

CARIBBEAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Julie Meeks Gardner, BSc, Dip Nutrition, PhD *UWI*
– Tutor/Coordinator

WORK OF THE CENTRE



The work of the Centre focused on research, technical assistance, outreach and networking. CCDC maintained a strong research focus on violence and aggression and child development, HIV/AIDS and child outcomes. Preliminary research studies were undertaken for new research initiatives in these areas. The Centre also convened a regional workshop for researchers on Children and HIV/ AIDS in the Caribbean. Tutor/Coordinator Dr. Julie Meeks Gardner continued supervision of four graduate students. There are two members of academic staff at the Centre, the Tutor/Coordinator and a Research Fellow who started mid-way through the review period.

Public Education & Outreach

CCDC maintained its work strengthening the Early Childhood Development (ECD) network of representatives from government ministries, services, technical persons, associations, and donors in the region, as well as international organisations. The network building activities, currently supported by UNESCO, include information sharing, facilitation of the exchange of proven practices, support for the Caribbean ECD web site, coordination of regional ECD Link teleconferences (using UWIDEC), production of the electronic Link newsletter, and participation in meetings. CCDC continued to serve as a UNESCO Cooperating Centre for Early Childhood.

CCDC convened a workshop with researchers in the area of Children and HIV/AIDS in December 2004, sponsored by the UNESCO Office for the Caribbean, to encourage researchers to share their findings across disciplines, reduce duplication of efforts and encourage collaboration in identifying and targeting areas most needed for research. Researchers from the fields of paediatrics, nutrition, mental health, epidemiology, social geography, community health, education and fertility management, as well as from donor agencies participated. The consensus was that the group would support the formalisation of a network to encourage dialogue and collaboration among researchers working in the area of Children and HIV/AIDS in Jamaica, and to expand the network to include other Caribbean countries. CCDC is seeking funding to support its role in this process.

Institutional Cooperation

CCDC is the administrative centre for, and Dr. Meeks Gardner is a member of the Children's Issues Coalition (ChIC), a group of academics at UWI, Mona who are seeking to enable more integrated research and teaching as well as outreach services and dissemination of research findings, in areas of child health, welfare, education, development and behaviour. ChIC is working on two major projects: an annual journal entitled Caribbean Childhoods and the development of a database of research on children's issues. Volume 2 of the Journal, which focuses on Children at Risk, was published in 2005. The database and a review of the compiled work are now completed, and these will be disseminated at a launch and workshop later in the year.

Research and Technical Assistance

Dr. Meeks Gardner was invited to be one of two child development specialists participating in a Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative programme that aims to develop and apply a systematic methodology to identify research priorities in child health and nutrition globally. The initial meeting of participants and programme planning was held in Croatia in June 2005. The child development section is being carried out along with Dr. Maureen Black of the University of Maryland, and an invited team of world experts.

The research programme on *Aggression and Violence in Jamaican Children* continued with a number of different activities being undertaken. Data analysis continued on the pilot study for a trial of parent and teacher interventions to reduce aggressive behaviour among primary school children (funded by the CHASE Fund and the Caribbean Health Research Council, with assistance from the British Council). Under the *Violence Programme Inventory*, funded by UNICEF Jamaica, a database of programmes has been developed listing all the intervention programmes addressing children and violence in Jamaica. Dr. Meeks Gardner was the lead researcher of the UWI consortium selected to conduct research for the *UN Secretary General's Report on Children and Violence: Caribbean Area Report* funded through UNICEF. This report comprised an extensive review of the literature relating to issues around children and violence in 16 Caribbean countries, and detailed reports from the governments of the participating countries. The team also participated in a regional consultation of children and young people and stakeholders, and conducted the working group sessions to identify the perceived priority areas for intervention. A feasibility study on nutrition intervention to reduce aggression funded through the Minority Health & Health Disparities International Research Training Program (MHIRT) was undertaken.

The programme of research on *HIV/AIDS and Child Development* continued. During the review period CCDC continued to provide support to the *Promoting Healthy Lifestyles in Western Jamaica: HFLE – HIV/AIDS Project*. This project conducted by Dr. Phyllis Macpherson-Russell of the Human Resource Development Unit (HRDU/SCS) aims to strengthen Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programmes in teachers' colleges, and among parents and community groups in a selected area of Western Jamaica.

A grant was approved from the Caribbean Development Bank to continue the work of the IDB-funded Child Focus II project in non-IDB-borrowing Caribbean countries. Called *Child Focus III*, this project will support ECD capacity building through work in three areas: implementation of curriculum goals and outcomes; financing and sustainability of ECD; and implementation of policies and regulatory systems for improving the quality of ECD services. Work is proposed for two countries in each of the three areas.

Main targets 2005 -2006

Conduct intervention trials to reduce children's aggressive behaviour.

Develop a database of HIV/AIDS intervention programmes that target children.

Conduct an intervention trial to reduce the negative developmental outcomes of being affected by HIV/AIDS.

Host a second workshop on children and HIV/AIDS.

Develop a Caribbean-wide network of researchers on HIV/AIDS and children.

Develop an extensive database of searchable materials on children's issues for use across UWI and the Caribbean.

Determine the requirements for and the feasibility of an associate degree programme in child development for the Caribbean.

Secure funding for Child Rights Universities Network (CRUN) activities.

PAPERS PRESENTED Meeks Gardner, J.

- . • “Children and Violence: Interventions at school and at home.” Childwatch International Research Network 2nd International Conference: Children and Adolescents Growing Up in Contexts of Poverty, Marginalization and Violence in Latin America, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. September 27 -29, 2004.
- . • “Interventions for Aggressive Children.” Faculty of Medical Sciences 13th Annual Research Conference Workshop: Violence and the Impact on the Health Services, Jamaica, November 10 -12, 2004.
- . • “Zinc Deficiency and Developmental Outcomes.” The International Zinc Nutrition Consultative Group symposium “Moving Zinc into the Micronutrient Program Agenda”, Lima, Peru. November 15, 2004.
- . • “Network for researchers working with Caribbean children and HIV/AIDS.” UWI HARP 3rd Annual Scientific & Business Conference, Barbados May5-8, 2005.
- . • “Experiences of the Caribbean Report for the UN Secretary General’s Report on Violence Against Children.” Assembly of Key Institutions of Childwatch International, Norway, June 25 -28, 2005.
- . • (with Powell CA, Thomas J, Lewis Y, Grantham-McGregor S.) “Social behaviour of Jamaican youths previously identified as aggressive or prosocial.” *Childhoods 2005*, Oslo, Norway, June 29 – July 3, 2005.
- . • (with Thomas JA, Powell CA, Lewis Y, Grantham-McGregor S.) “Jamaican parents’ responses to children’s behaviour.” *Childhoods 2005*, Oslo, June 29 – July 3, 2005.

PUBLICATIONS Books and Monographs

- * Walker S, Williams S, (Eds.) (2005) *Caribbean Childhoods: From Research to Action*. Volume 2 Children at Risk. Journal of the Children’s Issues Coalition, UWI. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Press.

Refereed Journal Articles

- .* J Meeks Gardner, C Powell. “Aggressive youth and youth experiences of violence: Who is at risk in Jamaica?” *Caribbean Childhoods 2* (2005): 71 -81.
- .* K Kruszewski, JM Meeks Gardner. “Breastfeeding patterns among 6 week old infants at the UHWI.” *West Indian Medical Journal* 54 (2005): 28 -33.
- .* J Meeks Gardner, SM Grantham-McGregor, C Powell, S Walker, T Cole. “Effects of zinc supplementation on the growth, morbidity and behavioural development of undernourished Jamaican children.” *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 82 (2005): 399 -405.

Technical Reports

- * J Meeks Gardner, A Henry-Lee, P Chevannes, H Henningham, C Coore, Report on Children and Violence in the Caribbean for the *UN Secretary General’s Global Report*.

Income Generation

CCDC received its annual subvention from the Government of Jamaica. The Centre also earned income through the rental of facilities and fees for the administration of projects. Project income for

2004-2005 was approximately J\$9M. Other income including UGC funding was approximately J\$3.6M.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Julie Meeks Gardner

- .- Chairman, National Food and Nutrition Coordinating Committee
- .- Chairman, Advisory Board of the Child Development Agency
- .- Secretary, Board of the Malnourished Children's Foundation
- .- Board Member, Peace Management Initiative
- .- Member, National Plan of Action on Children Coordinating Committee
- .- Member, Technical Steering Committee, Research Agenda Programme, of the Planning Institute of Jamaica
- .- Member, Inter-Sectoral Working Group on Children and Violence
- .- Board Member, Childwatch International Research Network

