

## CARIBBEAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

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Tutor / Coordinator

### **WORK OF THE CENTRE**

The Centre continued its strong research focus on violence and aggression and child development, HIV/AIDS and child outcomes with new activities being undertaken under established projects and new initiatives being developed. The co-hosting of the first Caribbean Child Research Conference was a key activity during this academic year. The Centre's technical assistance was sought by inter-governmental bodies to support varied initiatives. CCDC supervised five graduate students during the period. There are two members of academic staff at the Centre, the Tutor/Coordinator and a Research Fellow.



### **Continuing Education**

A proposal to support course or courses in Child Rights Education for professionals and para-professionals working with children was strongly supported by the Child Development Agency (CDA), the Office of the Children's Advocate and the Coalition on the Rights of the Child. CCDC associate Heather Gallimore was supported to attend the Child Rights course in Ghent, November 2006 by UNICEF and the Director's Office in preparation for the development of the course. Course development and piloting are expected to take place in late 2007 - 2008.

### **Public Education & Outreach**

A major activity for the CCDC in 2006 was the co-hosting of the first Caribbean Child Research Conference, funded by UNICEF, Jamaica. The conference was conceived by the CCDC along with SALISES, and these two UWI institutions served as co-chairs and a joint conference secretariat. The conference sought to provide a multi-disciplinary

meeting of researchers from across the Caribbean with a child-centred agenda. The conference took place on October 25-26, 2006 with some 350 attendees including a number of secondary school children and youth, and participants from over 10 Caribbean countries.

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. This year, UNESCO supported the CCDC to host networking conferences on Children and Violence and Children and HIV. The third and final forum in this series, on Child Rights Issues, will be hosted in September 2007.

### **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 published in the prestigious medical journal, *The Lancet*. The initiative was supported by UNICEF. The publications were launched in London, Boston and Dhaka. A launch is scheduled for Kingston in October 2007.

The Lancet steering group and the Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative (CHNRI) child development group, led by Dr. Meeks Gardner merged to become one technical group - the International Child Development Steering Committee - to continue these initiatives. The group has been awarded a grant to hold a meeting on "Child Development from a Global Perspective: Lost Potential, Modifiable Risk Factors, Successful Programs, and Future Goals" at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Study and Conference Center, Italy, from October 1 to 6, 2007.

The research programme on Aggression and Violence in Jamaican Children continued with activities being undertaken under various on-going projects. The report of the study 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) was completed. Also completed during this period was the study on

Interventions to Reduce Aggression among Basic School Children which was carried out in collaboration with the Child Development Research Group (TMRI) and the Faculty of Education and funded by grants from the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica and UNICEF.

A survey of gang involvement and violent behaviour among school children was carried out by the Safe Schools Initiative with assistance from CCDC. CCDC is carrying out the data analysis for this study. In addition, a grant proposal to study the involvement of school children and gangs was developed and funding is being sought to support this. The OAS Department of Public Security invited Dr. Meeks to collaborate on a study to describe the meaning of the term 'youth gangs' and related phrases as utilized in different countries in the Americas. The report has been completed.

Activities continued under the research programme in HIV and Child Development. Data collection continued for the database of interventions for children affected by HIV/AIDS; an outline proposal to fund a comprehensive programme of work in this area was favourably received by PANCAP (Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/AIDS), a special project of the CARICOM Secretariat, and a full proposal is under development and an analysis of psychosocial support programmes for children infected/affected by HIV was carried out during summer of 2007 with assistance from exchange students from the University of Michigan on the Minority Health & Health Disparities International Research Training (MHIRT) programme. The project report was submitted as an abstract to the Caribbean Child Research Conference 2007

Work on the CDB-funded Child Focus III Project was completed during this academic year. The final reports were submitted and reviewed by the Project Implementation Team. The outputs will be disseminated across the region for advocacy and public education purposes related to ECD and parenting.

The OAS invited the participation of CCDC as academic advisors of a poverty reduction programme to be carried out in Jamaica, Trinidad and St. Lucia. The programme will involve the technical transfer of selected aspects of a successful programme in Chile, the Puente programme, to these countries. CCDC convened a UWI team to consult on this project. The OAS Department of Education and Culture, in association with CIDA is embarking on a Democratic Citizenship Project to improve principles of democracy in courses for

teachers. CCDC was invited to a first stakeholders meeting in Barbados in July. The OAS has since proposed that CCDC host a stakeholders' meeting at UWI in 2008.

#### **Main targets 2007-2008**

- Continue ongoing programmes, projects and networking activities
- Develop the HIV programme of networking, information sharing and research.
- Continue the intervention trials to reduce children's aggressive behaviour
- Complete the 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
- Continue the annual research workshops on children and HIV/AIDS
- Develop a Caribbean-wide network of researchers on HIV/AIDS and children
- Develop and pilot a course or courses in Child Rights Education

#### **PAPERS PRESENTED**

Meeks Gardner, J.

- “Experiences of applying the priority setting methodology to child development”. CHNRI Priority Setting Satellite Session of the Global Forum for Health Research 10th Annual Meeting, Cairo, Egypt, October – November 2006.
- “Aggression and Violence: Anomalous Study Area or Obvious Offshoot?” Tropical Metabolism Research Unit, UWI, 50th Anniversary Celebrations: Scientific Conference, UWI, Mona, November 2006.
- “Violence, Youth and Children in the Caribbean”. Organization of American States, Washington D.C. March 2007.

- “Issues of Violence and Children in the Caribbean”. Workshop on Organized Crime: A Threat to the Caribbean, Montego Bay, Jamaica, March 2007.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Refereed Journal Articles**

*WIMJ* = *West Indian Medical Journal*

- \* Grantham-McGregor, S., Yin Bun, C., Cueto, S., Glewwe, P., Richter, L, Strupp, B. & the International Child Development Steering Group (Engle, P., Black, M., Meeks Gardner, J., Lozoff, B., Wachs, T. & Walker, S.). (2007) Over two hundred million children fail to reach their developmental potential in the first five years in developing countries. *Lancet*, 369: 60-70.
- \* Walker, S.P., Wachs ,T.D., Meeks Gardner, J., Lozoff, B., Wasserman, G.A., Pollitt, E., Carter, J., & the International Child Development Steering Group. (2007) Child development: Risk factors for adverse outcomes in developing countries. *Lancet*, 369: 145-157.
- \* Engle, P., Black, M., Behrman, J., Cabral de Mello, M., Gertler, P., Kapiriri, L., Martorell, R., Eming Young, M., & the International Child Development Steering Group (Grantham-McGregor, S., Lozoff, B., Meeks Gardner, J., Wachs, T. & Walker, S.). (2007) Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential among 200 Million children. *Lancet*, 369: 229-242.
- \* Meeks Gardner, J.M., Powell, C.A. & Grantham-McGregor, S.M. (2007) Determinants of aggression and prosocial behaviour among Jamaican schoolboys. *WIMJ*, 56: 34-41.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE**

Julie Meeks Gardner

- Chairman, National Food and Nutrition Coordinating Committee
- Co-Chair, Caribbean Child Research Conference

- Board Member, Malnourished Children's Foundation
- Board Member, Peace Management Initiative
- Member, National Plan of Action on Children Coordinating Committee
- Member, Inter-Sectoral Working Group on Children and Violence
- Member, Consultative Committee of the Office of the Children's Advocate
- Member, National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labour
- Member, Committee for the Enhancement of Basic Schools Project
- Member, Research and Data Management Sub-committee, Early Childhood Commission
- Member, Early Childhood Commission Conference Committee
- Member, CARICOM Regional Working Group on Early Childhood Development
- Board Member, Childwatch International Research Network

CCDC is represented on the following bodies:

- Child Rights Universities Network
- Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development