

CARIBBEAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (CCDC)

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

WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT



The work of the Centre focused on research, technical assistance, networking activities and outreach through public service. CCDC maintained a strong research focus on violence and aggression and child development, HIV/AIDS and child outcomes with new activities being undertaken under established projects. Work on the development and hosting of Early Childhood Development (ECD) related databases was a key activity during the academic year. The Centre also supported training at a range of levels from para-professional through post-graduate. Dr. Julie Meeks Gardner continued supervision of three graduate students. There are two members of academic staff at the Centre, the Tutor/Coordinator and a Research Fellow.

Public Education & Outreach

The Caribbean Early Childhood Development website project continued through the CCDC, Dudley Grant Memorial Trust and the Institute of Education. The website which was being re-designed is used by people from the region and beyond interested in early childhood issues. CCDC continued to serve as a UNESCO Cooperating Centre for Early Childhood.

CCDC maintained a number of activities designed to support ECD institutional strengthening and to strengthen networks of ECD representatives from government ministries, technical persons, ECD associations and donors in the region, as well as international organizations. Over the last five years, donors such as World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, Bernard

Van Leer Foundation, UNICEF and UNESCO have supported this work. CCDC has built relationships with colleagues throughout the English-speaking Caribbean and is establishing links in Dutch, French and Spanish-speaking Caribbean states.

Institutional Cooperation

A study on Interventions to Reduce Aggression among Basic School Children was carried out in collaboration with the Child Development Research Group (TMRI) and the Faculty of Education, with grant funds from the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica and UNICEF.

Dr. Meeks Gardner is a member of the Children's Issues Coalition (ChIC), a group of academics at UWI, Mona campus who are seeking to enable more integrated research and teaching as well as outreach services and dissemination of research findings, in areas of child development and behaviour. The Coalition publishes an annual journal entitled Caribbean Childhoods. Work on Volumes 3 (on Indicators and Screening Instruments of Children's Wellbeing, funded by UNICEF) and 4 (on Children and Violence) was undertaken during the review period. The work on the development of a database of research on children's issues was completed, and this was presented at a workshop.

Research and Technical Assistance

Dr. Meeks Gardner was a steering committee member of the Lancet Series on Child Development, a group of eminent researchers in the field of child development who undertook a comprehensive review of the state of knowledge of child development in non-industrialized countries. The review was prepared as three papers were accepted for publication in the prestigious medical journal, The Lancet. Dr. Meeks Gardner was an author on one paper, and contributor to all three. The initiative was supported by UNICEF.

Under the Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative (CHNRI) programme a technical working group was formed, and suggested research is being prioritized using the proposed methodology in a pilot. Dr. Meeks Gardner authored the first report and will present this at a CHNRI meeting in Egypt in October 2006. Together with Dr. Maureen Black of the University of Maryland, Dr. Meeks Gardner is leading the child development aspect of the project which aims to develop and apply a systematic methodology to identify global research priorities.

The research programme on Aggression and Violence in Jamaican Children continued with activities being undertaken under various projects. Data analysis was completed on the pilot study for a trial of parent and teacher interventions to reduce aggressive behaviour among primary school children and a report and paper have been drafted. Under the Violence Prevention Programme Inventory (funded by UNICEF, Jamaica) a searchable database of intervention programmes was created and all findings presented to stakeholders. The database is available online through the CCDC website. A proposal to maintain the database including regular updating has been submitted to UNICEF, Jamaica. Dr. Meeks Gardner was the lead researcher of the UWI consortium selected to conduct the review of literature relating to issues around children and violence under the UN Secretary General's Report on Children and Violence: Caribbean Area Report. The findings which were presented in Trinidad and Tobago in February 2006 have been incorporated into the UN Secretary General's Global Report on Children and Violence.

The programme of research on HIV/AIDS and Child Development continued. A grant proposal submitted to the IDB (US\$ 41,500) to create a database of interventions for children affected by HIV/AIDS was successful. The project is expected to commence in the next academic year. A second research workshop on HIV and children was held.

Work on the CDB-funded Child Focus III Project began in August 2005 and will continue until February 2007. This project is supporting 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. To date, consultants have completed reports for the first two areas. The outputs will be disseminated for advocacy and public education purposes related to ECD and parenting.

CCDC successfully negotiated with the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN) of the OAS to be the host institution in the Caribbean for their extensive databases of documents, institutions and programmes. In addition, the Centre hosted the training by IIN personnel of librarians from Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago and the Main Library, UWI in the use of these databases.

Main targets 2006-2007

- 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 third workshop on children and HIV/AIDS;
- Develop a Caribbean-wide network of researchers on HIV/AIDS and children;
- Determine the requirements for and the feasibility of a course or courses in Child Rights.

PAPER PRESENTED

Meeks Gardner, J.

- “Violence Interventions with Children”. Inter-American Forum on Citizen Security: Examining Experiences and Challenges, Medellin, Colombia, September 12-13, 2005.
- “Violence Prevention Programmes Inventory and Data- base”. Violence Prevention Alliance Meeting, Kingston, Jamaica, December 13, 2005.
- “Findings of the Caribbean Desk Review for the UN Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Children: From Research to Policy & Practice”. 4th International Conference on Crime and Justice in the Caribbean, St. Augustine, Trinidad, February 8-11, 2006.
- “A database of violence prevention interventions for Jamaican children”. Violence Prevention Alliance Meeting, Kingston, Jamaica, March 27, 2006.
- “Managing Classrooms in Jamaican Schools: What, why and how”. Jamaica Teachers’ Association Conference on Behaviour Management for Classroom Teachers and School Administrators, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, April 18, 2006.
- “HIV/AIDS and Children – The research evidence in the Caribbean”. International Nursing Midwifery Conference, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, June 1-3, 2006.

PUBLICATIONS

Refereed Book Chapters

- * Meeks Gardner J. (2006) “Children and Violence: Interventions at school and at home”, Children and Adolescents Growing Up in Contexts of Poverty, Marginalization and Violence in Latin America. CIESPI. Rio de Janeiro: Author, 93-106

INCOME GENERATION

CCDC received a 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 2005-2006 was approximately J\$2.9M. Other income including UGC funding was approximately J\$2.6M.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Julie Meeks Gardner

- Chairman, National Food and Nutrition Coordinating Committee
- Chairman, Advisory Board of the Child Development Agency
- Member, 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
- Member, CARICOM Regional Working Group on Early Childhood Development
- Board Member, Childwatch International Research Network

Awards

Julie Meeks Gardner

2005 UWI Long-service award for 15 years of service

2006 UWI Mona Principal's Award for Research with an Impact on Public Policy (as a member of the Child Development Research Group)