently targeted parishes to ensure that all highly volatile communities are adequately served. Efforts would also be made to better equip VIs to deliver quality services and to use the network of services in the security, child protection and justice sectors more efficiently. Attention would be paid to strengthening the data collection, analysis and utilization processes, and to developing a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework for activities.



Dave was convicted of murder in his 20s and spent most of his life in prison. Now paroled, Dave works as a Violence Interrupter, turning youth away from gang and gun violence.

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Additionally, a communication/advocacy strategy would be developed and implemented to raise public awareness of the impact of violence on children, promote the program's plans and achievements to encourage public engagement, inform decision-making of policy makers and implementers, and assist at the community level with the effort of VIs to change social norms and behavior.

The VIP will work through a variety of partnerships to end the epidemic of violence in Jamaica and its negative effects on children. The partner Cure Violence will provide training for VIs, while the Ministry of National Security will work through its Jamaica Crime Observatory program on data management. The government's Constabulary Force will strengthen its child-focused programming and work to collaborate more closely with the VIP, and key community-based violence prevention and reduction organizations will be supported to broaden the VIP's network and impact.

PROGRAM MILESTONES

■ **Year 1 (2017)**

- Expand the VIP in currently targeted parishes (increasing the number of communities served) in response to crime and violence statistics.
- Recruit, validate and train 50 VIs in Kingston and St. Andrew.
- Establish a team of local trainers and develop a trainer's manual.
- Increase the emphasis on working with adolescents and the application of behavior change/management methods in the VI training curriculum.
- Empower communities to deliver more effective programs that provide character-building, rehabilitation and integration activities for at-risk adolescents.
- Conduct consultations with local stakeholders (e.g., government and civil society partners).
- Strengthen referral and coordination services between partners and the VIP.
- Improve local VI data collection and management processes to better capture data on children.
- Strengthen the management and analysis capacity of the Ministry of National Security.
- Support the work of the Jamaica Crime Observatory to expand the scope of its data collection to include all 14 parishes and provide more timely and efficient data on crime and violence against children and by children.
- Improve the VIPs monitoring and evaluation framework, including the training of police officers in the use of geospatial mapping methodology.

■ **Year 2 (2018)**

- Provide on-going training workshops to VIs in five parishes (Kingston and St. Andrew, Clarendon, Westmoreland, St. Catherine, and St. James).

- Develop and disseminate Standard Operating Procedures for Violence Interruption to ensure consistency in program delivery.
 - Conduct consultations with local stakeholders (e.g., government and civil society partners).
 - Strengthen referral and coordination services between partners and the VIP.
 - Provide a refresher course for local VI trainers.
 - Continue to support the work of the Jamaica Crime Observatory to expand the scope of its data collection.
- Year 3 (2019)
- Conduct consultations with local stakeholders (e.g., government and civil society partners).
 - Strengthen referral and coordination services between partners and the VIP.
 - Provide on-going training workshops to VIs in five parishes (Kingston and St. Andrew, Clarendon, Westmoreland, St. Catherine, and St. James).
 - Provide a refresher course for local VI trainers.
 - Conduct an evaluation of the VIP and report on findings.

THE WAY FORWARD

We can and must do more to end the cycle of violence for boys and girls in Jamaica. With a \$250,000 gift from UNICEF Next Generation, UNICEF will support Jamaica's Violence Interruption Program for three years. Through partnership with government ministries and local NGOs during this time, UNICEF will support the following program activities:

- Expanding the VIP to new parishes and communities while also enhancing services to currently targeted parishes to ensure that all highly-volatile communities are adequately served.
- Training VIs and government personnel, and developing training materials for future use.
- Developing and disseminating Standard Operating Procedures for the VIP.
- Strengthening data capture, analysis and management by the VIP and government.
- Consulting with community, NGO and government members.
- Conducting an evaluation of the VIP.
- Implementing a communication/advocacy strategy for the VIP.

On behalf of the children of Jamaica, thank you.

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