

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND INFORMATION

**PUBLICATION OF FINAL REPORT: STUDY ON CHILDREN LIVING / WORKING ON THE STREETS IN JAMAICA AND ESTABLISHMENT OF MULTI-SECTORAL BODY TO CAUTERIZE SAME**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Members are asked to note that at its meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021, Cabinet approved:

- i. the release to the public of the findings of the Final Report: Study on Children Living / Working on the Streets in Jamaica;
- ii. the establishment of a Multi-Sectoral Body to review and finalize a Street and Working Children Framework of Action as well as oversee the implementation of said Framework of Action in a bid to cauterize and significantly reduce the prevalence of children Living and Working on the Streets in Jamaica.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

2.1 Members are asked to note that the issue of children working on the streets is of grave concern as the practice is indicative of a lifestyle of significant risk wherein both their safety and healthy development as children are compromised. It is to be noted that the last survey on this vulnerable population was undertaken at a time that pre-dated the passage of the *Child Care & Protection Act* in 2004 and the implementation of its provisions. Having regard to the increased visibility of street and working children across Jamaica, and the absence of empirical data on the population, a study on the nature and extent of the phenomenon is timely. Such a study is particularly important to policy and programme development in order to understand and address the factors contributing to the phenomenon, provide services targeting those children found to be living and working on the streets, and strengthen existing programmes to promote and safeguard the best interest of all children in Jamaica.

2.2 The street and working children phenomenon has been of concern to the people and Government of Jamaica (GoJ) over the years. The reality is that, especially in urban areas, children are often observed at major intersections peddling their wares or seeking to wipe the windshields of motorists both during and outside of regular school hours. This is of concern because the practice not only constitutes a lifestyle of significant risk to both the safety and healthy development of these children, but also a blight on their educational development as they are often out of school.

2.3 International Development Partners in the field of child protection have suggested that the situation is far-reaching, with thousands of children said to be living and/ working on Jamaican streets. The 2002 National Survey of Street Children defined the typical street child in Jamaica as “a thirteen year-old boy from a female-headed household of

five, where his guardian is marginally employed – as a vendor, domestic helper, otherwise self-employed or unskilled worker.”

- 2.4 In an effort to regularize the situation, the Child Protection & Family Services Agency (CPFSA), an Executive Agency operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MoEYI) with technical and financial assistance from Wimrock International under its Clear II Project, initiated the research on children who are living and working on the streets of Jamaica.
- 2.5 The purpose of the study was to determine factors that serve to predispose children to be living and working on the streets (inclusive of trafficking victims that may be invisible), and to identify gaps in the provision of care and social protection services that impede an effective response to addressing the street children phenomenon.
- 2.6 Results and recommendations from the study will be used by the Child Protection & Family Services Agency (CPFSA) and the MoEYI to inform policies, programming, and interventions relating to street children in Jamaica.
- 2.7 The study of **Children Who are Living and Working on the Streets of Jamaica** was conducted across 9 parishes: Kingston & St. Andrew, St Catherine, Clarendon, Westmoreland, St James, St Ann, St Mary and St Thomas. The study which was commissioned as part of a general commitment to addressing urgently and effectively the issues that are negatively impacting the lives of our children, with special focus on children who are living and/or working on the streets.
- 2.8 Within the scope of this study, children (between 5 - 17 years) who live and work on the streets were taken to comprise:
1. Those who sleep in public spaces, without their families (children “of the street”)
  2. Those who work on the streets during the day and return to their family home to sleep at nights (children “on the streets”);
  3. Those who live with their family on the streets (“Street family children”) at the time of the study; and
  4. Youth who were living / working on the streets before they attained the age of maturity (18 years).
- 2.9 The consulting firm, Institute for Applied Social Research headed by its Principal Director, Dr. Joy Moncrieffe emerged as the preferred candidate at the conclusion of the public tender process guided by the provisions of the GoJ Procurement Guidelines.
- 2.10 A Technical Steering Committee was established to guide the research team throughout the study period from 2018 to 2019. The committee consisted of representatives from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MoEYI), the Child Protection and

Family Services Agency (CPFSA), Winrock International, the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and the Ministry of Labour & Social Security.

- 2.11 Members are advised that an application for ethical review and approval for the publication of the study was made to the Ministry of Health and Wellness Advisory Panel on Ethics and Medico-Legal Affairs by the CPFSA and was approved.

### **3.0 STUDY REPORT: CHILDREN LIVING / WORKING ON THE STREETS OF JAMAICA**

- 3.1 Members should note that four hundred and thirteen questionnaires (413) were administered across nine (9) parishes, of which, three hundred seventy three (373) or 90.32% were fully completed and analyzed. Forty (40) or 9.69% of the questionnaires were considered incomplete and were, therefore, not used. On examination, the incomplete questionnaires involved instances where children ran off before completing the exercise or they were involved in child labour but not on the streets.

- 3.2 Of the 373 respondents, 230 or 63% were males and 137 or 37% were females. While the proportion of females is, as expected, less than that of males, this finding is critical as it is normally assumed that girls do not work or hustle on the streets.

- 3.3 The highest proportion of children on the streets falls within the 12 to 13 age band. 15.72% of children who participated were 12 years of age whilst 14.63% were 13 years of age. Thirty-eight or 10% of the sample size were children 10 years of age. Children 15 to 17 years of age made up 28% of the respondents. Children between 5 and 9 years of age grouping constituted 10% of the sample size.

- 3.4 The majority of respondents were located in Kingston and St Andrew (108), followed by St Catherine (85); St Ann (50); Westmoreland (42) and St Thomas (37). Stakeholders suggest that more children and adolescents may be involved in or taken-up by scamming; thus, less are on the streets. Only 11 children were interviewed in Clarendon. This was however, considered to be attributable to the upsurge of violence in the area at the time, which had the effect of keeping some away.

- 3.5 Three Hundred and Nineteen (319) or 94% of the children on the streets return home, whereas eighteen (18) or 5% sleep on the streets. The majority of the participants therefore, were children who work on the streets and return home. It should be noted that children were largely hesitant to acknowledge that they “work”; however, they agreed that their activities could be considered ‘hustling’. In some communities, parents and children were proud to be labelled as hustlers. The major proportion one hundred and one (101) or 35% ‘hustle’, work or beg each day of the week, while forty-six (46) or 16%, hustle four (4) days per week and fifty-four (54) or 18% hustle three days in the course of the week.

- 3.6 Significantly, the majority of children in the sample, two hundred and sixty (260) or 72% attend school most days; sixty-five (65) or 18% attend school sometimes and thirty-four (34) or 9.4% indicated that they used to attend school but no longer do so, whereas the remainder (less than 1%) indicated that they have never attended school.
- 3.7 The majority of respondents hustle/work or beg on the streets in the daytime only; approximately one quarter of the sample are on the streets in both the day and night. Of those who hustle during the daytime, over 57% do so after school. This pattern is consistent with that observed in the 2002 study: the majority of children on the streets attend school and are seeking funds to support themselves and their families.
- 3.8 The common daytime activities include selling snacks and ground provisions, such as sweets, newspapers and ground provisions. Over one quarter of the sample wipe motor vehicle windshields and/or wash cars, while a smaller proportion (12%) report 'hustling' in night clubs and at parties.
- 3.9 Beyond these, there are differing patterns of activity across the communities. In Kingston & St. Andrew and St. James, children who live off the dump also sell scrap metal, loom and copper. Children from one particular community collect money from sponsorship papers. There are reports that children are involved in prostitution, particularly in Kingston and St Andrew, St James, St Ann, St Mary and Westmoreland. Children who reside within fishing villages in St. Catherine and Clarendon are occupied with various tasks in the boating business. However, some girls are involved in prostitution and/or beg for a living. As in select communities in Kingston & St. Andrew, prostitution appears to be learnt/observed behaviour. There is the tendency to consider this a rational response to poverty; therefore, one's body is a 'good' that can be bartered for an income; at least in conversation, the girls or women involved explain that prostitution does not affect them internally.
- 3.10 The study also documented the prevalence of risky sexual practices among children on the streets. Children contend that 'bigger' men proposition young boys and have sexual relations with them. Meanwhile boys traverse the streets, in particular areas, and are involved in homosexual relationships. Their approach to boys and men on the streets are often threatening. There is also a pocket of street children with notoriety given their alleged involvement in aggravated assaults.
- 3.11 There were children who acknowledged their involvement in violent activities, although subsequent interviews revealed that the actual proportions of these children is likely to be higher than the survey findings present.
- 3.12 The research findings indicate that 'consumption poverty' is the most obvious push factor for the child working on the streets, while the potential for 'quick' monetary

gains, is the most significant pull factor. However, when poverty is understood in its multidimensional sense, the research reveals a wider range of factors that cause poverty and, in turn, push children to the streets. In short, addressing consumption poverty alone will not resolve the root issues.

- 3.13 Attention must be paid to the weights that come from family break up or dislocation; lapses in the school/education systems; limitations from learning challenges; peer influence; the growing hustling culture; the inadequacy of social safety nets; various forms of insecurity (economic, political, social, relational, food); the weights and limitations of common practices, such as power relations; witchcraft and dynamics that produce mindsets that cannot be addressed by behavioural change programmes alone.
- 3.14 While the majority of children who hustle in the streets do not feel threatened or pose threats, there are significant segments who threaten citizens, and are, themselves, at high risk of rape, assaults, abduction and death. Children and their parents are aware of this. Thus, those who venture to the major streets now comprise older and more hardened children who know the 'rules of the road'.
- 3.15 The factors and forces that pull children to the streets are complex and inter-related. The major challenge to addressing them is not through defining the appropriate policy and programme but in creating an environment of collaboration across ministries, departments and agencies and civic bodies at the local and national levels. Creating a purposive framework of action that embraces clear definition and determination of effective and measurable methods for managing the implementation processes is also critical.
- 3.16 An effective response programme requires deep and comprehensive interventions that are designed to, *inter alia*:
1. Acknowledge and address the norms, beliefs and values that influence choices across and within communities;
  2. Stem intergenerational inequalities, such that families can transcend conditions of poverty, which necessarily involves: (a) implementing an aggressive, transformative, income-generation programme for parents/guardians; and (b) arresting low educational achievement across generations;
  3. Address learning and psychological challenges among children on the streets;
  4. Urgently tackle the factors that push children to the streets, including those stemming from within the education system;
  5. Expand the programme to effectively prevent new cohorts of children from entering the streets;
  6. Implement child labour legislative deterrents; and
  7. Develop an effective marketing programme that will advocate against child work on the streets while presenting credible options.

#### 4.0 **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

4.1 The preparation of the **Street and Working Children Research Study Report** was spearheaded by the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA), an agency of the Ministry of Education, Youth & Information and is based on inputs garnered from a wide cross-section of stakeholders and technical oversight and guidance from a Technical Steering Committee during the life cycle of the research project.

4.2 A series of engagement sessions comprising:

- I. 24 focus group sessions with parents and guardians;
- II. 10 focus group sessions with children;
- III. 75 personal interviews with parents and guardians; and
- IV. A visit to 58 urban centres across 9 parishes (observation & engagement of adults and children alike).

4.3 Members should note that a stakeholder consultation conference was also organized to receive inputs from MDAs, civil society organizations, academia, youth and children groups, members of the clergy and other advocacy groups. At said conference, the research findings and preliminary recommendations were presented. Plenary sessions were organized to allow participants to review different areas of the report, discuss solutions and make recommendations across five (5) areas, namely:

1. Improving inter-agency coordination, social mobilization and marketing services;
2. Innovating Funding Strategies and Reform of Social Intervention Initiatives at the grassroots level;
3. Improving the policy, legislative and institutional framework to guide meaningful intervention and a robust monitoring and accountability system;
4. Working with families and communities to break intergenerational poverty cycle and inequalities; and
5. Transforming harmful/toxic social norms and practices.

4.4 **Organizations that participated in the Street and Working Children Study Stakeholder Consultation Session are:**

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| 1. Office of the Cabinet                               | 6. Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)                                |
| 2. Ministry of Education, Youth & Information (MoEYI)  | 7. Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade                     |
| 3. Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA) | 8. Ministry of Labour & Social Security                            |
| 4. Winrock International                               | 9. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) |
| 5. Jamaica Social Investment Funds (JSIF)              |  |

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| 10. National Secondary Students' Council (NSSC)               | 24. Jamaicans for Justice  |
| 11. Ministry of Health & Wellness                             | 25. CPFSA Children's Advisory Panel  |
| 12. Ministry of Justice                                       | 26. National Youth Council of Jamaica  |
| 13. Youth Advisory Council of Jamaica                         | 27. Women Centre Foundation of Jamaica                                       |
| 14. Violence Prevention Alliance                              | 28. Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (CISOCA) |
| 15. Portmore Parish Development Committee                     | 29. UWI Open Campus - Caribbean Child Development Centre                     |
| 16. Manchester Parish Development Committee                   | 30. Early Childhood Commission   |
| 17. Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment & Sports       | 31. Office of the Public Defender  |
| 18. Office of the Children's Advocate                         | 32. Department of Correctional Services                                      |
| 19. Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies | 33. National Parenting Support Commission                                    |
| 20. St. Elizabeth Parish Development Committee                | 34. Jamaica Tertiary Union   |
| 21. Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica                        | 35. Fight for Peace  |
| 22. Bureau of Gender Affairs                                  | 36. National Parent Teachers Association of Jamaica                          |
| 23. Paediatric Association of Jamaica                         | 37. Attorney General Chambers  |

**5.0 THE MOEYP'S ROLE AND EFFORTS AT REDUCING THE PREVALENCE OF CHILDREN LIVING AND WORKING ON THE STREETS**

5.1 Members are advised that as the Ministry with which the *Child Care and Protection* portfolio resides, the MoEYP, takes seriously, and remains purposefully committed to addressing the disturbing phenomena of children living and working on the streets of Jamaica. The Ministry recognizes and accepts that substantially reducing, if not ultimately eliminating, the prevalence of children living and working on the streets of Jamaica is a herculean task, and indeed, will require efforts over and beyond those of the MoEYP itself or any one (1) agency of government. The Ministry in conjunction with its principal agency vis-à-vis the welfare and protection of the nation's children (the CPFSA), considers itself a partner in ongoing efforts at addressing the scourge of children living and working on the streets and keenly looks forward to the proposed establishment of a Multi-Sectoral Body to address the issue.

5.2 As the agenda to reduce and eliminate the prevalence of children living and working on the streets is advanced, the CPFSA will lead, pursuant to a *Framework of Action* on: i) communicating with the public the Study Report's findings and next steps; and ii)

convening the Multi-Sectoral Body (Working Group) to oversee the creation of a Street and Working Children Framework of Action and accompanying Implementation Schedule and Budget. The Children's Affairs Policy Division will be working alongside the CPFSA to provide support and execute any necessary action that may arise from the determination of the Committee.

### 5.3 The CPFSA's Efforts/Interventions

- 5.3.1 Members should note that the response mechanism currently used by the CPFSA may be described as a reactive one, typically featuring a citizen filing a report with the National Children Registry (NCR) upon observing a child/children peddling wares and/or appearing to be living on the streets (for e.g. selling their wares, begging or wiping motor vehicle windshield); or otherwise appearing to be in need of care and protection.
- 5.3.2 Amid such a report, the CPFSA, in keeping with its mandate, would visit the site/locale with the intent of taking corrective action such as: winning the trust of the child/children through appropriate engagement methods, ascertaining place of residence and status of that residence, engage with parents/guardians if this can be determined and work towards resolving the reason for children being on the street; making referral to social partners such as PATH programme. Where these options are not possible, the CPFSA will seek the support of the police and courts in making a decision that the child/children in question is/are in need of care and protection.
- 5.3.3 More often than not, upon arrival at the reported site/locale, the children are either not seen, or if seen, they would disperse, run away or otherwise vacate the area. Follow-up visits typically ensue to ascertain whether they are there. After some time, reports would re-surface indicating that children were observed on the streets.
- 5.3.4 From time to time the CPFSA enlists the assistance of the police, which typically supports the Agency's efforts, however, this is not sustainable as the approach is largely reactive. No one entity has the mandate to respond to this phenomenon, which makes the intervention level weak.
- 5.3.5 The CPFSA has had some successes, and the Agency's team is able to work with the children in question, oftentimes seeking the intervention of the Courts to have them placed on a *Fit Person Order* for care and protection. Regrettably, said children tend to abscond (run away) and when checks are made, they have been identified in or about the same location from whence they were initially removed.

- 5.3.6 The practice of absconding usually occurs before the CPFSA can commence any intervention, and the act is made that much easier by the fact that the CPFSA does not operate high security spaces.
- 5.3.7 Based on the Agency's observations, more boys than girls are on the street before, during and after school hours. This is corroborated by the findings of the *Study Report* in question.
- 5.3.8 The Agency notes that children gravitate to the streets because it provides access to the environment and means through which they can gain material things. In many instances, the pull factor is a desire to help themselves and assist in alleviating the socio-economic challenges faced by their household. A majority of the children converge on the streets outside of normal school hours and do have homes. However, due to socio economic situations they are forced, compelled or otherwise lured to be on the streets to gain access to money and other resources. Many of these children are confronted with the task of being the sole income earner for their families, and as such, are at greater risk of harm and danger, including human trafficking and being deprived of an education. The CPFSA is not equipped to address all these issues, some of which are documented in the Study Report and supports a coordinated approach that seeks to treat with the underlying socio-economic challenges being faced by the child's household, with the intent of keeping and supporting children within their family units; provided it is safe and prudent to do so.
- 5.3.9 The *Possibility Programme* is an initiative implemented to provide intervention in the lives of children found on the streets and other troubled youth. The programme equips them with resources and provides them with coaching and emotional support to assist in overcoming their circumstance and reintegrate with their family.

## **6.0 ESTABLISHMENT OF MULTI-SECTORAL BODY**

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Multi-Sectoral Body (i.e. the Street and Working Children Taskforce) be composed of governmental and non-governmental organizations / stakeholders, in a bid to reflect and incorporate diverse institutional experiences and perspectives. Members will include representatives from the following:
1. Child Protection Family Services Agency (CPFSA)
  2. Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ)
  3. Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA)
  4. Ministry of Justice (MoJ) - National Child Diversion and Restorative Justice programme
  5. Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MoEYI)
  6. Ministry of National Security (MNS) - Department of Correctional Services/Juvenile Correctional Services
  7. Ministry of Health and Wellness (MoHW) - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services & Child Sexual and Reproductive Health Services
  8. Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) – Social Services and Child Labour Unit

9. Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) – Community Safety & Security and CISOCA
10. Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MLGCD)
11. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
12. Ministry of Transport and Works – Road Safety Unit
13. Social Development Commission
14. Jamaica Business Development Corporation
15. Representatives of established Children & Youth Groups
16. Children First
17. Dispute Resolution Foundation
18. Young Men/Women Christian Association
19. National Council on Drug Abuse
20. Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities
21. Jamaica Council of Churches Representative

6.2 Members are advised that persons may be co-opted periodically to address specific issues based on relevant skill sets and experience, as the Committee deems necessary.

6.3 It is proposed that the Multi-Sectoral Body (i.e. the Street and Working Children Taskforce) be chaired by the Planning Institute of Jamaica and co-chaired by the Child Protection & Family Services Agency.

## **7.0 STREET & WORKING CHILDREN FRAMEWORK OF ACTION (DRAFT)**

7.1 Consequent on the findings of the *Final Report: Study of Children Living and Working on the Streets of Jamaica*, the CPFSA has drafted a Street and Working Children Framework of Action (inclusive of an Implementation Plan and a Budget), which the Multi-Sectoral Body will be tasked to review and finalize through their feedback and input. The Multi-Sectoral Body (the Street and Working Children Taskforce) will also be mandated to oversee the implementation of said Framework of Action in a bid to cauterize and significantly reduce the prevalence of children Living and Working on the Streets of Jamaica.

7.2 It is envisaged that the finalization of the Street and Working Children Framework of Action will ensue in an atmosphere of inclusivity and consensus building. To that end, the draft Street and Working Children Framework of Action that has been prepared by the CPFSA, as a document that can be built upon, will receive focused attention from the Multi-Sectoral Body and benefit from the broad-based input of the Body. It is anticipated that the efforts of the Multi-Sectoral Body will culminate in a fit-for-purpose, targeted and practical document that sets the stage for action that will inure to the safety and protection of our nation’s children and effectively combat the prevalence of children living and working on the streets of Jamaica.

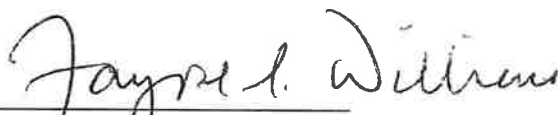
## **8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 As outlined in the draft Street and Working Children Framework of Action, the estimated cost pertaining to the proposed CPFSA-led interventions is outlined below and will be funded from within existing MoEYI budgetary provisions.

- FY 2021/2022 – \$10,150,000.00

- FY 2022/2023 – \$7,580,000.00
- FY 2023/2024 – \$3,620,000.00

Members are advised that the *Final Report: Study of Children Living and Working on the Streets in Jamaica*, the *Proposed Terms of Reference of the Multi-Sectoral Body to be Established*, as well as the *Draft Street and Working Children Framework of Action* appended hereto provide further details regarding the subject matter.



Hon. Fayval Williams, MP  
Minister

June 21, 2021

