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# **UPLIFTING ADOLESCENTS PROJECT**

## **OPERATIONS RESEARCH WORKSHOP**

### **“DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS AND THEIR LINK TO RISK BEHAVIOUR”**

U520

#### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS BY HOPE ENTERPRISE LIMITED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE JAMAICA FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION**

*Courtleigh Hotel, Kingston 5  
November 9, 2000*

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**The UAP is managed by Development Associates, Inc.  
in collaboration with Hope for Children Development Company, Ltd.  
under Contract No. 532-C-00-96-00234-00  
on behalf of USAID/Jamaica and the Youth Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Youth  
and Community Development, Jamaica**

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# Introduction

On November 9, 2000, Development Associates Inc./Jamaica conducted a half-day workshop at The Courtleigh Hotel, Kingston, to present the findings of the third of four operations research projects undertaken with respect to the *Uplifting Adolescent Project (UAP)*.

As can be seen from the "List of Participants" (*Appendix I*), the 37 participants included 18 representatives of 14 NGOs participating in the UAP as sub-grantees, and 10 representatives of selected agencies or government Ministries working in the area of youth development.

The subject operations research project was a study, "Developmental Assets and their Link to Risk Behaviour", conducted among Jamaican at-risk youth by Hope Enterprises Ltd. in collaboration with the Jamaica Family Planning Association (FamPlan), one of the NGOs taking part in the UAP.

The Workshop Agenda (*Appendix II*) was designed to meet the following objectives:

- To present and review findings of developmental assets and risk behaviour in Jamaican at-risk adolescents aged 10-14.
- To highlight the fact that while individual assets appear to impact specific behaviour, it is the presence of many different assets that combine to provide the strong base the adolescent needs for resilience against risk behaviour.
- To highlight the inter-relatedness of family, school and community support in building a protective environment.
- To contribute to the process of programme development as it pertains to the promotion of healthy behaviour in adolescents.
- To highlight the impact which a multi-faceted intervention programme can have on assets in the short-term.

This Report summarises the information conveyed at the workshop. It is anticipated that NGO staff and others will use it as a source of reference for their **efforts to incorporate the main research findings into their activity planning and implementation**, so as to further enhance the impact of their programmes with the target age group of 10-14 year-olds.

# Summary of Workshop Proceedings

## WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Valva, UAP Chief of Party, thanked everyone for attending and acknowledged the considerable work undertaken by Hope Enterprises Limited and FamPlan over the last two years in carrying out the operations research project that was to be discussed. It was his feeling that the UAP operations research projects represented an important beginning and he hoped that others would take the opportunity of adding to those initiatives.

He noted that printed copies of the final research project report were not yet available, but indicated that all UAP sub-grantees would receive a copy. In addition, copies would be made available to representatives of other agencies who entered their names on a sheet of paper that would be circulated during the workshop for that purpose.

Mr. Valva also announced the continuation of the UAP, for another three to four years after the end of Development Associates' contract period, under the management of PACT (a local NGO). He welcomed the continuation decision and promised full support to PACT during the transition period. He praised the hard work NGOs had put into the project so far, and said that they deserved gratitude, applause and kudos. He then handed over chairmanship of the proceedings to Mrs. Maxine Wedderburn, Head of Hope Enterprises Limited.

## BACKGROUND TO DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS IN JAMAICAN AT-RISK YOUTH

*Mrs. Maxine Wedderburn, Hope Enterprises Limited*

Mrs. Wedderburn greeted everyone and expressed thanks to USAID for the research funding; Development Associates for their guidance and support; and to her associates who had worked assiduously on the project.

She outlined the Workshop Objectives (See "Introduction", pg. 1) and then drew attention to the handout entitled *Status on Developmental Asset Base Among Jamaican 'At-Risk' Adolescents*, which included the following definition of a basic element of the research approach adopted:

**DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS:** A set of building blocks that, when present, appear to enhance important developmental outcomes, conceived as both the reduction of health-compromising behaviours and the increase of school success and other indicators of positive outcomes.

*(Search Institute, 1998)*

Mrs. Wedderburn explained that the original research hypothesis had presumed the increased likelihood of adolescent school participation, regardless of the economic status of the families and communities, if certain risk factors were eradicated. Early local reports from the field, however, had shown that, in order to achieve initial return to school, development programmes had first to facilitate provision of basic items, such as uniforms, shoes, lunch money, etc. (Later those experiences were validated by survey findings indicating that the two main reasons given for non-attendance at school were “no lunch money” and “illness”.) This reality led to a revised hypothesis that focused on developmental assets *vis-à-vis* behaviour; namely: as a child’s developmental asset base increases, his behavioural problems will decrease.

Thus, the **research objectives** were revised as follows:

- To provide information on the relationships existing between developmental assets and risk behaviour
- To identify those assets associated with risk behaviour which other studies show, result in school drop-out
- To develop and test a measurement instrument to assess the status of the developmental asset base in children 10+ years old.

The research **methodology** had involved two asset-based cross-sectional surveys conducted among all the adolescents enrolled in FamPlan ‘s UAP “Young Adolescents Empowerment Project” and available during the survey periods (May 1999; May 2000). This meant that all respondents were rural residents (St. Ann) in the 10-14 age group who had been defined previously as at-risk, either by the formal schools that they were attending (91%) or by community standards since they were out-of-school (9%).

Slides were then shown to give demographic information on the survey sample of 342 students. Their age & gender profile and school enrolment data are reproduced below:

***Age and Gender Profile of Baseline Population***

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
10	36	25	61
11	64	42	106
12	56	54	110
13	22	10	32
14	20	6	26
n/a	-	-	7
<b>Total:</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>342</b>

### **School Enrolment of Baseline Population**

	%
None	1.8
Primary	71.6
All-Age	26.0
Technical	0.6
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Face-to-face interviews were conducted using a structured questionnaire that offered response options on a Likert scale. Data was collected on the basis of anonymity, so there was no tracking of participants. The design of the survey questionnaire was influenced by previous research on developmental assets (Search Institute on Profiles, 1966; Tarter & Hegedus Inventory, 1991), and formulated to enable assessment of the correlation between the presence/absence of 38 key assets and respondents' behaviour.

The asset categories covered 19 external assets (relating to family and community) and 19 internal assets (relating to self):

External Asset Categories		Internal Asset Categories	
Support	6	Positive values	5
Empowerment	3	Social competencies	5
Boundaries & Expectations	6	Positive identity	4
Constructive use of time	4	Educational Commitment	5

Survey responses indicated the following **incidence of risk behaviour:**

	<u>%</u>
Alcohol use (had been drunk)	14.0
Smoked cigarettes	6.7
Smoked/got high on ganja	1.8
Used/got high on cocaine	1.5
Currently does drugs	1.0
Has had intercourse	26.0
Engages in unprotected sex	26.0
Had attempted suicide	6.0*

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\*20% among boys aged 13 years; 10% and 17% among girls aged 13 and 14 years, respectively.

Findings causing particular concern were:

- The lower the number of developmental assets possessed by the adolescent, the greater the number of risk behaviours in which he/she is likely to be engaged  
*See Appendix III: "Risk Behaviours and Assets"* tabulating the relationship between certain behaviours and assets, which emerged from the study.
- The incidence of certain assets appeared to decline as adolescents grew older (e.g., constructive use of time; personal restraint 35% had been in a fight within the previous month)
- The incidence of attempted suicide increased as adolescents grew older.

### **RISK BEHAVIOUR AMONG ADOLESCENTS**

*Mrs. Pansy Hamilton, Hope Enterprises Limited*

In her presentation, Mrs. Hamilton highlighted how assets were distributed among the survey sample. Noting that research done elsewhere had shown that possession of 30 developmental assets was a valid benchmark for determining protection against risk behaviour, she produced statistics to illustrate that the majority of respondents did not have that minimum number of assets. Analysis of the data had further revealed that those with under 20 assets had reported the most risky behaviour.

#### ***Frequency Distribution of Assets***

<b>Number of Assets</b>	<b>%</b>
0 - 9	0.3
10 - 19	4.7
20 - 29	72.8
30 - 38	22.2
	<hr/>
	100.0

While the results indicated that the majority did not have the benchmark minimum number of assets, the indications were that many persons had some of the same assets:

**% of Youth Possessing Each Asset**

<b>External Assets</b> (6 of 19 assets)		<b>Internal Assets</b> (14 of 19 assets)	
	<b>%</b>		<b>%</b>
School Boundaries	78	Homework	52
Family Boundaries	80	Reading for pleasure	65
High Expectations	96	Achievement motivation	78
Religious community	78	School engagement	95
Youth programmes	80	Personal restraint	75
Creative activities	86	Integrity	88
		Responsibility	91
		Honesty	95
		Caring	95
		Peaceful conflict resolution	52
		Planning & Decision Making	53
		Cultural competence	86
		Positive view of personal future	85
		Sense of purpose	93
		Self esteem	96

The most deficient assets were found to be:

- |                                      |     |                                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|
|                                      |     | <i><u>Most Impacted by:</u></i> |
| 1. Adult role models                 | 48% | • Adult role models             |
| 2. Resistance skills                 | 47% | • Interpersonal competencies    |
| 3. Time spent at home                | 47% | • Time spent at home            |
| 4. Personal power                    | 44% | • Personal power                |
| 5. Bonding to school                 | 44% | • Bonding to school             |
| 6. Parental involvement in schooling | 36% | • Positive family communication |
| 7. Positive family communication     | 28% |                                 |
| 8. Positive peer influence           | 23% |                                 |

Analysis of the data had also indicated that the **most important predictors of risk behaviour** were the absence of 13 assets:

### External Assets

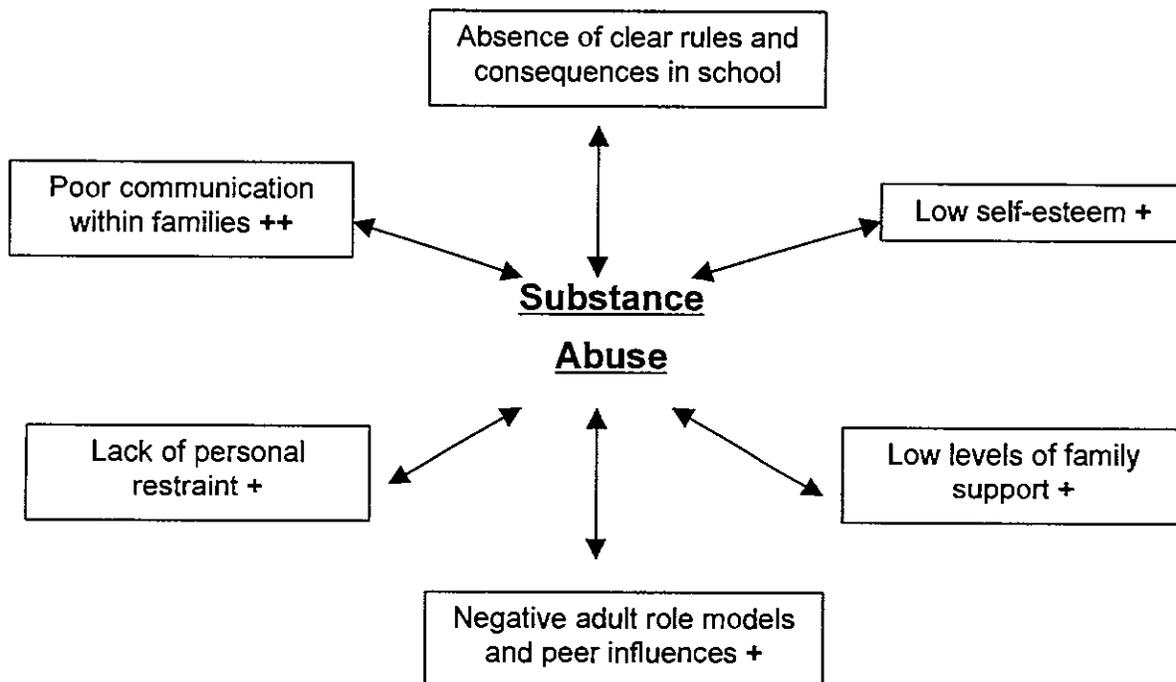
1. School boundaries
2. Neighbourhood boundaries
3. Adult role models
4. Positive peer influences
5. Positive view of personal future.
6. Religious community
7. Parental involvement in school

### Internal Assets

1. Reading for pleasure
2. Restraint
3. Inter-personal competence
4. Resistance skills
5. Peaceful conflict resolution
6. Self esteem.

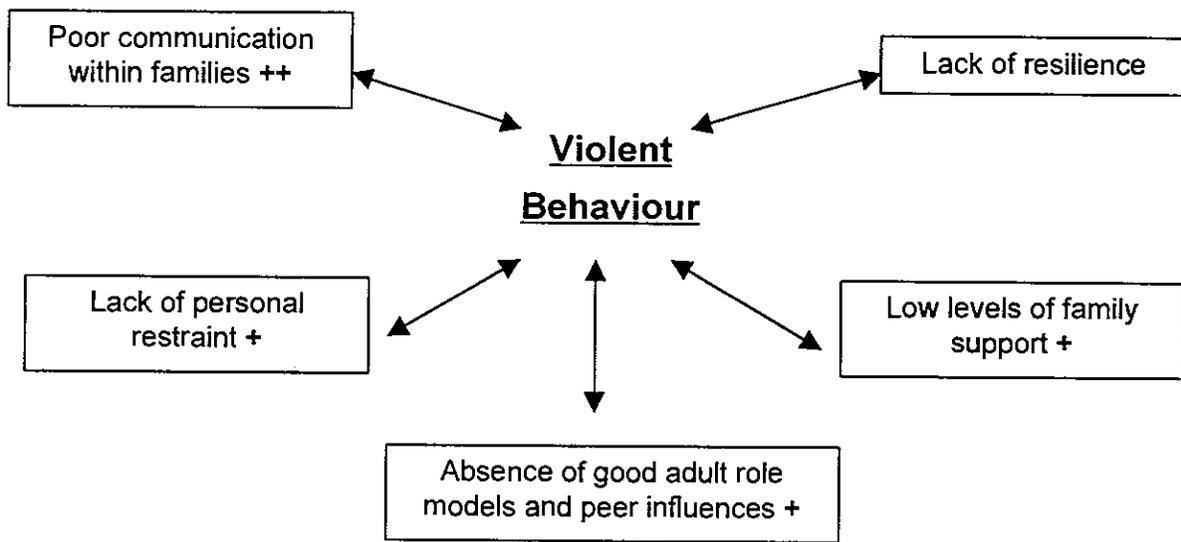
Particular emphasis was laid on the inverse correlation of certain assets with five (5) risk behaviours: Substance Abuse, Violence, Early Sex, Unsafe Sex and Suicide. The following slides were used to illustrate the asset deficiencies which render an adolescent more likely to engage in some of these behaviours, and the assets which protect against some of the risks.

### I. Asset Deficiencies Related to Substance Abuse



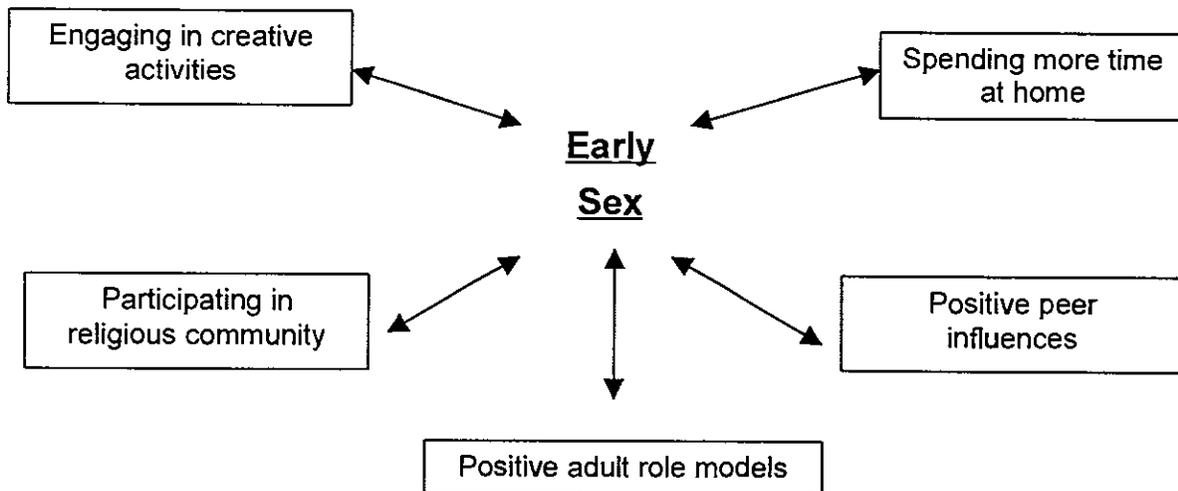
++ = most influential.

## II. Asset Deficiencies Related to Violent Behaviour

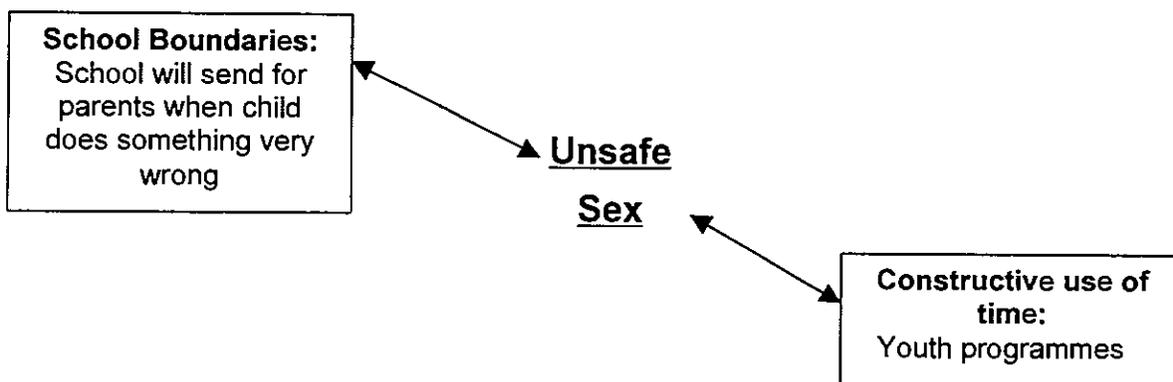


++ = most influential.

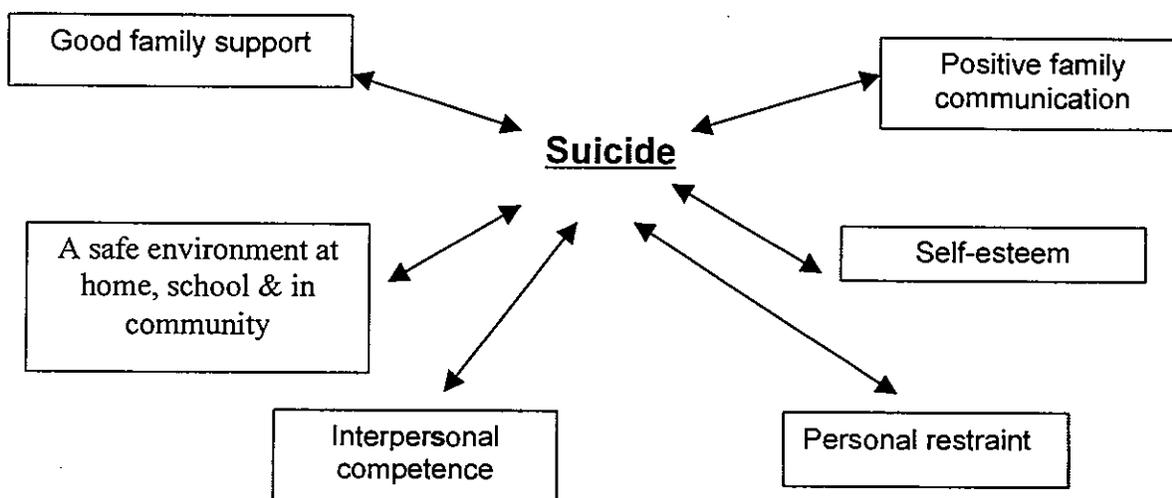
## III. Assets Which Protect Against Early Sex



#### IV. Assets Which Protect Against Unsafe Sex



#### V. Assets Which Protect Against Suicide



Other helpful information on protective asset factors was also summarised in a handout, "Building a Protective Environment against Risk Behaviours" (*Appendix IV*).

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

*Ms. Carol Gayle, Hope Enterprises Limited*

Following the coffee break, Ms. Gayle made a presentation on the research conclusions and implications. She said that poverty remained a basic factor impacting school attendance and this had to be addressed as a prerequisite for returning children to the formal school system.

Other significant conclusions were:

- Increasing the asset base of adolescents will contribute to a reduction in all risky and anti-social behaviour, in particular substance abuse.
- A multi-sectoral approach was essential to increase the developmental assets of at-risk youth

the family and community must become partners supporting school intervention activities

a variety of socialising institutions need to be involved in this effort

Increased emphasis must be placed on the development of social skills and participation in extra-curricular activities (community and school).

- In view of the declining asset base trend after age 11, intervention programmes must focus on the most vulnerable age group – the 11-14 year olds.
- Positive family support and intra-family communication were crucial assets for avoidance of risk behaviour.
- Adolescents need clear boundaries and guidelines to follow at home, school and in their communities.

Ms. Gayle also maintained that the study had achieved its objectives in that it had

- (a) elicited new and important findings that linked risk behaviour with a developmental asset base;
- (b) produced useful data on those assets which must be in place to ensure successful programme outcomes, depending on the risk behaviour that was being addressed; and
- (c) developed and tested an instrument that could be used in the future for measuring the status of the asset base among adolescents 10 years and over.

Following Ms. Gayle's presentation, Mrs. Wedderburn asked the FamPlan representatives to outline the field experience from their organisation's perspective.

## **THE FAMPLAN EXPERIENCE**

*Mrs. Peggy Scott, CEO & Mrs. Pauline Pennant, FamPlan*

Mrs. Scott thanked USAID for funding the research project: Development Associates for their guidance; and Hope Enterprises for conducting the survey. She then introduced Mrs. Pennant, who had been intimately involved with project implementation and who would present FamPlan's report on their field experience.

In her overview, Mrs. Pennant stressed that they had found it essential to secure the involvement of parents/care-givers in UAP activity, as without their understanding and support FamPlan would “just be scratching the surface” and not achieving sustainable changes in the children they sought to serve. She recounted some of the special initiatives that were undertaken from time to time to achieve that goal, including home visits over very difficult terrain and some training for parents to enable them to engage in income-earning activity.

Mrs. Pennant was asked the age group of the parents in one of the communities served (Windsor) by her organisation. She replied that the typical age was 13 – 36 years, characterised by multi-partners. She noted too that it was not unusual for 16 year-olds to already have two children, and for mothers and daughters to give birth at the same time.

## **A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO HEALTHY ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT**

*Dr. Peter Weller, Hope Enterprises Research Ltd.*

Dr. Weller reiterated his team’s view that the developmental asset model provided a valid theoretical framework for a national co-ordinated approach to effective interventions targeting the at-risk adolescent population. Accordingly, he summarised the study’s **implications for strategic interventions** in the following list:

- Focused Interventions
- Co-ordinated Themes
- Sequential Interventions
- Collaborative Efforts.

and said the model provided opportunities for pulling variables together into one or more units/themes for special, structured focus. **A co-ordinated approach would not only broaden the scope and cumulative effectiveness of the sporadic efforts currently being made by various agencies in relative isolation of each other’s activities, but would also make better use of existing resources.** He pointed, however, that there was a difference between “co-ordination” and “control”, and the two situations should not be confused.

As far as focused interventions were concerned, use of the Developmental Asset Model would provide organisations with information to improve the design/targeting of their interventions, e.g., by age, gender, developmental stage, and so on. This self-examination process would entail examination of how existing projects and programmes related to the development of desirable assets, and identification of any gaps not being addressed. The next step would be refine programme interventions if their relevance is unclear.

Dr. Weller also said that sequential interventions were necessary, because they improved understanding of the change process; targeted interventions to meet relevant needs; and

facilitated a structured 'building block' approach. Planning these interventions would required finding out why adolescents believed/acted in the ways they did.

The Developmental Asset Model could serve, therefore, as a launching pad for determining the nature, sequence and structure of a collaborative approach for a process that would get the best results from combined efforts. Collaborative efforts would, for instance, avoid fragmentation and isolation of useful research findings and enable collaborating organisations to step out of their individual mind sets and examine what others were doing differently, so as to 'fine tune' their own efforts. Some examples given of areas in which collaborative efforts would produce added value were:

- Analysis of policy implications
- a Clearing House for easy access to relevant material, so that everybody could know what others were doing
- Co-ordinated Themes (communicated in ways that reinforced selected messages through the use of varied but complementary media and activities, e.g., JIS roadshows in public squares, drama presentations).

Dr. Weller affirmed his belief that **institutionalisation of an asset-based approach would result in more efficient and public sector management of youth development interventions**. In elaborating on that point, he asked participants to note the contents of the handout "Towards Implementing a Multisectoral and Strategic Programme for the Development of Youth" (*Appendix V*), which included some suggested actions in that regard.

Finally, he urged his audience to get past the 'roadblocks' to ensure that all their good work had maximum impact and did not just fall by the wayside.

## **OPEN DISCUSSION**

Moderator: *Mr. Sam Dowding, Development Associates Inc.*

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Dowding noted that the presentations to that point had provided participants with a great deal of useful, thought-provoking information, which he hoped would also be action-provoking. He then invited comments and questions.

One participant commented on the difficulty experienced in knowing what others were doing, and there was endorsement for the view that organisations needed to improve documentation of their programme outcomes and dissemination of research findings and the like. **Increased and sustained networking would result in more information exchanges.**

As far as more effective communication of desirable messages was concerned, a few creative suggestions emerged:

- Ask the producer of the TV Show ,“Royal Palm Estate”, to weave into some episodes scenes that would deal in a positive way with problem situations, attitudes, behaviour, etc.
- Tape episodes from popular TV shows for discussion at PTA meetings to focus attention on certain issues.
- Involve parents in the identification of they need/want to know to improve the relevance of programmes planned for their benefit.
- Arrange meetings with parents at the most convenient venues (e.g., a shop) and times and involve them in brainstorming to find problem solutions (e.g., improving poor attendance at school).

During the discussion of the problem of eliciting maximum parental participation and support of project activities, a participant pointed out that those concerns had been the subject of several previous workshops. **If the several strategies recommended on those occasions and documented in the relevant workshop reports were consistently utilised, better results would surely be obtained.**

Another participant questioned whether cultural bias (e.g., Jamaican norms for treatment of animals that might be considered cruelty elsewhere) in some of the asset items selected for purposes of the study could distort the research conclusions to some extent. He was assured that there was no cause for concern in the present instance, but his point was worth keeping in mind for the future.

An additional concern that surfaced was “What could NGOs do to dispel the negative welfare image evoked by applications for funding to correct the material deficiencies imposed by poverty and affecting individual educational progress?” Mrs. Wedderburn’s recommendation was that it might be worthwhile for NGOs to collaborate in determining which developmental assets were specifically and detrimentally affected by poverty, and couch funding requests in that context.

Further contributions to the discussion

- emphasised the importance of focusing on the positive effects of possessing developmental assets, rather than on the negative effects which their absence produced
- recommended that organisations represented at the workshop should continue to network and collaborate from that point onwards
- all organisations concerned with adolescent development should ‘tie into’ what was happening at other levels and collaborate, for example, to mount a properly structured National Programme on Parenting since good family communication and support had been found to have major effect on risk behaviour avoidance
- The Social Development Commission had communication animators, facilitators who could assist NGOs if requests for technical input were made

- Some limitations of the FamPlan project had been recognised by the researchers, particularly the fact that there had been no control group. However, it would not now be possible to identify and derive data about those who might not have received all the UAP programme interventions.

Finally, Dr. O'Neil shared information on the core principles of the New Horizons Project, indicating that these involved the development of effective, inclusive schools that accentuated positives and promoted collaboration through a Participatory Model a vital factor to success and sustainability.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

*Mrs. Maxine Wedderburn*

The workshop ended with Mrs. Wedderburn's closing remarks, during which she noted that the discussions that had taken place clearly showed that participants' thinking was already focused on the next stage. She urged that the focus should not only be on parenting, but also on improving the quality of the interactions between adolescents, their families and their communities as a whole.

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**UPLIFTING ADOLESCENTS PROJECT**

**OPERATIONS RESEARCH WORKSHOP, NOVEMBER 9, 2000**

Presentation of Research Findings on "Development Assets & Their Link to Risk Behaviour"

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

ORGANISATION		NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ashé	1.	Mr. Richard Rowe	143 Mountain View Ave Kingston 4	928-4064
Children First	2.	Miss Camille Taylor	9 Monk Street Spanish Town P.O.	984-0367
Jamaica Association for the Deaf	3.	Ms. Adrienne Hyatt	9 Marescaux Road Kingston 5	970-1779
Jamaica Family Planning Association	4. 5.	Mrs. Peggy Scott Mrs. Pauline Pennant	King & Mkt. Streets St. Ann's Bay P.O.	972-2515
Jamaica Red Cross	6. 7.	Mrs. Lois Hue Ms. Daisy Lilly	Central Village Spanish Town P.O.	984-7860
Kingston YMCA	8.	Mr. Anthony Brodber	21 Hope Road Kingston 10	926-8081
Mel Nathan Institute for Social Research	9.	Ms. Michelle Bennett	31 Mannings Hill Road Kingston 8	931-4989
Rural Family Support Organisation	10.	Mrs. Utealia Burrell	5 Main Street May Pen P.O.	
Sam Sharpe Teacher's College	11. 12.	Ms. Alma Williams Mr. Viceroy Cunningham	Granville Montego Bay P.O.	952-4000
St. Patrick's Foundation	13.	Mrs. Florence Manning	93 Bay Farm Road Kingston 11	937-1891
Western Society for the Upliftment of Children	14. 15.	Mrs. Glenda Drummond Mrs. Lurline Greene Daly	26 Marion Way Montego Bay P.O.	952-3377

ORGANISATION		NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation	16.	Ms. Sherrill Morris	42 Trafalgar Road Kingston 5	926-5768
Youth Opportunities Unlimited	17.	Mrs. Sheila Nicholson	4 ½ Camp Road Kingston 5	759-2080
YWCA National Council	18.	Mrs. Mildred Dean	2H Camp Road Kingston 5	928-3023
Adolescent Reproductive Health Project, Ministry of Health	19. 20.	Dr. Pauline Russell-Brown Dr. Kim Scott-Fisher		
Hope for Children Development Co.	21.	Mr. Richard Troupe	74 Spanish Town Road Kingston 13	923-3594
National Centre for Youth Development, Ministry of Local Government, Youth & Comm. Dev.	20.	Mr. Kenneth Russell		
New Horizons Project (GOJ/US-AID)	23.	Dr. Ernest O'Neil	MOE&C Caenwood Complex 37 Arnold Road Kingston 4	967-5192
PACT	24.	Ms. Ruthlyn Nicholson		
Police Community Relations	25.	Deputy Supt. Hyacinth Newman Miller		
United Nations Fund for Population Activities	26.	Mr. Casper Peek		
USAID/Jamaica	27. 28.	Mrs. Joan Davis Ms. Claire Spence	2 Haining Road Kingston 5	926-3751
Research Consultants/Presenters	29. 30. 31. 32. 33.	Mrs. Maxine Wedderburn Mrs. Pansy Hamilton Dr. Peter Weller Ms. Carol Gayle Ms. Tricia Morris	Hope Enterprises Ltd.	967-4384/5

ORGANISATION		NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
UAP	34. 35. 36.	Mr. Francis Valva Mr. Samuel Dowding Mrs. Marsha Hylton	1 Holborn Road Kingston 10	929-4779
Workshop Rapporteur	37.	Mrs. B. Butler	P.O. Box 364 Kingston 19	944-2057

UPLIFING ADOLESCENTS PROJECT**OPERATIONS RESEARCH WORKSHOP**

The Courtleigh Hotel

November 9, 2000

*"Developmental Assets & Their Link to Risk Behaviour"*

*Presentation & Discussion of the Findings of a Study  
conducted among Jamaican At-Risk Youth by Hope Enterprises Limited  
in conjunction with the Jamaica Family Planning Association*

*Workshop Agenda*

<b>09:00-09:10</b>	<b>REGISTRATION</b>	
<b>09:10-09:15</b>	<b>Opening &amp; Welcome</b>	Mr. Francis Valva <i>Development Associates Inc.</i>
<b>09:15-09:30</b>	<b>Background to Developmental Assets in Jamaican At-Risk Youth</b>	Mrs. Maxine Wedderburn <i>Hope Enterprises Ltd.</i>
<b>09:30-10:10</b>	<b>Risk Behaviour Among Adolescents</b>	Mrs. Pansy Hamilton <i>Hope Enterprises Ltd.</i>
<b>10:10-10:30</b>	<b>C O F F E E</b>	<b>B R E A K</b>
<b>10:30-10:40</b>	<b>Conclusions and Implications</b>	Ms. Carol Gayle <i>Hope Enterprises Ltd.</i>
<b>10:40-10:55</b>	<b>The FamPlan Experience</b>	Mrs. Peggy Scott/Mrs. Pauline Pennant <i>Jamaica Family Planning Association</i>
<b>10:55-11:10</b>	<b>A Strategic Approach to Healthy Adolescent Development</b>	Dr. Peter Weller <i>Hope Enterprises Ltd.</i>
<b>11:10-11:30</b>	<b>Open Discussion</b>	Mr. Sam Dowding <i>Development Associates Inc.</i>
<b>11:30-11:35</b>	<b>Closing Remarks (Next Stage)</b>	Mrs. Maxine Wedderburn

**RISK BEHAVIOURS AND ASSETS**

A relationship between certain assets and specific risk behaviours emerged in the study. The nature of the relationship clearly indicated that some external assets act to provide a protective environment while some internal assets provide the adolescent with the resilience to resist participation in the behaviour. The table below shows the specific behaviour/asset correlation:

<b>Risk Behaviour</b>	<b>Asset Profile of Respondents Engaged in Risk Behaviour</b>
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	Low levels of family support Poor communication within families Absence of clear rules and consequences in school No adult role models Poor peer influences Low self esteem Lack of personal restraint Absence of motivation to achieve.
<b>Violent Behaviour</b>	Low levels of family support Poor communication within families No adult role models Poor peer influences No constructive use of time Lack of personal restraint Lack of skills to resist peer pressure Lack of skills to resolve conflict in a non-violent way.
<b>Early Sexual Activity</b>	Lack of personal restraint No adult role models Poor peer influences No constructive use of time Low religious involvement No participation in creative activities
<b>Unprotected Sex</b>	Operates without boundaries at school — no sense of sanctions Uninvolved in youth programmes
<b>Attempted Suicide</b>	Low levels of family support Poor communication within families Feeling of vulnerability to attack whether at home, school or in the community Operates without boundaries in the neighbourhood — no sense of sanctions Lack of personal restraint Is shy and does not make friends easily or have many friends (interpersonal competence) Low self esteem.

From *Developmental Assets in Jamaican At-Risk Youth* (2000). Hope Enterprises Ltd.

## **Building a protective environment against risk behaviors**

### **a. External assets**

The external assets of family and school support, presence of good role models and outlets for the constructive use of time combine to build a protective environment against a range of risky behaviors. These include:

- ✓ Substance use:
  - Alcohol and drug use
  - Cigarette smoking
- ✓ Antisocial behavior:
  - Aggression with knife
  - Trouble with police
  - Teasing/harming animals
- ✓ Suicide:
  - Attempted suicide
- ✓ Engaging in early and unprotected sex

A supportive family environment can be defined as one in which the family spends time together and the child perceives that:

- ✓ parents care, know him/her well and approve of his friends;
- ✓ parents are interested in his/her development as they facilitate school attendance by providing things for school and are involved in schooling
- ✓ encourage him/her to do well
  - ✓ family boundaries are clearly established
  - ✓ the child is comfortable with living arrangements at home
  - ✓ child communicates readily and feels free to discuss concerns on drugs, alcohol, sex, with parents

Good adult role models refrain from aggression and substance abuse while peers do not do drugs or alcohol.

A caring and supportive school environment is one in which the child feels comfortable and involved, is aware of clearly established boundaries and teachers encourage him/her to do well.

Constructive use of time is time spent in creative activities, youth programs, church attendance or time spent at home as opposed to hanging with friends.

**b. Internal assets**

Internal assets of achievement motivation, reading for pleasure, restraint, resistance skills, peaceful conflict resolution and self esteem are also critical to building the child's protective environment.

Where the child is self motivated to achieve, values school and learning, reads for pleasure, is caring and has not yearned to do alcohol or drugs (restraint), he is less likely to engage in alcohol or drug use, smoking, aggression, be in trouble with the police, teasing or attempted suicide.

Where a child displays resistance skills in taking responsibility for actions, not liking to do risky or dangerous things and is not easily led, he is less likely to walk with weapon, damage property, threaten with knife, fight, tease or harm animals.

## UPLIFTMENT OF ADOLESCENTS PROJECT

### *Towards Implementing a Multisectoral and Strategic Programme for the Development of Youth*

A multisectoral and strategic approach to the promotion of the healthy development of the youth of Jamaica can benefit greatly from the results of this groundbreaking research on internal and external developmental assets and their relationship to adolescent behaviour.

We already know that the family and parenting are important, that self esteem is important, that appropriate boundaries build a sense of discipline and responsibility. We have individually and collectively identified many of these core elements of positive human behaviour which need to be addressed.

These include the developmental processes, experiences and resources which support well-being.

There is much good work being done by many hardworking and well-intentioned individuals and organizations.

This work can be enhanced using this new data which provides both a theoretical framework and structure for implementation of interventions.

Subsequent research which will help identify common themes and common issues based on assets identified.

#### **Strategic planning**

As we begin to appreciate both the diversity and commonalities of the developmental process we see how important it is to coordinate and collaborate.

We must also understand that development is not a series of discrete and separate events but a process.

This means, among other things, that the building block approach promoted by the Development Asset Model must guide us in the way we conceptualize and implement our interventions.

This coordination must occur at the policy and planning level, among lending and donor agencies.

We must coordinate not only 'who is doing what', but who is doing what to whom, how, in what sequence'.

Perhaps most importantly those of us in the field who want what is best for the youth of Jamaica and are now being provided with appropriate data must ensure that we are the driving forces behind the decision-making process.

**Some Suggested Actions:**

1. Develop a mechanism to ensure that all data is collected, analysed and made available in an accessible format to those who are actually designing and implementing relevant interventions at both the 'macro' (National Programmes) and 'micro' (Community e.g. PTA or Youth Club) levels.
2. Urgently identify a center at which all relevant material can be located and thus become a clearinghouse for training manuals, videos, brochures and programme designs.
3. Agree on a mechanism whereby all media messages targeting youth and intended to promote healthy behaviour are coordinated to ensure compatibility and relevance to those assets which are known to be significant for the targeted group and targeted behaviour.
4. As the data identifies the importance of developing the community based human resources (parents, teachers, youth leaders), and as project and programme resources are frequently limited, the institutionalization of some important aspects of the process are imperative.

*How could all of this work? Here is an example:*

Parenting skills and family communication skills, as well as skills for adults who communicate with youth are shown to be an important part of the process. Creative initiatives must be used to develop a supportive environment and to maintain the desired changes.

- Parenting and communication skills videos and dramas/ skits (using both humor and pathos) as well as support literature (for various levels of literacy) could be developed based on previous work in these fields.
- Jamaica Information Service could develop a road show to carry these messages around the island using guest spokes-persons of national and local status and with the necessary credibility.
- Agencies such as the Social Development Commission and Sports Development Foundation could coordinate the venues and promotion. At each venue local organizations, drama groups etc could be involved as co-sponsors and presenters.

**Together we can make a difference !**

(Hint - A starting point:

- does your project have components to support this asset development
- if not who else can do this for your target audience?
- contact them now!!!)