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UPLIFTING ADOLESCENTS PROJECT TRACER STUDY RESULTS: IMPLICATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

June 1999

**prepared by
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and
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UAP

UPLIFTING ADOLESCENTS PROJECT

The UAP is managed by **Development Associates, Inc.**
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and the **Youth Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Youth and Community Development, Jamaica.**

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SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE TRACER STUDY

A. Sample Profile

1. Household size provides some indication of overcrowding, poverty, lack of privacy, sharing of basic amenities and noise, among others. Under these conditions, it is likely that parental influence and control are not optimal. It is therefore likely, that in these less than adequate conditions, consistent and diligent study habits are difficult both to achieve and to sustain. These conditions exacerbate the risks for under performance and school dropout.

B. Schooling and Literacy

1. UAP objectives to reduce dropouts and increase school retention are directly addressing major concerns in the education of adolescents. Fifty nine percent of the respondents improved their skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
2. Graduation is a most desirable achievement. Only 2% thought they would not graduate. This point should motivate the programs to see that participants not only graduate but excel to increase their options for post graduation training and employment.
3. The reality of achieving professional goals needs to be addressed through career guidance and planning at the group and individual levels.
4. Bible and school textbooks were the most frequently read materials and the most liked materials for reading were non-fiction and poetry. The lack of reading material speaks to an impoverished environment for literacy in the home resulting in limited literacy among both parents and children.

C. Health Status

1. Underutilization of health clinics by adolescents is a common feature in the Caribbean. Strong partnership is needed between health and educational institutions to attract and deliver needed health and social services to adolescents.

D. Fertility and Family Planning

1. It is known that sexual activity among adolescents is most often spontaneous and unplanned thereby reducing the possibility that a reliable contraceptive will be used. Unplanned and unprotected sexual contact increase the risks for pregnancy and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. Sexual involvement is initiated at an early age which makes it imperative that information/education be provided in a comprehensive, consistent and adolescent friendly manner by the relevant stakeholders.

E. Substance Use

1. Thirty percent of the respondents had used alcohol and or drugs by the time they had attained fourteen plus years. Behavioral problems related to substance use include the alteration of attention span and learning ability Adolescent use of substances, legal and illegal will compromise their learning and school attendance leading to their dropping out.

F. Risk and Protective Factors

1. Among the leisure activities identified by the tracer study participants, football was the most popular (48%), followed by non-sports games (31%). Involvement in youth programs as a constructive use of time has been shown to be related to improved achievement and aspirations to continue education (Barber and Eccles 1997; Hawkins, Royster and Braddock, 1992). They also are protective factors against school dropout. Greater involvement in group activities is necessary for social skill development and to provide alternatives to early sexual activity , delinquency, drug use and other risky behaviors.

G. Self Esteem

1. Of the five highest self esteem scores, females scored less than males on all items. Overall there is an appreciable level of self esteem among respondents but the specific item score point to areas of weakness, in particular, self value, as reflected in feelings of needing more respect, being useless and thinking that they are no good.

H. Alienation

1. On the alienation scale the mean item score on the alienation scale was 2.49, which is approximately mid-way between disagree and agree response level on the scale. It is to be noted that the lowest mean scores, for the sample, males and females was for item 1 “most of my academic work in school seems worthwhile and meaningful to me”. These scores demonstrate that respondents , even in a vulnerable, at risk population have strong feelings that academic work is both worthwhile and meaningful. This is a very positive finding. Adolescents are questioning their own process of development as expressed in the statement “ I often wonder if I am becoming the kind of person I want to be.” Despite the mean sample score of 2.49, it is clear that more work is required in the family, school and other institutions and agencies dealing with adolescents to help adolescents to gain a greater sense of belonging, purpose, confidence and ease with themselves, their peers and family

I. Peer Advice

1. Less than half (47%) of the adolescents reported that they did best at academic subjects and 68% would like to do better particularly in English and reading (50%). This finding shows that the adolescents themselves are aware of their deficient reading skills. Increased and innovative efforts are needed to ensure that this need is met in the UAP.

I. BACKGROUND

Uplifting Adolescents Project Tracer Study

The Uplifting Adolescents Project (UAP) was formulated as a medium term intervention to address problems among adolescents who are most at risk in Jamaica. The most vulnerable adolescents for social and economic deprivation were identified as those between the ages of 10-14 years. This group was deficient in the required educational, technical and social skills that are critical for their development and participation in productive activities.

Overlaying these deficient skills are the problems of adolescent sexual activity, pregnancy and school drop-out which are associated with poverty, lack of family support, poor quality of formal education and the ambiguous situation of conservative sexual ideals alongside cultural approval of early childbearing (Barnett et al, 1996; Brody 1981; Jagdeo, 1984 ; Hamilton, 1995). The majority of adolescent females who become pregnant while attending school do not return to school. At the primary school level 20 percent returned to school (Morris et al 1995). Adolescent pregnancy presents a complex range of social and health problems for both mother and child which impacts negatively on the quality of their lives. Incomplete education, reduced job opportunities, and health risks, for example poor nutrition, are some of the difficulties which attend early fertility.

Several studies (Jagdeo, 1984; Powell and Jackson, 1988; Russell-Brown et al , 1992; Jackson et al, 1998) have been conducted among adolescents in the Caribbean focusing on some aspects of the tracer study, namely knowledge, attitude and practice related to pregnancy and contraception. In general, they have not included adolescents under the age of fifteen which is the target group for UAP. The most recent of the studies, Jackson et al, 1998, was a longitudinal study in Jamaica, of 945 grade 7 students in primary and all age schools with a mean age of 12.1 years. This study will provide some relevant points of reference for the findings of the tracer study.

The UAP's purpose is focused on improving the social, literacy and pre-vocational job skills of the target group to enable them to become responsible and productive citizens. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are the main vehicle through which the interventions are implemented.

Specific outputs for UAP, relevant for the tracer study, are NGO institutional strengthening and the design and delivery of programs for adolescents. The indicators on which to assess the achievement of the project's purpose, as stated in the Project Paper¹, include:

- sustained service delivery by the NGO's;
- reduced rate of pregnancy for 10-18 year olds by 30%
- reduced school dropout among 10-14 year olds by 20%
- return 20% of out of school teenagers to school
- increase by 30% completion rate for all-age and vocational schools and or programs

¹ In May 1999, USAID/Jamaica approved new purpose level indicators to be applied to the Development Associates' contract. These are listed in the Appendix.

The UAP is organized into four program elements, namely; personal and family development; reproductive health; literacy/remedial and vocational/technical training. Under the UAP, selected NGOs organize and deliver the services to the target population.

II. CONDUCT OF THE TRACER STUDY

The conduct of a tracer study was planned to promote continuous "self evaluation and refinement of services" and also to establish the status of the project graduates. Information sought from UAP graduates focused on the impact of the UAP program, their current activities, factors determining their status and the retention and use of UAP program information and skills. A questionnaire was used to collect the data.

In the fourth quarter of 1998, the mid-life of the project, the first of two tracer studies was conducted. A systematic random sample of 148 UAP graduates in the age range 9-18 years from 10 participating NGOs was selected and interviewed.

A report on the study "Documenting Program Outcomes: Findings of the First Tracer Study of Uplifting Adolescents Project Participants" was prepared by Dr. Diana Davis, Dr. Paul Hopstock and Mr. Oscar Espinosa of Development Associates. The report provides details on the study purpose, methodology and findings. A workshop was convened by Development Associates in March 1999 to report the findings and to hold discussions and obtain feedback from the NGOs. The proceedings of the workshop are documented in the report "Uplifting Adolescents Project Workshop, Tracer Study Results and Performance Tracking System for Non-Government Organizations." Both these reports provide the basis for this report.

III. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE TRACER STUDY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

A. Sample Profile

In the sample of 148, 58% were girls and 42% boys, with the majority (68%) in the 9-14 age range. Most of the sample (84%) lived in households with one or both parents, with the latter accounting for 22%. By rank, household sizes reported were:

- 34% had seven or more persons in residence,
- 20% had four,
- 18% six,
- 15% one to three,
- 13% five persons.

Household size provides some indication of overcrowding, poverty, lack of privacy, sharing of basic amenities and noise among others. Under these conditions it is likely that parental influence and control are not at their optimum. With such a large proportion (34%) of the respondents living in

households with seven or more persons it is most likely that some of the aforementioned conditions will exist. These conditions are factors which impact on the adequacy of available facilities for study. It is therefore likely that, in these less than adequate conditions, consistent and diligent study habits are difficult both to achieve and to sustain.

These conditions exacerbate the risks for under performance and school dropout. While this situation lies outside the direct influence of the UAP, it impinges on the project purpose in terms of the opportunity and facility that it provides for remedial academic work and vocational training to rehabilitate school drop-outs.

B. Schooling and Literacy

Grades 5 through 9 were the most frequently completed by adolescents with grade six accounting for just over a quarter (26%). School drop-out was 22% and the most likely grades for this to take place were grades 6-7. The Jamaica Ministry of Education has sought to tackle this persistent problem of school dropout. A review of the 1986-87 cohort of children from grades 1- 11 reveals that in All-age schools (which end at grade 9), the rate of loss was 30% among males and 23% among females in 1994-95 (Chevannes 1999). The results of this tracer study show drop-outs numbering 32 (22%) with more boys (18) than girls (14). The Ministry of Education data corroborate this finding that more boys than girls drop out of school. Among these tracer study dropouts, 75% do so between the ages of 15-18. UAP objectives to reduce dropouts and increase school retention are therefore directly addressing major concerns in the education of adolescents.

It was unanimously reported that UAP assisted respondents both to return to and remain in school. Fifty nine percent of the respondents improved their skills in reading/writing and mathematics. These findings indicate that the project purpose is being met in the target group.

Graduation was found to be a most desirable achievement. Only 2% of the study population thought they would not graduate. Given the wide range of professional and skills areas named for future employment, respondents have recognized that graduation is compulsory. This is indeed a selling point for the program to motivate the participants not only to graduate but to excel, thus increasing their options for post-graduation training and employment.

The most popular professions named were arts and fashion (15%), mechanic (11%) , and doctor (10%). Overall, 57% of the careers named require training beyond what the UAP provides, and 40% did not. Information on the requirements for additional training should be made available to the adolescents by NGOs, and this should be explained on an on-going basis. Through career guidance and planning at the group and individual levels, NGOs need to assist adolescents to assess how realistic their career goals are, given their stage of development, and to plan career and achievement paths.

Future plans reported by the adolescents included, by rank:

1. employment,
2. study and training,

3. ownership of important fixed assets such as a car and home, and
4. getting married and having a family.

Only 2% indicated that they desired to migrate. Yet, international migration has been an important demographic feature of the Jamaican and Caribbean populations. The desire to migrate is usually regarded as a strategic means of successfully achieving most, if not all, of the future plans identified. The very small proportion wishing to migrate is perhaps reflecting a recognition of the realities of migration which may include among others, a lack of resources to meet visa requirements, and a feeling that their future goals may best be attained at home, in Jamaica.

The availability of reading material is important to encourage and maintain literacy skills. Bible and school textbooks were the most frequently read materials. The most liked materials for reading were non-fiction and poetry. It is clear that the adolescents have limited access to reading materials. In Jamaica, it is common that the most readily available reading material in the poorest of homes is a bible, hence its popularity among respondents. A recent report by the American Academy of Pediatrics of 199 low-income homes found that about one in four contained fewer than ten books of any kind. The lack of reading material speaks to an impoverished literacy environment in the home, resulting in limited literacy among both parents and children. The level of literacy among UAP the target population should influence the type of reading and study materials used and the teaching methodology.

C. Health Status

Adolescents are generally healthy persons. Tracer study results show that in relation to their peers, two thirds of the sample felt that their personal health was better, while 30% felt they were equally as healthy and 4% worse. The perception of personal health differed by gender with 71% of the males feeling their health was better than that of their peers compared to 60% of the females. A factor that could have influenced the gender difference in the health status assessment is probably related to the onset of menstruation and any difficulties experienced.

Reported access and use of health facilities saw 67% who would go to a public hospital, 20% to a private doctor and 11% to a clinic. Of all these health service delivery points, given the structure of Jamaica's health service delivery system, the health clinic is the most accessible based on distribution among the population, and is also the most heavily used. Nevertheless, adolescents reported the clinic as the least accessed and used. One can therefore infer from this that an important source for education, information and services is currently being underutilized by adolescents.

It should be noted that underutilization of health clinics by adolescents is a common feature in the Caribbean. A survey of six Caribbean countries in 1995, reported a similar finding. Reasons offered were unfriendly staff and lack of privacy and confidentiality (Kurz et al, 1995). In the tracer study, unfriendliness was also reported as a barrier, but it was not linked to a particular health facility. Strong partnership is needed between health and educational institutions to attract and deliver needed health and social services to adolescents.

Reasons offered as barriers to accessing health care were cost (34%), parents or relatives will know what to do (26%), transportation difficulties (10%), distance (9%) and unfriendliness (9%). Approximately one fifth (21%) reported that they do not get sick.

D. Fertility and Family Planning

Only 3% of the adolescents were parents, all with one child. Four of the girls reported that they were currently pregnant. With regards to contraceptive behavior, 87% of the girls reported abstinence as the preferred contraceptive and 10% reported contraceptive use. The majority of the respondents (61%) plan to have 1-2 children, this desire is in keeping with Jamaica's target of replacement fertility. Reflected in this desire is the impact of the vigorous public education campaign by the National Family Planning Board to promote a two child family. Two fifths want three or more children. Fertility desire by sex saw 66% of females desiring 1-2 children compared to 58% males. Interestingly, among those desiring no children were 13% of the females and 2% of males while 13% males and 3% females desired four or more children.

The achievement of desired family size is determined by consistent use of a reliable contraceptive. It is known that sexual activity among adolescents is most often spontaneous and unplanned thereby reducing the possibility that a reliable contraceptive will be used. Unplanned and unprotected sexual contact increase the risks for pregnancy and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. Also, many problems attend adolescent contraceptive use which include physical access, legal ramification, skill and privacy to use. There are many challenges to be faced in the attainment of the desired family size stated by the adolescents.

Tracer study results show 32% reporting that they use condoms prevent STDs. This response was given by 50% (43) of the males and 6% (4) of the females. Sixty percent of the sample reported that they were not sexually active: 43% of the boys and 84% of the girls. However, early sexual initiation has been found in several studies. The Jamaica Adolescent Survey, 1998, found the mean age at first intercourse was 12.4 years for girls and 9.3 years for boys. Similarly, in the Contraceptive Prevalence Survey 1993 among 15 year olds, 43% of the boys were sexually experienced (Morris et al 1995) and the 1987 Young Adult Reproductive Health Survey found among those 15 years old, that 27% of girls and 58% boys had been sexually active (Powell and Jackson, 1988). Sexual involvement is initiated at an early age which makes it imperative that information and education be provided in a comprehensive, consistent and adolescent friendly manner by the relevant stakeholders.

E. Substance Use

Seventy percent reported to have had a drink or been high and 80% had not been drunk or high in the last week. Five percent had their first experience with drugs and alcohol at age ten or under, 19% between ages 11 and 14 and 6% over age 14. Altogether, 30% of the respondents had used alcohol and or drugs by the time they had attained fourteen plus years. Substance use is known to have deleterious health and social effects, thus early substance use makes the problem more insidious with substantial human, economic and social costs. Behavioral problems related to substance use include the alteration of attention span and learning ability. Adolescent use of substances, legal and illegal

will compromise their learning and school attendance leading to their dropping out. Several studies have pointed to these consequences. Tartar et al (1984) reported decreased attention span and Adler and Raphael, 1983 recognized cognitive and interpersonal problems. Murray (1984), found in his study of students that approximately 22% of cocaine users and 11% of ganja /marijuana users did poorly in school.

More males (83%) than females (77%) reported never having been drunk or high in the last week, and 13% males and 21% females reported that they were drunk at least once. Usually, this situation is reversed and it is possible that there was some under reporting. . By comparison, the Jamaica Adolescent Study found that 43% of the participants had used alcohol at least once. Boys (53%) were far more likely than girls (33%) to have tried alcohol. Few of the adolescents had experimented with marijuana, but again, it was more likely that the boys would have. In the Tracer Study, the oldest of the adolescents, 15-18 years (29%), had the highest proportion of those drunk or high once. The proportions of 10-12 and 13 -14 years that were drunk once were 5% and 14% respectively.

F. Risk and Protective Factors

Adolescents are more prone to risk behaviors because of the intense physical, biological, psychological and social changes that they undergo. These risky behaviors, include among others, early sexual activity, substance use, rebelliousness and drug experimentation. Mediating influences on these risk factors which can either promote or retard the taking of risks include the activities they are involved in, level of self esteem and alienation.

Among the leisure activities identified by the tracer study participants, football was the most popular (48%), followed by non-sports games (31%). All other activities mentioned accounted for 22% each or less. Involvement in the arts was reported by rank, as singing (45%); art (42%); dance (34%) and drama (33%). Although participation in each area of leisure and art is less than half the sample, it is known that there is considerable interest and talent in these areas among adolescents and this needs to be tapped, organized and used for entertainment, teaching and income generation. One of the NGOs participating in the UAP, ASHE has successfully demonstrated how this can be done.

Membership and involvement in community organizations included clubs of various types (41%) and church attendance (83%), of which 45% attended weekly. It is often expected that frequent church attendance informs and reinforces sexual morals and behavior. However, this assumption was not supported in the Jamaica Adolescent Study 1998 as no association was found between sexual experience and church attendance.

Involvement in youth programs as a constructive use of time has been shown to be related to improved achievement and aspirations to continue education (Barber and Eccles 1997; Hawkins, Royster and Braddock, 1992). They also are protective factors against school dropout.

Various skills are important for successful group interaction and participation. Skills such as decision-making, consultation, negotiation, working as a team member etc. are gained through group

activities. These are useful life skills to be developed and practiced by adolescents. Greater involvement in group activities is necessary for social skill development and to provide alternatives to early sexual activity, delinquency, drug use and other risky behaviors.

G. Role Models

Adolescents need to have positive role models from whom they can pattern their behaviors, learn social skills, obtain support and share their concerns and aspirations. Role models identified in the sample, were ranked as follows: sports stars, entertainers, teachers, local business persons or professionals, politicians and relatives/friends. Given the popularity of sports and arts among adolescents it is not surprising that they are the major role models. Twenty one percent of the respondents failed to identify a role model. The three most popular reasons for wanting to be like the identified role models were: helping others (13%), entertainment ability (12%) and athletic ability (11%).

H. Personality Attributes

Several research findings have demonstrated that an association exists between personality attributes and behavior. In the tracer study, attributes investigated were self esteem and alienation. Jessor and Jessor (1975) identified twelfth graders as most likely to have problems with drugs, alcohol, risky sexual behavior and delinquency based on their personality attributes which included low self esteem, alienation, lack of interpersonal communication and judgement skills.

Tools used to assess self esteem and alienation in the tracer study were Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale and Jessor and Jessor's Alienation Scale. Both these tests have been validated through previous use in the United States. Each scale utilized an identical four point response schema which ranged from strongly disagree (1); disagree (2); agree(3); through to strongly agree (4). The higher scores represent higher levels of self esteem and alienation.

I. Self Esteem

The mean score for the ten item self esteem scale was 3.10. This score is just above the agree response level. The majority of the respondents (60%) scored 3.0 or more. Of the ten items tested, 30% (3) fell below the mean sample score (Table 1). The differences between the mean score of males and females were not found to be statistically significant.

Table 1: Items Below the Sample Mean Scores on the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

<i>Item</i>	<i>Sample Mean</i>	<i>Male Mean</i>	<i>Female Mean</i>
1. <i>I wish I could have more respect for myself</i>	2.18	2.09	2.30
2. <i>I certainly feel useless at times</i>	2.70	2.73	2.66
3. <i>At times I think I am no good at all</i>	3.08	3.20	2.91

The lowest mean scores, by age, for the three items in Table 1 reveal the following:

- item 1, 10 -12 years old (2.04)
- item 2 13-14 and 15-18 years were similar (2.64)
- item 3 13-14 years (2.93)

Of the five highest self esteem scores, females scored lower than males on all items . The lowest overall score by sex was for the item “ at times I think I’m no good at all” (Table 2).

Table 2: Five Highest Mean Scores on the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

<i>Item</i>	<i>Sample Mean</i>	<i>Male Mean</i>	<i>Female Mean</i>
1. <i>I am able to do things as well as most other people</i>	3.36	3.38	3.34
2. <i>I take a positive attitude toward myself</i>	3.31	3.35	3.36
3. <i>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure</i>	3.27	3.29	3.24
4. <i>On the whole I am satisfied with myself</i>	3.23	3.25	3.21
5. <i>At times I think I am no good at all</i>	3.08	3.21	2.92

Overall there was an appreciable level of self esteem among respondents but the specific item score pointed to areas of weakness, in particular, self value, as reflected in feelings of needing more respect, being useless and thinking that they are no good.

J. Alienation

On the alienation scale the mean item score was 2.49, which is approximately mid-way between disagree and agree response level on the scale. Sixty eight percent scored 2.40 or higher. Differences in the mean scores of males and females were not significant except for the items “ I sometimes feel that the kids I know are not too friendly” and “ I generally feel that I have a lot in common with the other students in schools” (p=<0.5). In both cases females scored higher than males.

Fifteen items were tested in the alienation scale and eight of them were below the sample mean (Table 3). Of the eight items, the mean score for males was less than that of the females on 75% (6) of the items. It is to be noted that the lowest mean scores, for the sample, males and females was for item 1 “most of my academic work in school seems worthwhile and meaningful to me”. These scores demonstrate that respondents, even in a vulnerable, at-risk population have strong feelings that academic work is both worthwhile and meaningful. This is a very positive finding.

The challenge to those providing educational programs is to capitalize on this readiness to learn by teaching in interesting and purposeful ways which allow students to connect the information and education to their own lives, as individuals and as members of the national, regional and international community.

Table 3: Items Below the Sample Mean Score on the Jessor and Jessor Alienation Scale

<i>Item</i>	<i>Sample Mean</i>	<i>Male Mean</i>	<i>Female Mean</i>
a. <i>Most of my academic work in school seems worthwhile and meaningful to me</i>	1.58	1.53	1.66
b. <i>When kids are having problems, its my responsibility to help them</i>	1.91	1.94	1.88
c. <i>I generally feel that I have a lot of interests in common with other students</i>	2.00	1.92	2.11
d. <i>I often feel alone when I am with other people</i>	2.34	2.36	2.32
e. <i>I often find it difficult to feel involved in things I'm doing</i>	2.37	2.47	2.24
f. <i>I sometimes feel uncertain about who I really am</i>	2.41	2.39	2.43
g. <i>I feel that my family is not as close to me as I would like</i>	2.43	2.33	2.56
h. <i>Hardly anyone I know is interested in how I really feel inside</i>	2.44	2.43	2.46

An analysis of the eight items below the sample mean showed that respondents 15-18 years had the lowest scores on 87% (7) of the items. The mean scores on these seven items were in the range of 1.50 - 2.47. The 10-12 year olds scored the lowest on item 2, "when kids are having problems its my responsibility to help them."

Adolescents are questioning their own process of development as expressed in the statement "I often wonder if I am becoming the kind of person I want to be." Among these five items, the gender difference is largest on item 3 "If I really had my choice I'd live in a very different way than I do", with females scoring a higher mean than males. (Table 4). Despite the mean sample score of 2.49, it is clear that more work is required in the family, school and other institutions and agencies dealing with adolescents to help adolescents to gain a greater sense of belonging, purpose, confidence and ease with themselves, their peers and family.

Table 4: Five highest Mean Scores on the Jessor and Jessor Alienation Scale

<i>Item</i>	<i>Sample Mean</i>	<i>Male Mean</i>	<i>Female Mean</i>
1. <i>I often wonder if I'm becoming the kind of person I want to be</i>	3.19	3.12	3.29
2. <i>It's hard to know how to act most of the time, since you can't tell what others expect</i>	2.86	2.94	2.76
3. <i>If I really had a choice I'd live in a very different way than I do</i>	2.82	2.69	3.00
4. <i>Nowadays you really can't count on other people when you have problems or need help</i>	2.85	2.84	2.85
5. <i>I often feel left out of things that others are doing</i>	2.66	2.68	2.62

The concept of alienation embodies the lack of control over one's engagement, lack of a sense of purpose, function and personal self-expression. The degree to which this occurs can operate to either dampen or promote the possibilities for early pregnancy, school drop-out and substance use among adolescents.

K. Peer Advice

Less than half (47%) of the adolescents reported that they did best at academic subjects and 68% would like to do better particularly in English and reading (50%). This finding shows that the adolescents themselves are aware of their deficient reading skills. Increased and innovative efforts are needed to ensure that this need is met in the UAP.

Major areas on which study respondents would offer advice to their peers included admonitions to stay in school (36%), work hard (28%), and behave/stay out of trouble (15%). Inherent in these advice is the recognition of the value of education and the importance of fully utilizing available opportunities. The challenge to educators is to make the educational process one in which adolescents can both realize and maximize their potentials for their individual and communal benefit.

IV. NGO PRACTITIONERS' REVIEW OF THE TRACER STUDY RESULTS

A workshop was convened by Development Associates with the NGOs in March 1999, to discuss the findings of the tracer study report². Outlined below is a synthesis of the observations and comments made by those NGO practitioners present at the workshop, on the data and report presented.

A. Schooling and Education

- i. The teaching methodology needs to be varied, participatory and innovative to encourage students to share their opinions, discuss issues, and to develop nurture and expand concepts, knowledge and social skills. Visual and performing arts are strong areas of adolescent interest and they should be used as teaching tools where appropriate. These forms of communication stimulate participation, confidence, learning and enjoyment
- ii. A greater variety of reading materials is needed to develop and maintain reading skills. Suggested means are the creation of a central library system to distribute materials to UAP NGO participants, sponsoring of "read-a-thons" and encouraging use of public libraries.
- iii. NGOs should be required to make a contribution towards the establishment of a central library facility for UAP. This activity could be facilitated by Development Associates.
- iv. Curriculum content should be relevant to the experiences of the adolescents while preparing them to be responsible citizens. Topics suggested for inclusion in the curriculum are small business development and marketing. These would help to prepare graduates to become small entrepreneurs
- v. Increased training in a greater variety of vocational skills should be provided to meet the skill interests of adolescents and to increase their marketability on graduation. Additionally, the gender bias in vocational training should be addressed by encouraging both males and females to enter areas other than those that are traditional for a particular sex
- vi. Students should be encouraged to keep daily journals and have pen-pals to increase and improve their writing skills.
- vii. Sporting activities should be integrated into the training program. To this end it is proposed that the UAP Football League be established.
- viii. Services to assess children's abilities, such as is available at the Mico Care Centre, is needed to identify learning problems and guide teachers on how best to address them.

² Documenting Program Outcomes: Findings of the First Tracer Study of Uplifting Adolescents Project Participants, Davis DK, Hopstock PJ, and Espinosa OJ.

- ix. Talent competitions in drama, singing, art, dance, writing etc. should be organized by the NGOs to develop interest, recognize talent and promote healthy competition among adolescents.
- x. Training programs should have more access to technologies that enhance learning and interest.
- xi. Differences among students with respect to their needs and abilities based on age, sex and gender must be assessed and used to influence teaching content and methodology.

B. Health and Family

- a. Health delivery institutions, in particular health centers, should organize and develop health programs specifically for adolescents, to provide educational, counseling and health care services in a friendly and confidential environment. In the thrust for health promotion, adolescents need to develop a relationship with health delivery institutions that is not influenced mainly by illness but rather by the need or concern to protect their health through preventive actions. NGOs under the UAP should seek to form close alliances with the health facilities in their area and collaborate on health program content, information and activities for adolescents.
- b. Family life education must be comprehensive, consistent and participatory to provide adolescents with a non-judgmental, information rich and sensitive forum in which to discuss family planning, sexuality, pregnancy etc. and other issues.
- c. Parents and the family are critical determinants of adolescent attitudes and behaviors. In recognition of this they should be partners with the training institutions. Opportunities for parent education, frequent consultation and home visits where necessary, will strengthen the home-school bond to create the partnership that is vital for the well-being of children.

C. Personal Development

- i. A mentor-ship program should be established to provide role models to enhance adolescent personal development. Male mentors are needed to create some balance among those from female headed households. Community and national personalities should be invited to participate.
- ii. Sensitive and realistic career guidance should be offered. Guidance should consider individual qualification, training, aptitude, career desire and the needs of the job market. Students should be taken on visits to workplaces, institutions etc. and have planned interactions with a wide range of professionals to obtain information to help in their career decisions.

- iii. Levels of self esteem and alienation can be improved through a comprehensive program which promotes purposive, enjoyable learning, healthy lifestyles, adequate social skills, confidence and supportive and caring schools and families.
- iv. Student participation must be recognized and accepted as an integral part of the needs assessment, program planning, implementation and evaluation, if an appreciable measure of success is to be achieved.
- v. Students should be involved in community life by having planned activities with for example, the aged, programs such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme etc. to develop civic responsibilities and leadership skills. The YMCA of Jamaica has offered to share information with interested NGOs on the Award Scheme.

D. Overall Comments

- a. NGOs should network to organize joint projects for adolescents, consult and share information, experience , strategies and suggestions to refine and improve the UAP program implementation and benefits.
- b. The UAP program should be promoted in the media to make the target group and other relevant persons aware of the program. This promotion would make the task of recruitment easier..

V. CONCLUSION

The UAP is at the mid-point of its implementation in addressing some of the important issues that influence the vulnerability of Jamaican adolescents. These issues are not new and have persisted for some time but have become more critical with declines in the social and economic infrastructure.

Program delivery through several NGOs has its own inherent difficulties, among which is quality assurance. Data from the tracer study show that across all NGOs, adolescents are benefitting from UAP activities in areas of academic and vocational skills, personal development and school retention. It is reasonable to infer that the target group is being served by the NGOs, program delivery is taking place in the areas stipulated and a fairly even standard is being maintained. There is scope for improvement and this should evolve given the experience to date and the strengthening of the NGOs' program delivery capacity.

Skills have also been transferred to the NGOs to assist them in aspects of their project management. The conduct of this tracer study is an example of such transfer. NGO staff were trained in tracer study methodology. They were responsible for data collection and analysis of their individual data. NGOs are now able to conduct similar studies to evaluate the UAP and other programs. The study experience has also led the NGOs to share and discuss program data and to exchange ideas.

With greater cohesion and interaction among NGOs, improved skills and management together with the support of Development Associates, the NGOs should be able to chart a path to achieve the stated outputs for the UAP.

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APPENDIX

Uplifting Adolescents Project
Revised Goal and Purpose for the Contract to DA

Goal: to promote better educated, socially adjusted families, with particular attention to the lower socio-economic sector of society.

Purpose: to improve the social, literacy and pre-vocational skills of at-risk youth offering them the opportunity to initiate a process towards becoming responsible and productive adults.

Indicators:

1. Percentage of participating NGOs who have been strengthened in case management, accounting systems, personnel systems and are using the manuals developed;
2. Percentage of UAP at-risk youth who stay in school;
3. Percentage of UAP at-risk youth who are returned to an educational institution (formal school, vocational school, apprenticeship program, etc.);
4. Attendance rate (%) of at-risk youth at UAP NGO programs;
5. Literacy levels of at-risk youth (as measured by the % performing at or above level 4 JAMAL), for both in-school and out-of-school populations;
6. Attendance rate (%) for parents at UAP NGO parent activities (as measured by 1 parent for each adolescent participating);