



UPLIFTING ADOLESCENTS PROJECT

A STUDY OF THE DEFINITION OF YOUTH IN JAMAICA

August 1999

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
ILO	International Labour Organization
MLGYCD	Ministry of Local Government, Youth and Community Development
NFPB	National Family Planning Board
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIS	National Insurance Scheme
PIOJ	Planning Institute of Jamaica
STATIN	Statistical Institute of Jamaica
TRN	Tax Registration Number
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UWI	University of the West Indies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Issues relating to youth as a category began to surface immediately after World War I. In these earlier years youth issues were addressed mainly within the ambit of international law. More recently, the United Nations (UN) declared 1985 the International Year of Youth, and in that year also the first international definition of youth was developed. Notwithstanding the increased focus on youth, it should be noted that no single convention or charter on the Rights of Youth exists, as is the case for children where there is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Youth as a category can be defined by law, public policy and social perception. However operational definitions have been found to vary not only across the aforementioned areas but also from organisation to organisation and from country to country depending on cultural, institutional and other factors.

Perhaps the most commonly used definition of youth is that of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly which defines youth as “persons falling between the ages of 15 - 24 years inclusive”. This definition also recognises the category of young adults (persons between 20-24 years). Of significance is that the UN definition of youth (15-24 years inclusive) overlaps with its definition of child (0-18 years).

It is important to note that youth (as defined by the UN - 15-24 years) comprise approximately 17% of the world’s population. In the Caribbean they comprise between 18% - 23% (1991 data). In Jamaica, 1998 data indicated 19% of the total population being between the ages of 15-24 years, while 15-29 year olds accounted for approximately 28% of the nation’s population.

Generally the issue of having a common definition of youth is ‘dogged’ in polemics. Proponents argue that a common operational definition with parallel rights, responsibilities and obligations (for the youth themselves, as well as for adults with whom they interact) is critical to ensure that the needs of youth are met in a proactive and systematic way, as well as for efficient use of limited resources. This will further ensure that youth are adequately prepared to become productive adults and make a meaningful contribution to the society. The opponents feel that existing instruments (CRC, International Human Rights instruments) provide adequate protection. They further claim that young people will soon be adults and therefore need no specific set of rights.

The significance of definitions however lie in the critical role they play in delineating scope and boundaries of operation. Definitions therefore impact on inputs and outputs and by extension on the process of policy planning and decision making.

Looking at social perceptions, adults perceive youth as being too young, too inexperienced and having opinions which are not to be taken seriously. Some young people espouse similar perceptions and describe themselves as ‘still young’ and ‘having their whole lives ahead of them’. Generally though, the majority of young people express the need to be treated as full and equal citizens, who are able and ready to make meaningful contributions to the development of society. They also express the need to be given the necessary tools and to be assisted in acquiring the needed

skills to take on this role as responsible partners contributing to overall human development.

In the Caribbean, the social stages of youth which parallel stages of biological development show some relationship between chronological and sociological criteria. While many scholars in the Region agree that the social stage of youth in the Caribbean begins at 15 years and ends at 25 years, there is no one accepted approach in defining the sub-categories within same. However, the most commonly used sub-categories are as follows:- Social childhood (0-14 years); Social youth (14-25 years); Social adulthood (25 years and over).

According to the above therefore where childhood ends youth begins. What is noticeable is that social life stages of youth and the legal definition of adult do not concur. This further contributes to the problems of defining youth. Indeed in most English-speaking Caribbean countries, the law delineates 18 years as the point of transition to adulthood, that is, on attaining the Age of Majority at 18 years. In addition, it is socially accepted that individuals at 18 years have, by and large, abandoned the status of childhood and would have achieved the physical and emotional maturation commensurate with adulthood. Using the social life stages of youth in the Caribbean, youth is extended for an additional 7 years.

In Jamaica, the situation is quite reflective of the above. The category youth is not explicitly defined by law, and operational definitions at the public policy and other levels reflect wide variations.

While there is no legal definition of youth, there are definitions of child (minor) and adult (Majority). Many interpret the law therefore to be implying that youth is the stage between childhood and adulthood, that is, 15 - 17 years inclusive. Definitions of child also vary, with some legislation using 0-18 years while others use 0-14 years. The closest legal definition to youth is to be found in the Juveniles Act which defines a 'young person' as someone who has attained the age of 14 years and is under 17 years. This immediately raises the question of whether 'young person' as defined by the Juveniles Act is meant to be synonymous with 'youth'? It is important to note that the Juveniles Act defines child as 'a person under the age of fourteen years'; however the Children (Adoption of) Act and the Children (Guardianship and Custody) Act define child as a person under eighteen years of age. The age of Majority (when a person "becomes of full age and capacity") is consistent, and occurs on the attainment of 18 years of age.

In areas of public policy the situation ranges from no definition at all, to a variety of definitions with some defining youth as going up to 30 years. The area of public policy raises some concern particularly where the organisation concerned influences policy development at the national level. Non-governmental organisations working with youth reflect a similar range of definitions. In some instances the UN definition is used, in others youth is defined as up to 29 years or 30 years.

The overall situation in Jamaica is one where there is no congruence across public policy, legal definition and social perception regarding what is meant by 'youth'. These inconsistencies have resulted in further inconsistencies and complications. A major issue is the overlap of 'child' and 'youth' (as defined by the UN). Another is the ability of a young person to give sexual consent at

age 16 years but not being able to acquire a National Insurance (NIS) number or a Tax Registration (TRN) Number, (both indicators of being at the working age which coincides with the age of majority) until 17 years of age. If 18 years is accepted as the Age of Majority, then youth in the Caribbean is extended for 6 years (using 15-24 years inclusive definition). Since the law does not recognise different stages of adulthood, what then is to happen between 18 and 24 years? These are but a few of the many issues and concerns to be addressed.

Indeed some scholars have argued, that failure of Caribbean policy makers to ensure the existence of structures and systems to address youth matters, is a result of their inability to provide economic empowerment or the requisite material resources for youth. Such empowerment would come through, among other things, available employment and post-secondary educational opportunities. This argument has some merit, especially when one considers the economic hardships experienced in the region in recent years. In the case of Jamaica, the economic hardship has been one of the worst in the region and young people have indeed felt the brunt of the negative repercussions of structural adjustment.

Will a definition of youth be the solution to the many differences? A definition in itself cannot solve these issues, but it is felt that a working definition can smooth the process and better focus resources ... all towards the desired outcome of more adequately addressing the needs of the young people.

It is clear from the material examined that the concept of youth in Jamaica needs fundamental and thorough analysis and re-examination. To devise and develop policy to address youth issues, there must be some parameters of operation. A working definition would certainly contribute positively to the process.

It is recommended therefore that a definition of youth be developed. The definition of 'youth' should be legally defined, in the same way that 'child' and 'adult' are defined by law, and not left to the dictates of public policy and social perceptions. It should also reflect social life style and customs of the nation, and be cognisant of regional and international trends, as well as instruments to which the nation may have made commitments.

In developing the definition, a consultative/participatory approach is recommended, with representation from the youth population, the legal fraternity, Children Services Division, PIOJ, STATIN, the Social Development Commission (SDC), as well as, other public and non-public entities working with youth, etc. It is further recommended that the Youth Unit of the Ministry of Local Government, Youth and Community Development take responsibility for co-ordinating the consultative/participatory process.

Suggested age range proposals for examination are as follows:-

1.
 - i. Define 'Child': 0 - 14 years inclusive
 - ii. Define 'Youth': 15 - 17 years inclusive
 - iii. Define 'Adult': 18 years and over. (Recognise two categories of adulthood: Young adult: 18-24 years inclusive; mature/older adult 25 years and over).

2. Where persons are of the opinion that the upper end of young adulthood should end at 29 years, the following option is proposed for examination.
- i. Define 'Child': 0 - 14 years inclusive
 - ii. Define 'Youth': 15 - 17 years inclusive
 - iii. Define 'Adults': 18 years and over. (As above recognise two categories of adulthood, but here young adult would span the range of 18-29 years inclusive).

The above suggestions would retain 18 years as the Age of Majority. Further, there will be a three year period (15-17 years inclusive) of youth, during which decisions would be made, as to which individuals have the potential and are interested in attaining higher education at the tertiary level, who will join the labour force, and who will move on to other levels of skills training of apprenticeship, on reaching adulthood (18 years). Whatever the choice, this is the period of transition and preparation, to enable these potential nation builders to be ready to take on the next stage of development - adulthood.

The definition should be accompanied by a set of rights, responsibilities and obligations for youth, as well as, the establishment of an enabling environment to meet the needs of youth. The issue of the overlap between child and youth must also be addressed. Indeed any definition developed cannot be static, therefore there should be room for periodic review, to reflect significant social and lifestyle changes within the nation.

INTRODUCTION

Concerns with youth and distinguishing between the categories children and youth can be traced back to the period immediately after World War I. Then (1919 - 1940) the League of Nations Assembly and the International Labour Conferences, in pioneering work, prepared and had adopted a variety of related declarations, conventions, resolutions and recommendations. (United Nations) During this period issues of Youth were raised and addressed mainly within the ambit of international law. After World War II, issues on "youth" as a category continued to be reflected in aspects of international law through work engineered primarily by the UN General Assembly, UN Commission on Human Rights, International Labour Conference, UNESCO General Conferences and World Health Assembly (UN 1999). Indeed it was not until 1985, with the Declaration of the International Year of Youth that the UN General Assembly first defined youth.

Generally, youth refers to individuals who are not totally dependent on adults (as is the situation with children), but who are not themselves full adults. It is generally recognised as occurring between childhood and adulthood. However the definition of youth and the task of appropriately defining same is 'dogged' with polemics.

It is important to state at the outset, that there exists no Charter or Convention on the Rights of Youth, as in the case of children. Thus there exists no list of rights for youths, that have been agreed to and are being protected by ratifying nations or governments. Further, there is not a single understanding of the category "youth"; how young people are defined, dealt with, understood, vary within and between countries, regions and cultures. While youth as a category of young persons can be defined by the law, public policy, or social perception, significant variations exist between and within categories.

In Jamaica as in many other Commonwealth Caribbean nations, a variety of age limits and conceptual bases have been used (and continue to be used) to define youth. This paper in looking at the definition of youth in Jamaica will seek to incorporate and examine issues such as:- the public policy approach to defining youth, the social life stages of youth, the legal definition of youth, the age definition utilised by international organisations working with youth, as well as the age definitions used in CARICOM countries. The paper will also seek to explore some of the contradictions and/or overlaps which exist in the legal definition of youth, the public policy and the social perceptions, in Jamaica.

This paper represents a first edition on the subject matter. The taking of this approach is influenced by the paucity and scattered nature of data and information on the subject area. It is anticipated therefore that as additional material is unearthed this can be included when the paper is revisited in the future.

WHY IS A DEFINITION OF YOUTH IMPORTANT?

The proponents and opponents of a common definition of youth, with a parallel set of rights, responsibilities and obligations for the youth themselves (as well as for policy makers and adults who interact with young people), are many and varied.

Importantly, the UN General Assembly in providing guidelines for the development of national youth policies, identified the establishment of a definition of youth and the identification of various subcategories, as the first of a number of main steps in the policy development process. (UN Secretariat, 1998a: 4).

The proponents have argued that a definition of youth is essential, as without such definition accompanied by a set of commensurate rights and responsibilities, individuals comprising this category will be discriminated against. Further they argue that human development and sustainability rest with the young people of any society.

Arguments from the other side, particularly among those who espouse the transitory approach to youth, claim that persons categorised as 'youth' today, will shortly be part of the adult population, thus a definition along with requisite rights and responsibilities is not necessary. In addition it is argued that the rights of young people are already defined and protected by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and a number of covenants and conventions.¹

However, it must be remembered that youth (as defined by the UN)² comprise approximately 17% of the world's population. In the territories of the Commonwealth Caribbean they comprise between 18% and 23% (1991 data). In the case of Jamaica, in 1998 persons between ages 15 and 29 years constitute approximately 28% of the nation's total population, while persons 15 - 24 years comprise approximately 19%³.

Failure to properly define this group therefore and to ascribe attendant rights, responsibilities and obligations, represents a failure to effectively recognise a sizeable part of one's population. Further, it means that this large proportion of the population is not formally involved in the decision making process of the nation, and the benefits of their contribution are lost to the society in general.

Definitions are important. They provide meaning, describe or explain the scope of a word or thing, they help to establish boundaries and limits. It follows therefore that they impact on inputs, and outputs which are integral to the process of planning and decision making.

³ Demographic Statistics 1998; 33. STATIN

APPROACHES TO DEFINING YOUTH

The category youth can be defined by law, social perceptions or public policy. Definitions and perceptions vary, sometimes widely, between and within areas. Differences in definitions can be even conflicting and contradictory at times.

Youth is seen as that period between childhood and adulthood, and in most countries (particularly developed countries), normally commence on the completion of the period of compulsory education, and when a person is not prevented by law from entering the labour force. (UN/ILO, 1998: 1). In addition there is a link between adolescence and youth.

In looking at the approaches to defining youth, it is pertinent to examine briefly how various reputable dictionaries define the term. In addition it is also pertinent to examine the definition of 'adolescence' and the link which exists between both terms. Indeed elements used to characterise adolescence, are also used to characterise aspects of youth and in some situations adolescence and youth seem to be used interchangeably.

First, some definitions of 'youth' from reputable dictionaries.

1. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines 'youth' as :
 - 'the fact or state of being young'
 - 'the early part of life, especially, the period between childhood and adult age'
 - 'a quality or condition characteristic of the young, example, freshness, vigour, wantonness, rashness ...'
 - 'personified or vaguely denoting any young person or persons' (1988: p.2592).
2. The Penguin English Dictionary defines the term as
 - 'state of being young, early life; young people collectively;'
 - and 'young' is defined as 'not old; in early stages of growth; juvenile;; inexperienced; immature'

The definitions of 'adolescence' are as follows:-

1. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines 'adolescence' as
 - 'the process or condition of growing up; the growing age; youth; the period between childhood and maturity, extending from 14 to 25 years in males, from 12 - 21 in females' (1983: p. 27).
2. Collins Gem English Dictionary
 - 'period between puberty and adulthood' (1994:7)

3. Penguin English Dictionary:

- 'youth, period between childhood and manhood or womanhood' (1991: p.9)

It appears from the above definitions that in some instances when the word 'youth' is used, it encompasses stages of adolescence. Indeed in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, possible definitions of 'adolescence' include 'youth' and 'the period between childhood and maturity'.¹

Reference must be made of the increasing prevalence, in many societies, of extending the transition to adulthood for longer periods than previously was the custom. This as individuals opt for acquiring higher levels of education and delaying getting married and starting a family to later years. In the United States for example with adolescence extending for so many years some writers have divided it into several phases. Early adolescence which encompasses the beginning of puberty extends approximately from ten through fourteen years. Middle adolescence, which reflects increased autonomy and independence extends from ages fifteen through seventeen years. Late adolescence can stretch for eighteen years into the twenties, and encompasses individuals who because of educational or other factors delay their entry into adulthood (Carnegie Council; 1994).

International Organisations

A number of international organisations which work with youth at varying levels, and which influence the definition of youth adopted and used by many nations, as well as by organisations within nations, themselves exhibit differences in definition. Often times these definitions differ with definitions used at the national level.

Following are the definitions used by some international organisations:-

- The United Nations General Assembly defines youth as, "those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive."^b
- The ILO has adopted and uses the UN definition
- UNICEF (While there is no definition for 'youth', the organisation uses a definition of 'child' as 0-18 years).
- UNESCO uses the UN definition of youth, 15 - 24 years inclusive
- The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) defines youth as those people in the age range of 15-29 years.
- The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) includes in its definition of youth, persons between the ages of 10 - 24 years (Danns et al: 5).

^b The UN makes the distinctions within the category of 'youth' between 'teenagers' (13-19 years) and 'young adults' (20-24 yrs). These distinctions are cognisant of differences in sociological, psychological and health problems each group faces.

A closer look at some of these international definitions shows that for the UN there is some overlap in the definition of child and youth. Flowing from the definition of youth above, it is accepted that children are those persons under the age of 14 years. However it should be noted that Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines "children" as "persons up to the age of 18". This obvious overlap in the definition of youth and children is, according to the UN 'intentional', as the aim then was to have the Convention provide protection and rights to as large an age group as possible, since there existed (and still does not exist) no similar UN Convention on the Rights of Youth.^c

Of significance is that many nations and organisations have adopted and use the definition of 'youth' and 'child/children' proffered by the UN and UNICEF. The question which occurs however is whether these organisations/nations are cognisant of the existing overlap, and the reasons for same. And further how good a fit exists between the definition as adopted and the realities (legal, social perception, public policy) in the particular organisation/nation. In Jamaica the difference in some legal definitions of child and that of UNICEF is a case in point.

One obvious question of fit is whether or not individuals in the 15 to 18 year age group consider themselves as children? Further does the society in which they live treat them as children? In addition to what extent do individuals between ages 15 and 18 years consider themselves as youth and not as adults?

Legal Definition of Youth

The general perception in the Commonwealth Caribbean is that adulthood begins on attainment of the age of majority which is 18 years. At this age persons can vote, have the capacity to enter into binding contracts, and generally take independent decisions about their lives. Childhood as defined by statute is 0-14 years. However many Caribbean nations have adopted the United Nation's definition of child (0-18 years). The available data indicate that generally among CARICOM nations, there is no explicit or legal definition of youth. Some countries however have devised definitions of youth based on age ranges as follows: Trinidad and Tobago 15-25, Barbados 16-29, Guyana 14-25. (Danns et al: 4)

^c The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, sets out specific rights, responsibilities, obligations due to children of all nations which are signatories to the Convention.

SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH

Social perceptions and definitions of youth vary among and within cultures, countries and regions. Further they vary among individuals in the same country/region. First, differences exist in how adults view youth, versus how youth view themselves. Then there is the issue of how youth think adults perceive them. In addition within each individual group there are differences in perception. (Danns et al, 1997; UN Secretariat, 1998a).

Overall, adults tend to view young people as immature and not serious about issues. The definition in the reputable Oxford dictionary describes youth as:-

‘the state of being young’; ‘the period between childhood and adulthood’; ‘the vigour or enthusiasm, inexperience, or other characteristic of this period’. (Young is defined as ‘immature, inexperienced; not far advanced in life, in development’

Generally, youth are perceived as a category of persons who are too young, too inexperienced, whose opinions and judgements, on a variety of issues, are not to be taken seriously.

How Youth Perceive Self

How young people in the English-Speaking Caribbean perceive themselves also varies. On the one hand young people’s perceptions of themselves are similar to that expressed by adults. They often describe themselves as ‘still young’, ‘having time’, having their whole lives ahead of them’, etc. On the other hand some feel they should be treated no differently from adults in the society. They want to be treated as full and equal citizens and be given the necessary tools to allow them to be responsible and reliable partners and contributors in the conception, planning and implementation of policies and programmes for human development, not only for themselves, but for their society and nation as a whole.

An example of the varying perceptions Caribbean youth have of themselves is seen on examination of how the term was defined, at the 1996 CARICOM consultation on regional youth policy, by attending youth delegates. The following are some examples.

1. “A transition period between dependence and the attainment of capacity to take care of oneself, supported by adequate education and employment”
2. “Persons between the ages of 12 and 30. This definition is not fixed or rigid, but assists in identifying the target population of youth programmes”
3. “Vibrant and active persons between the ages of 13-35 who are active participants in youth related activities and work”
4. “Youth is a state of mind characterised by the transition from dependence to independence”
5. “Youth is a process, not a stage. It is a flexible state of mind representing the transition from

dependence to independence. No starting point is specified, but youth ends at age 40".
(Source: CARICOM Youth Report, 1996, 22-24).

Social perceptions of youth are intertwined with issues of power and authority, dependence and independence within society. Youth, seen as 'junior' to adults are denied certain privileges and levels of access based on chronological age (which is used as a measure/index for experience). In the Caribbean for example adults tend to occupy most positions of dominance and authority.

Social Stages of Youth in the Caribbean

A brief look at the social stages which to some extent parallel the stages of biological development is important and allows for some examination of the relationship between chronological and sociological criteria and the corresponding rights and attributes of each stage.

Danns et al states that with few exceptions, the social life stages in the Caribbean are basically similar to those elsewhere in the Western world. These stages can be described as follows:-

1. Social childhood 0 - 14 years
2. Social youth 14 - 25 years
3. Social adulthood 25 years and over

The first stage, social childhood, from a psycho-physical perspective can be further subdivided into infancy 0 - 2 years; early childhood 3 - 5 years; and late childhood 6 - 14 years. Of note is that the attributes and expectations of childhood though being cognizant of these psycho-physical developmental stages are not limited by same. In the Caribbean, social childhood includes a phase of early adolescence (onset of puberty).

According to Danns while in some typologies of child development, particularly in developed countries, childhood is seen as ending when puberty commences. In the Caribbean, where childhood ends, youth begins.

If one characterises childhood from birth through various stages of physical, social and emotional maturation, the following important characteristics of childhood should be noted. These include:-

- physical, economic and psycho-social dependence
- preclusion from imprisonment, capital punishment and conviction for criminal offences
- preclusion from paid employment
- prohibition by law from having sex or marrying
- legal prohibition from purchasing or owning property

(Danns et al; 10).

Some scholars posit that the social stage of youth in the Caribbean begins at 14 years and ends at 25 years of age. Generally, it is within this stage that the youth category is to be found. The major difference between this stage and that of childhood is that individuals develop personal and social autonomy. Attributes and expectations of youth as a stage of social life include:-

- the right to marry and/or establish relationships with the opposite sex
- the right to seek employment and to work
- the right to own property
- the right to make independent decisions about one's own life
- the capacity to reproduce and rear children
- the right to pursue social autonomy by establishing independent households

(Danns, et al; 11).

Of note however is that the position of Danns et al is not a homogenous one. Lewis (1992) identifies the social stages of 'youth' (14-18 years) and 'young adulthood' (18 - 25 years). If Lewis' approach is applied to the Jamaican situation it can be seen that it corresponds somewhat with the legal indicator marking the transition to adulthood (18 years). However it keeps the 'youth' as a minor, eligible for the various types of protection, levels of care and parental support due to the child up to the age of 14 years.

During Lewis' period of 'young adulthood', the young person is expected to acquire the various privileges and responsibilities which under law are accorded adults. However since Caribbean and Jamaican law do not differentiate between categories of adults, a 'young adult' is a full adult.

The brief preceding review shows not only the attributes and characteristics of various stages of social development, but it also shows explicitly that issues of defining youth are not clear cut and precise; and one wonders if some overlapping is not unavoidable.

Of significance however is that within the Caribbean context, Jamaica being no exception, the social life stages of youth (14 - 25 years) do not coincide with the legal definition of adulthood (18 years). This blurring of the lines contributes to problems of defining youth. Indeed the generally accepted definition of adulthood in the Caribbean (18 years) is subsumed within the social youth stage and adds to the difficulty of defining youth (at both the lower and upper ends).

Most persons would agree, that by 18 years most individuals would have abandoned the childhood status and would have achieved the physical and emotional maturation adequate to be accorded adult status. However, using the Caribbean social stages of development, the youth period is extended

for at least seven additional years. Two important questions come to mind here.

1. What is the purpose of this extended youth state?
2. What opportunities for development of leadership skills and general maturation are provided during this period?

THE JAMAICAN SITUATION

Legal Definition of Youth

In Jamaica there is no legal definition of 'youth', no laws/legislation specifically address issues of 'youth'. However, a variety of legislation define and/or address child/children (minor) and the adult. This has resulted in many interpreting the law to be implying that youth is the stage in-between minor and adulthood. In addition, some legislation governing issues of children actually provide some rights/protection to young persons up to 18 years of age, as there is some overlap between the definition of 'a child' and the commonly used definition of 'youth'. Further the laws also speak to related issues of the age to enter the labour force; age of marriage and the age of sexual consent.

The Age of Majority^d

Adulthood in Jamaica is generally accepted to commence at the attainment of the Age of Majority, that is, 18 years, as indicated by:-

1. The Law Reform (Age of Majority) Act which states that "a person attains the age of majority and becomes of full age and capacity on attaining the age of eighteen years". (Marsh, 1994).

Other legislation which impliedly address the definition of youth through the definition of child are:-

1. The Children (Adoption of) Act which defines "child" as meaning a person under the age of 18 years who has never been married (Marsh, 1994).
2. The Children (Guardianship and Custody) Act where "child" means a person under eighteen years of age but does not include a person who is or has been married (Marsh 1994).
3. The Juveniles Act which has been described as the main Act relating to the day to day protection of children, posits a variety of pertinent definitions as follows:-
 - 'child' means a person under the age of fourteen years
 - 'juvenile' means a person under the age of 17 years
 - 'young person' means a person who has attained the age of 14 years and is under 17 years of age.
4. The Marriage Act prohibits a valid marriage between any one under the age of 16 years (since that person is a minor), but persons who have reached the age of eighteen years of age may marry without the consent of others.

^d In 1962, when Jamaica became independent, the age of majority was 21 years. However as of April 30, 1979, under the Law Reform (Age of Majority) Act, 'a persons attains the age of majority and becomes of full age and capacity on attaining the age of eighteen years' (Marsh, 1994).

5. The Offences Against the Person Act deems it an offense to carnally know a girl (she cannot give sexual consent) under the age of 16 years.^e
6. The Education Act (16th December, 1965) defines child as “a person who has not attained the age of fifteen years”.

On matters relating to the labour force, a young person who has not attained 17 years is not eligible to join the work force.

A number of issues and contradictions seem to arise from the above.

1. The Children (Adoption of) Act and the Children (Guardianship and Custody) Act have similar definitions of ‘child’ (under 18 years), both of which however differ from that of the Juveniles Act which defines ‘child’ as being under 14 years. In the Education Act a child is one who has not attained 15 years.

Now if the Children (Adoption) and the Children (Guardianship and Custody) Acts are followed, individuals would move from childhood directly to adulthood; since 0 > 18 years defines child and the attainment of 18 years signifies adulthood. Does this mean therefore that there is no category of youth; no period of transition to adulthood?

2. On the other hand if it is accepted that a child is less than fourteen years (as defined by the Juveniles Act); and the age of majority (adulthood/ceasing to be a minor) occurs on attaining 18 years; how does one define and categorise persons of the age in between childhood and attainment of majority? Is the ‘young person’ defined in the Juveniles Act, meant to be synonymous with ‘youth’? Is the Juveniles Act implying that youth is this period (15 - 17 years inclusive) between childhood and adulthood? Some scholars opine that this is the spirit of the law. Arguably this is a possible and plausible interpretation of the law.

Indeed the Juveniles Act does ascribe some rights and responsibilities to juveniles (and by default to young persons under 17 years of age). What should be noted here however, is that young persons over 18 years who are faced with unique issues and concerns in this transition period, are not covered by the Juveniles Act nor the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It can be argued however that since such persons have attained the age of majority (18 years) and are now adults, they are covered under legislation which applies to adults in general.

^e It is noted that the Act is silent on the age of consent for young men under the age of 16 years.

If one follows this line of thinking, accepting that young persons of 18 years are adults, some difficulty arises however in that the law does not recognise categories of adults. The pertinent question here of course is, why the need for categories of adulthood?

It is generally accepted that adulthood signifies attainment of independence and autonomy to make one's own decisions. However, it is also accepted that in most if not all cultures, immediate independence is not a full reality to one who has just entered adulthood, and that some level of dependence on adults to achieve objectives still remains. During this time however, it is expected that young adults would be provided with the enabling environment and the necessary tools to aid this transition. The tools and enabling environment would include opportunities for further (post-secondary) education and training, opportunities for employment, as well as an opportunity to make a contribution to the affairs of the nation of which they are a part.

The significant question and issue for Jamaica and indeed the English speaking Caribbean, is whether adequate opportunities and an enabling environment are being provided for young people, to assist them to make the transition to full independence and develop into responsible adults. Specifically, are adequate post secondary educational opportunities available; are adequate employment opportunities available?

While some facilities exist, they are by and large inadequate. One only has to look at the limited opportunities available at the tertiary level, and at the high levels of unemployment among young people (Anderson; 1995). Danns et al (1997; 2) for example notes that "Caribbean societies do not make adequate formal provisions for enabling most youth to successfully accomplish the transition to adulthood". The West Indian Commission (1992; 28) also noted that young people in the Caribbean were distressed about the lack of opportunities in education. They had also expressed frustration and concern about future prospects in education and employment.

3. Another issue relates to the ability to enter into valid marriages and give sexual consent and entry into the workforce.

It would appear that the age when individuals can enter into a valid marriage, indicates that individuals concerned have attained the stage where they are or should be able to take full responsibility for maintenance of self and any children which may result from a marriage. Indeed this level of independence is assumed to coincide with emotional, psychological and physical maturity, representative of attaining adulthood. Of course marriage implicitly gives consent to sexual intercourse. In Jamaica the Age of sexual consent is 16 years. However, a sixteen year old person cannot get married without the consent of an adult (parent or guardian). Only persons who have 'reached the age of 18 years may marry without the consent of others' (The Marriage

Act:15). Now, if a person cannot enter the workforce until attaining 17 years, how is that person who gets married at age sixteen years, to maintain his/her family in marriage? It appears that independence is given on one hand and withheld on the other. The message to young people here seems quite contradictory. The need seems to exist for synchronising such age limitations.

Some of the variance with respect to labour matters and the minimum age to join the labour force may result from the non-existence of a compulsory minimum age for attending an education institution, coupled with deficiencies in the availability of training/education facilities for persons beyond 14 years. This seems particularly applicable to the labour force contradictions. Therefore some persons on leaving all age institutions, are unable to access further training/education and as a result end up on the job market, at the age of 14 years.

On the matter of the age of sexual consent, by law a person who has not attained 16 years of age cannot give sexual consent. However where 'child' is defined as $0 > 18$ years, this means that a 'child' can give sexual consent, at age 16 years. With respect to joining the labour force, in Jamaica one can legally join the labour force at 17 years. This means that a 'child' is being allowed to work.

When the Juveniles Act is followed however, the two above examples will apply to 'young persons'. It now raises the issue of what are the rights, responsibilities and obligations of a young person. Can a young person legally obtain work, give sexual consent? A more general question is, should this category (15-17 inclusive) define 'youth', which would represent a period of preparation for adulthood which begins at 18 years? There is need for further analysis and discussion here.

It should also be noted that under the Juveniles Act, 17 year old persons can be held responsible and be penalised for acts of negligence regarding any mishap suffered by younger juveniles (under 10 years) left in their care.

Public Policy Approach

Public policy definitions on youth emerge predominantly from government ministries, departments and divisions which work with youth at a variety of levels. In Jamaica a number of Ministries, Departments and/or Divisions have responsibility for some aspect of children and or youth. Indeed public policy seems to have a stronger influence in defining youth than does the law.

Following is a list (not exhaustive) of Ministries, Divisions with their respective responsibilities for matters of children and/or youth.

1. Ministry of Health

The Children Services Division which falls under this Ministry has responsibility for

- ▶ Child care and protection and children's homes and places of safety.

The Children Services Division generally utilises the UNICEF definition of child (0-18 years).

2. Ministry of National Security and Justice

- ▶ Juvenile Correction Centres and Remand Centres are the responsibility of this Division.

3. Ministry of Labour

- ▶ Sports Division. This division has responsibility for matters of sports which apply mainly to young people and children.
- ▶ Matters regarding minimum age to join the labour force (17 years).

4. The Ministry of Local Government, Youth and Community Development

The Youth Unit of the Ministry has responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of activities implemented at the community level, as well as for data gathering and policy setting and recommendations.

A brief look at a variety of important national public policy documents and how youth (or child/children) is defined shows the following:-

- ▶ The Youth Services Division, has over the years utilised the UN definition of youth (15-24 years). However the Division has been involved in Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) activities, and the CYP defines youth as being between 15 and 29 years.
- ▶ The Ministry of Education defines 'child' as a person who "has not attained the age of fifteen years" (The Education Act, 3)
- ▶ The National Youth Policy document does not define youth.
- ▶ The Jamaica Policy Towards Poverty Eradication, while it addresses issues on youth and makes reference to the National Youth Policy (pp. 33), does not define the category.
- ▶ A Statement of National Population Policy for Jamaica (1995 revised), in addressing issues on child/children does not explicitly define same. However throughout the document, implied definitions of 'youth' and 'child/children' occur. These definitions vary and are sometimes contradictory. Thus in the body of the document reference is made to:-
 - : youthful population (30 years)³
 - : children (0-18 years)⁴
 - : "The child population (0-14 years)"⁵
 - : "The working age population (15-29 years),"⁶

: “ ... the young adult age group 15-29, ...”

- ▶ The National Family Planning Board defines ‘young adult’ as ‘persons aged 15-24 years’ (NFPB Fact Sheet).

What is clear from the above examples, which are not meant to be exhaustive, is that there is no congruence of what is meant by ‘youth’, ‘young adult’, ‘child’, ‘children’. The implications of such lack of congruence for planning and policy development, as well as for efficient use of scarce and limited resources could be quite convoluted.

This lack of congruence can be attributed to a variety of reasons:-

- Influence of international agencies, whose definitions are adopted because of their international clout and the resources which they may have to disburse
- Ministries or departments/divisions asked to deal with aspects of youth, but youth does not ‘fit’ within the general portfolio, thus there is not enough focus on youth
- The latter is compounded by failure of decision makers to allocate adequate resources to these Ministries or departments to ensure effective and well thought out programmes
- Related to the latter is the lack of adequate or reliable baseline data necessary to formulate policies and programmes.

NGOs Working With Youth And/or Children

In Jamaica, a number of non-governmental organisations work with youth and children. Those working with children generally use the 0-18 years definition adopted from the UN. Some are not cognisant of the fact that the definition of children overlaps with that of youth.

An unstructured exploratory research of organisations which work with youth or have the word youth in their names, showed as wide a range of definitions as exist in public policy. In some cases organisations really had no working definition of the category. In other instances age ranges reached as high as thirty years.

It has been suggested that organisations sometimes adjust their definition and focus of work in order to access funds from international and other bodies. Whatever the reasons, among these groups there is no established or common definition of youth. Expectations and standards varied similarly.

DISCUSSION

The foregoing seem to indicate clearly that in Jamaica there is no common understanding of what is meant by the term 'youth'. This raises a number of questions.

1. Does the failure to have congruence on the interpretation of the category 'youth' affect the interpretation of related terms such as 'youth development', 'youth development programmes', and areas such as the identification of youth developmental needs, youth outcomes, etc. Arguably it could. There is a strong probability that the present outcomes are not the best that they can be because of the absence of parameters and definitional guidelines.
2. Within the context of the present situation of no clear delineation of the category youth, is the society satisfied that the needs of the youth are being adequately addressed?
3. Would clearer definition of the category result in better identification of needs and the development of strategies to address same?

It is the opinion of this writer that having a definition with parallel rights, obligations and responsibilities (for the young persons, and the society in general) could be extremely useful. The assumption here is that, decisions on a definition would be preceded by an examination of the various legislation, social policy, etc. and attempts to bring some level of congruence to the many differences which now exist.

If it is agreed that adulthood is characterised by autonomy, independence, rights to secure a job and work, having the right to vote, own and purchase property, the right to marry, establish one's own family, etc., in short make independent decisions about one's life; a number of questions arise.

1. To what extent are young people in the Jamaica capable of realising or acting upon the various characteristics to attain their independence?
2. Do the young people have the economic or material resources necessary to realise independence whether in totality or at the level of individual characteristics?
3. Are the structures and systems in place to facilitate the realisation/attainment of this independence?
4. Does having/not having a definition of youth enhance/impede any of the above?
5. And overall, how does the definition of youth or failure to define youth affect the transition from childhood to youth to adulthood?

Many question and rightly so, whether Jamaican youth as a category are organised and ready to assume the responsibilities necessary to actively participate in the decision-making of their country. It is felt that they are not ready, thus the development of a definition would be self defeating. While

this paper did not set out to address this issue, it is recognised that the level of preparedness of young people must be taken into consideration in deciding on a definition. In addition the young persons themselves must be part of the process. Further, structures and systems must be implemented to help them to get to the point of effective participation in the decision making process.

The above leads naturally into the question of the availability of economic and material resources. Are young people unprepared because of the unavailability of economic and material resources? And does this lack of economic empowerment result from the nonexistence of structures and systems. Arguably the high levels of unemployment among youth is indicative of economic disempowerment. Issues regarding inefficiencies in training and education can also point in this direction.

It can be argued that the failure of Caribbean policy makers and leaders to put structures and systems in place to address youth matters, is a result of their inability to provide economic empowerment or the requisite material resources for the youth. This argument has some merit when one considers the economic hardships experienced in the region in recent years. In the case of Jamaica, the economic hardship has been one of the most severe in the region and young people have indeed felt the brunt of the negative repercussions of structural adjustment. However would a definition enhance this process? Arguably an operational definition could bring some focus to activities aimed at addressing the needs of the group. What is important here is the need to take all these issues into consideration in the determining of a definition.

Looking at some of the contradictions between social perceptions, public policy and legal definitions of youth the following is seen. If it is agreed that the legal age of adulthood starts at 18 years, at which time individuals would have experienced physical and emotional maturity, why are these individuals with all these adult attributes/characteristics treated as youth (and not as adults) for an additional 6 years (for an additional 11 years if 29 years is the upper age limit)? Is this 'in-between' period intended to serve as some kind of apprenticeship? And if so, what are the responsibilities and obligations of the youth, and of the society, to young people during this period?

Another issue to be examined is that where child is defined as being between 0 - 18 years, and 18 years indicates the transition to adulthood, then individuals would be moving directly from childhood to adulthood. This would be at variance with generally accepted developmental principles which recognise different emotional, psycho-social, and other needs at the chronological age between 14 and 17 years.

Of note is that the law of Jamaica does not distinguish between different stages of adulthood. This can be interpreted as signaling that for all intents and purposes, the 'youth' of 18 years is an adult.

At this age an individual acquires all legal privileges, responsibilities and obligations of an adult.

In the area of public policy, having common interpretation and understanding of youth become even more important when the public entity is involved in shaping and influencing fundamental public policy at the national level. Take for example, the National Population Policy (1995), the National Youth Policy (1994), Jamaica Policy Towards Poverty Eradication (1995). These documents are pivotal to the national planning process. However, while youth is recognised as an important group to be targeted, the category is not defined. Non existence of clear definitions, could result in mis-identification and mis-diagnosis of problems and compromise the targeting procedure. Further, it also increases the possibility of young persons 'falling through the cracks', where clear definitions and areas of responsibility do not exist.

To the persons who would argue that since the definition of child goes up to 18 years, young persons are protected by the relevant instrument, that is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The point must be made that relying on existing instrument is insufficient, particularly for persons over 18 years. These persons are not covered by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but it must be acknowledged that they have needs and concerns which differ from those of full adults and children. In addition are young persons in the age group 15-17 years inclusive, adequately protected under the Convention on the Rights of the Child? It would appear that this group is perceived differently from children under 14 years of age. Indeed their social, physical and emotional needs differ from that of persons under 14 years old.

It appears that this issue of defining youth has raised a plethora of questions. Admittedly this would not be an easy or short term task. However most persons would agree that in matters pertaining to youth, too much of this area is nebulous and grey to contribute positively to their development. Further, such lack of clarity does not facilitate meaningful contributions from young people to the overall developmental process of the society, a society that they will soon be responsible for managing.

..

Additionally, when working with scarce and limited resources the importance of targeting is critical. Therefore adequate definition and categorisation of terms, in this case youth, is essential to help eliminate unnecessary overlapping and enhance more efficient use of resources.

CONCLUSION

In Jamaica the concept of youth reflects many variances and inconsistencies. Social perception and practice and implied legal definition of youth do not concur. Public policy reflects similar obfuscation and lack of congruence. It seems clear therefore that the concept of youth which exists in Jamaica needs fundamental and thorough analysis and re-examination. It would appear that there is more to be lost than gained by continuing in the present mode of operation.

Strictly speaking, definitions are seen as providing clear and distinct meaning or explanations of a word or a phrase. Definitions are important in that they provide parameters, framework, and/or boundaries for operation. Following on the above therefore they also affect inputs and outcomes, as well as, facilitate the assignment of tasks and responsibilities. Clearly they are integral to the processes of planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Social policy on the other hand refers to intentions to directly affect human well-being by what ever means - regulations, expenditure, etc. However for effective policy to be developed and implemented, research and assessment are necessary. This in turn requires the setting of parameters for investigation. The important link here is how could policy be devised to impact on the category youth if there is no consensus of what is meant by youth. It would appear therefore that there must be some working definition of the term in order to ensure more effective and efficient policy, particularly when operating in an environment with limited resources.

In addition within the specific context of the overlap in the definition of child and youth, and the inter-sectoral nature of youth, it appears that some definitional parameters with corresponding rights and responsibilities would contribute significantly to better addressing youth matters.

Deciding on a definition for youth, as do other matters concerning youth is of an inter-sectoral, inter agency nature. While the Youth Division can make recommendations, the final decision should encompass the contributions of other individuals, organisations, etc., involved in the many and varied aspects of youth development. Indeed the issue of the definition of youth should form an integral part of the National Youth Policy. Issues to be addressed include relevant laws, social policy and attitudes, public policy, etc.

Issues of youth development are assuming more pre-eminent roles within the society as well as in the global environment. In Jamaica issues of youth have in recent times been cause for concern. There have been numerous calls to urgently find solutions to a plethora of youth problems and

concerns - chronic unemployment, involvement in crime and violence, use of drugs, teenage pregnancies, to mention a few. Perhaps the time is right to begin to address the needs of this important category in a proactive and participatory manner. This could commence by deciding what is meant by 'youth'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is critical that the category 'youth' be defined. Such a definition is pivotal to the formulation of any national youth policy.^f
2. Youth should be legally defined, in the same way that 'child' and adulthood are defined by law. The definition of youth should not be left to public policy and social perceptions.^g
3. Definitions developed must reflect social life style and customs of the nation. They should also be cognisant of regional and international trends, as well as instruments to which the nation may have made commitments.
4. Any definition which is to be representative or reflect a people's way of life must be reviewed periodically, in order to remain current and truly representative.
5. In developing the definition a consultative/participatory approach must be used. This process should have representation for youth, the legal fraternity, Children Services Division, NGOs, PIOJ, STATIN, public and non-public entities working with youth, etc.
6. Following on the recommendation of defining youth by statute it should become necessary to examine the related laws and seek to address variances where necessary. Areas such as the workforce age limits, compulsory education age, definition of child, ...
7. The Youth Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Youth and Community Development (MLGYCD) should take responsibility for co-ordinating the consultative/participatory process to develop a definition for youth. Discussions could start at the level of the Advisory Council on Youth Policy, and then be taken to a wider level.

The following is proposed in addressing the definition of youth:- Define children as 0 - 14 years inclusive; youth 15 - 17 years inclusive; and adults 18 years and over. It is further proposed however, that two categories of adulthood be recognised, with the early or young period of adulthood spanning the 18-24 years age range, and mature adulthood commencing at 25 years of age.

^f The UN General Assembly in providing guidelines for the development of National Youth Policies (NYPs), identified the 'establishment of a definition on youth appropriate to national circumstances' as the first of a number of main steps to be taken in the developmental process.

^g It should be noted that a study on the Youth Division conducted in 1997, recommended that development of an 'age policy for the purposes of identifying the target clientele for data collection and information dissemination'. The consultative approach was also recommended.

Based on the above suggestion, there will be a three year period of youth, during which time decisions will be taken regarding which persons are interested and capable of furthering their education at the tertiary level, who will join the labour force. Others may wish to acquire some vocational skills, or join programmes of apprenticeship (which should be made available by the state). Whatever the choice, this is the period of transition and preparation, to enable these potential nation builders to be ready to take on the next stage of development - adulthood.

The suggestion to recognise two categories of adulthood is based on the fact that the stage of development and the needs of young adults and more mature adults do differ. During the period of young adulthood, individuals are focused on acquiring/completing the acquisition of higher levels of education and/or skills, which would provide them with the ability (economic empowerment and greater autonomy) to function as mature adults. At this point, as well as, during the youth stage, the importance of ensuring the existence of the necessary structures and systems, as well as opportunities (in training, employment, education, etc) to provide empowerment and aid the transition process is critical.

The definition should be cognisant that youth is not a homogenous group, therefore there must be some identification of sub-categories. The definition must not be unalterable (cast in stone), but must be subject to periodic review to reflect significant social and lifestyle changes within the nation.

Of significance however, is that alongside the definition of age must come the establishment of an enabling environment to meet the needs of youth and young adults. This will help to ensure that these individuals “organise within and not outside of the official halls of power” (Danns et al; 1997).

Suggested age range proposals for examination are as follows:-

1.
 - i. Define ‘Child’: 0 - 14 years inclusive
 - ii. Define ‘Youth’: 15 - 17 years inclusive
 - iii. Define ‘Adults’ 18 years and over. (Recognise two categories of adulthood: Young adult: an individual 18-24 years inclusive; and mature adult 25 years and over).

While in this writer’s opinion 24 years should be the upper limit for a young adult, there may be persons who think young adulthood should include persons between the ages of 18-29 years. Thus the inclusion of the following option.

2.
 - i. Child: 0 - 14 years inclusive
 - ii. Youth: 15 - 17 years inclusive
 - iii. Adults 18 years and over. (Recognise two categories of adulthood: Young adult: 18-29 years inclusive. It may be necessary to further subdivide the young adulthood

stage in this option, as it spans quite a wide age range).

The above suggestions would retain 18 years as the Age of Majority.

The foregoing recommendations focused on medium to long term activity, however in the interim work must continue, therefore the need exists to identify a definition of youth, as well as, any other age group which will be focused on, for immediate work. Keeping in mind that a definition is a guide, and should be relatively flexible allowing for the consideration for as wide a range of the participants as possible, without excluding too many from the onset, it is recommended that for immediate work focus be placed on youth (15 - 17 years inclusive) and young adults (18 - 24 years inclusive). Why include young adults? These individuals have not yet attained full independence and autonomy. Many of them are still in the process of acquiring post-secondary education and/or skills, which are critical to achieving full independence and autonomy in actual life. Such education and skills will also allow these young adults to make meaningful contributions to the development of their society as adults.^h

This task of establishing a definition of 'youth' represents but one step in the greater process of empowering youth. Such empowerment is critically important to meeting the needs of youth, helping them to realise their full potential, and establishing a strong foundation for sustainable national development. The development of the National Youth Policy represents a step already taken. It is important for the sake of the nation that this process be continued with some urgency.

^h In conducting work on behalf of the Youth Division, the Social Policy Analyst would focus on youth (15-17 years inclusive) and young adults (18-24 years inclusive).

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APPENDIX I

THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)

The CRC, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989, came into force on September 2, 1990. The Convention, which states that “a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (Article 1); implores all persons acting on behalf of a child to ensure that “the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration” (Article 3).

The Convention is divided into three parts and comprises of 54 Articles. The rights enshrined in the Articles apply to all children and adolescents, without discrimination of any kind, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability birth or other status. (Article 2).

The following represents a tabular synopsis of the rights contained in the CRC.

ARTICLE	RIGHTS ADDRESSED The Right
Article 6	to life, survival and development
Article 7 & 8	to a name, nationality and identity
Articles 9 & 10	to maintain contact with their parents
Article 11	to protection against illicit transfer & non-return from abroad (i.e. trafficking)
Article 12	to express their views and to be heard
Article 13	to freedom of expression, which includes freedom to access and impart information and ideas of all kinds
Article 14	to freedom of thought and religion
Article 15	to choose their companions freely and gather peacefully
Article 16	to protection of the law from arbitrary and unlawful interference or attacks on his/her privacy, family, home or correspondence
Article 17	to have access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. The pivotal role of the mass media in accomplishing this right is recognised and their cooperation and participation are encouraged.

Article 19	to protection from all forms of physical and mental violence, abuse, injury or neglect; child victims have the right to support and treatment
Article 20	to have alternative care, provided by the state, in the event of temporary or permanent deprivation of one's parent
Article 21	Addresses the protection of the child's best interest in the event of an adoption
Article 22	addresses the rights of a child who is seeking refugee status or is considered a refugee
Article 23	of a physically or mentally disabled child to enjoy a full and decent life
Article 24	to health and access to health services
Article 27	to a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development
Articles 28 & 29	to an education that develops their talents and abilities, teaches them about their human rights and cultural identity, and promotes respect for tolerance, peace, gender equality and protection of the natural environment
Article 31	to rest, play and pursue leisure activities
Article 32	to be protected from economic exploitation or forced labour
Article 33	to protection from illegal drugs and dangerous substances and from being exploited in the production and sale of drugs
Articles 34 & 35	to protection from all forms of sexual abuse or exploitation, as well as from abduction, sale or trafficking
Article 37	to liberty and protection from torture or other degrading treatment or punishment
Article 38	to be protected from armed conflict and from being forced to become a combatant

Source: UNICEF. First Call For Children: Convention on the Rights of the Child.

DEFINITIONS

1. Youth as defined by the United Nations. "Those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive".
2. Definitions from The Juveniles Act
 - Child: 'means a person under the age of fourteen years'
 - Juvenile: 'means a person under the age of seventeen years'
 - Young person: 'means a person who has attained the age of fourteen years and is under the age of seventeen years'.
3. Age of Majority (Accepted as indicating attainment of adulthood)
 - Under the Law Reform (Age of Majority) Act, 'a person attains the age of majority and becomes of full age and capacity on attaining the age of eighteen years' (Marsh; 7).
4. Child as defined by the Children (Guardianship and Custody) Act and the Children (Adoption of) Act:-
 - 'meaning a person under the age of 18', who has never been married (Marsh; 7)
5. Adolescence: Period between childhood and adulthood. The onset of puberty is part of early adolescence.

END NOTES

1. The four main human rights conventions identified as protecting the rights of young people are:-
 - i. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - ii. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
 - iii. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
 - iv. The Convention on the Rights of the Child.
(Commonwealth Secretariat: Humble: 1998: 4-5)
2. The UN General Assembly defines 'youth' as "those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive. This definition is based on General Assembly resolutions 40/14 of 1985 and 50/81 of 1995. (UN website: www.un.org).
3. A Statement of National Population Policy - Jamaica (Revised 1995); pp. 14
4. A Statement of National Population Policy - Jamaica (Revised 1995); pp. 26
5. Ibid, pp. 33
6. Ibid, pp. 33
7. Ibid, pp.34