



**BOYS TOWN/YMCA
CHILD RESILIENCY
PROGRAMME of the
Violence Prevention
Alliance**

**AN IMPACT DRIVEN
PROGRAMME**

**RESULTING IN CHANGED
LIVES**



**YEAR THREE EVALUATION
REPORT**

September 2016 - June 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child Resiliency Programme (CRP) annually assesses the impact of its intervention to determine the effectiveness in order to improve performance and ensure its sustainability.

The CRP targets children (ages 9-11) at risk for violence, abuse and neglect in feeder schools in the neighbouring communities of its two current partners: Boys Town and YMCA, Kingston Jamaica.

Referral Criteria of Children in the Child Resiliency Programme

- *Literacy below grade level*
- *Delinquency, excessive fighting, violence and poor internal locus of control*
 - *Family history of incarceration and involvement in gangs*
 - *Inappropriate behaviour*
- *History of sexual, emotional, physical abuse and/or neglect*
 - *Use of drugs and other substances*

The Child Resiliency Programme's Six Arm Theory of Change

- *Life Skills Training Including Mentorship and Spiritual Development*
 - *Sporting and Creative Activities to Reinforce Life Skills*
 - *Parent/ Family Counselling and Training*
 - *Academic Support to Increase Literacy*
 - *Teacher Training*
 - *Nutritional Support*

In academic year 2016-2017, an average of 45 children attended at each of 2 centres and benefitted from the Programme's intervention through its Six Arm Theory of Change.

The following qualitative and quantitative analysis and findings were derived from a series of interviews, focus groups, pre and post tests and observations:

Programme Output for 2016-2017

- 20 facilitators from 2 centres (Boys' Town & YMCA) trained at a workshop held in September 2016.
- Monthly parenting workshops attended by an average of 24 parents: 14 parents at YMCA and 10 parents at Boys Town
- 120 children (60 at each centre: 66% males & 34% females) attending afterschool activities three times per week across the Centres; with daily completion of attendance registers.



Programme Outcomes for 2015-2016

After one year of Intervention:

Improvement in Anger Management & Conflict Resolution

- 75% reduction in frequency and intensity of conflicts: hitting, pushing, name-calling, threatening and bullying
- 65% increase in anger management in children
- 70% improvement in ability to resolve conflicts.

Improved Resilient Attributes & Pro-Social Behaviours

- Parents, teachers and children confirmed 95% improvement in children's self-esteem, sense of belonging, feeling safe and supported; and 70% improvement in parent/child communication.
- Over 90% of the children could identify someone who cared and to whom they could talk to express their grief.
- 80% of the children confirmed that they were more motivated and excited to learn with 70% taking part in extracurricular activities.
- Over 95% of the children felt hopeful about the future and could identify a goal in life and displayed increased independence, use of initiative and decision making.
- 70% improvement in politeness, honesty, obedience, use of appropriate language, helpfulness, proper hygiene, participation & better attitudes and relationships with parents, teachers and peers
- Significant improvement in self-discipline: taking turns and displaying appropriate behaviour & teamwork.

Increase in Literacy

- 75% of the children demonstrated an improvement in literacy
- 95% demonstrated an increased love for learning and reading.

Outcome & Indicators

● Outcome 1.

Greater protection from violence, exploitation and abuse

Indicators

- # of Programme children caught in a fight or sent out of the classroom for poor behavior.
- # of children who can identify someone who cares and to talk to for support
- Children feeling safe and supported to express their grief
- Children demonstrating an increase in resilient attributes and pro social behaviours: Can identify a goal in life, displaying an increase in self-esteem, sense of belonging and better relationship with peers, teachers and parents
- # of parents trained and better able to communicate with their child
- # of parents trained and reporting an increased belief in the use of appropriate discipline

● Outcome 2

Improved access to good quality, non-formal education and training by providing literacy training after school 3 days/week.

Indicators

- # of children taking part in reading/literacy activities after school
- # of children showing an increase in literacy by one grade level.
- Children demonstrating an increased love for learning and reading



INTRODUCTION

The Child Resiliency Programme (CRP), through its umbrella organisation, Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA), has secured international funding from UK organisation Comic Relief, to achieve the following objective, starting 1 September 2014 for 36 months:

‘To partner with two non-profit organisations, Boys’ Town and Kingston YMCA, to identify and build resiliency in a cohort of 120 pre and young adolescents ages 9-11 years, who are ‘at risk’ for violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.’ The CRP partners with initiatives already existing in the community to execute its objective as well as to build the capacity of the community initiatives for long-term impact.

Children were identified and referred by the guidance counsellors and grade five teachers in neighbouring primary schools, according to the following criteria:

Referral Criteria of Children in the Child Resiliency Programme

- *Literacy below grade level*
- *Delinquency, excessive fighting, violence and poor internal locus of control*
 - *Inappropriate behaviour*
 - *Family history of incarceration and involvement in gangs*
 - *History of sexual, emotional, physical abuse and/or neglect*
 - *Exposure to drugs and other substances*

The caregivers of these 120 students signed consent forms for their children to be enrolled in the Programme. This holistic approach of School, Family, Community, Church partnership targeting violence prone communities in Kingston, is expected to reduce the incidence of violence and abuse through the delivery of a Six Arm Theory of Change, for each cohort, over a 1 year period:

The Child Resiliency Programme’s Six Arm Theory of Change

- *Life Skills Training Including Mentorship and Spiritual Development*
 - *Sporting and Creative Activities to Reinforce Life Skills*
 - *Parent/ Family Counselling and Training*
 - *Academic Support to Increase Literacy*
 - *Teacher Training*
 - *Nutritional Support*



The purpose of this annual evaluation is to assess the impact of the Programme’s intervention in the year under review, in order to determine the extent of its effectiveness and improve its performance to ensure its sustainability.



PROGRAMME OPERATION

As an intervention Programme, the CRP was delivered after school, three times per week at two centres, 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The activities offered were rotated between 6 ‘houses’ at each centre:

Activities per Centre	
Boys’ Town	Kingston YMCA
Meet: Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays	Meet: Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays
Literacy	Literacy
Circle Time	Circle Time
Art & Craft	Art & Craft
Literacy through Computer	Literacy through Computer
Football	Karate
Boxing	Dancing
Dancing	Drumming
	Swimming
Parent Workshop: last Wednesday of the month	
Thematic Approach: Weekly themes are used to guide the content of activities Nutritional support: a meal is served every day	
Annual Sports Day; Mid-term Behavioural Prize-Giving; Fun Day; Field Trips; End-of-term Prize Giving & Awards Ceremonies & Concerts	
Reward & Recognition Programme: 6 different coloured ‘houses’/teams of up to 12 children each. The leading ‘House’ wins a prize field trip at the end of each term.	

The Reward and Recognition Programme motivated the children to improve their behaviour as they gained or lost points/stars for themselves and their ‘houses’ based on their behaviour/performance. The students who showed exemplary behaviour were recognised at the end of each term.

“The children love the house and star system, and the football. That encouraged them to come to the Programme. That I know for sure because they beg me not to make them late because they don’t want to lose stars.” Teacher

“The activities and the ‘houses’ helped to break down the divisions between schools and created inter-school bonds.” Facilitator



“The Reward and Recognition Programme and all the other incentives, boosted the children’s self-confidence tremendously. I think there was a 95% positive improvement. When Yellow house won sports day, there was increased self-confidence among the winners; not to mention those who won the field trips! These really boosted their self-esteem.” Facilitator



METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from a variety of evaluation tools. Baseline data was collected from the referred children using interviews and questionnaires which included background information, behavioural measures, home and family support measures, Literacy assessments as well as level of exposure to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. Referral forms outlining CRPs criteria were completed by the Guidance Counsellors/ Grade five teachers to indicate why each child was chosen to attend the Programme. Pre and post Grade 4 Literacy tests were also completed by the referred children to determine level of improvement over the reporting period. In addition, baseline questionnaires were completed by parents by November 2016, which included rating their children on pro-social behaviours (politeness, honesty, anger management, obedience, use of appropriate language, helpfulness, proper hygiene, participation); rating their level of communication with and discipline of their children.

Fig. 1 Programme Centres by Gender

		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Gender	Male	37	42	79
	Female	23	18	41
Total		60	60	120

During the month of June 2017, focus group discussions and interviews were held with a sample of 24 parents (Boys Town: 12 & YMCA: 12); 44 children (Boys Town: 22; YMCA: 22); the Coordinators and facilitators at each centre; as well as the grade 5 teachers and guidance counsellors in 8 feeder schools. The Executive Director and Administrative Assistant of the Programme were also interviewed.

In addition, weekly site visits were conducted to monitor attendance and the effective delivery of the Programme. The research was administered by trained personnel to ensure confidentiality and the data was stored in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and quantitatively and qualitatively analysed.

The findings were shared in the UK at the *'Sport for a Better World?' a Commonwealth Research Symposium*, 23 May 2017; The Mico University College's Research Day 2017: *Education Re-Imagined: Towards Solutions for Crime and Violence*. April 26; at termly staff/facilitator meetings; at VPA committee meetings including approximately fifteen partner organisations (non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government agencies and churches) involved in violence prevention activities; and on the Child Resiliency Programme's website.



Programme Centres and their Feeder Schools	
Boys Town	Kingston YMCA
Boy's Town All Age	Half-Way-Tree Primary
Denham Town Primary	Mona Heights Primary
St. Alban's Primary	Tarrant Primary
St. Andrew Primary	St. Jude's Primary
Jones Town Primary	St. Patrick's Primary
St. Anne's Primary	
Trench Town Primary	

FINDINGS

The **Programme Outputs** for the year under review are:

- 20 facilitators from 2 centres (Boys' Town & YMCA) trained at a workshop held in September 2016.
- Monthly parenting workshops attended by an average of 24 parents: 14 parents at YMCA and 10 parents at Boys Town
- 120 children (60 at each centre: 66% males & 34% females) attending afterschool activities three times per week across the Centres; with daily completion of attendance registers.





Attendance

An average of 45 of 60 registered students

attended on a regular basis at each centre and any inconsistency in attendance was largely due to violence in the communities (Boys Town was severely affected); transportation issues at the YMCA centre; and students' attendance at school functions. Tremendous efforts were made to keep the children safe and coming to the Programme and follow up calls were made regarding children who were noticeably absent for an extended period.

"In Boys Town, St Annie's challenges are so extreme because of the community violence and therefore have not been participating but they are always welcome. Jones Town likewise, is always welcome. They too had minimal participation because of gun violence." Programme Director

"We are officially removing HWT from the feeder school list because the need is not great enough and the transport cost does not justify the few children who came. This allows us to bring in another feeder school."

Programme Director

Parental attendance at monthly parent workshops remained a challenge although invitations were issued and prizes and surprises were awarded to stimulate attendance. Other creative strategies need to be explored.



THE SIX ARM THEORY OF CHANGE

OUTCOMES & INDICATORS

Life Skills Training via Circle Time, Sports & Creative Activities

Life Skills Training develops critical thinking, builds self-esteem, and moral, physical, social, cognitive, spiritual and emotional competencies. **Participation in the life skills activities (Sports, Circle Time and Creative Activities) provide physical, emotional and creative outlets while acting as tools to develop anger management, conflict resolution, self-discipline, pro-social behaviour and teamwork skills.** The resultant resilient attributes include independence, initiative, humour, positive relationships, creativity, morality, and spirituality, insight into one's own strengths and weaknesses and increased self-esteem. **Improved resilient attributes reduces the vulnerability to become involved in violence, drug use, gang membership and other high risk behaviours.**

The value of Sports to reinforce Life Skills lies in its universal popularity and powerful global language that transcends socio-economic and political boundaries to effectively “bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status” *Kofi Anan, United Nations*. A universal language, Sports empowers, motivates and inspires by drawing on, developing and showcasing individual and collective strengths.



Its benefits include strengthening child development and education; enhancing physical and mental health and development; enabling independence and participation; providing opportunities for leadership and achievement; building positive values; helping children recover from trauma; promoting gender equity; fostering self-esteem and empowerment; and facilitating social inclusion/integration. This universal appeal empowers those affected and fosters strong community cohesion.



Outcome

Greater protection from violence, exploitation and abuse by identifying children at risk for violence and abuse and referring them to intervention for life skills training.

Indicator (a): # of programme children caught in a fight or sent out of the classroom for poor behavior during school or in the Child Resiliency Program.

The baseline data shows 39% of the students admitting to being reprimanded by their teachers for fighting (Fig.3). Most of them (55%) said they did it in ‘self-defense’ using their fists and legs (Fig.4); and 51% of the students were referred for ‘fighting/anger/aggression’ (Fig.2). Aggression was obviously their first response to solving issues.

Fig. 2 Programme Centres by Number of Children Referred for Fighting/Aggression				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Fighting/Anger	Absent	7	10	17
/Aggression	Yes	33	20	53
	No	20	30	50
Total		60	60	120

“They have their times when they act up but nowhere near first time. Those children were branded and labelled and nobody is talking about them anymore.” Teacher

Fig.3 Programme Centres by Number of Children Reprimanded for Fighting at School				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Has a teacher called	Absent	10	2	12
to you for fighting?	Yes	16	26	42
	No	34	32	66
Total		60	60	120



Fig.4 Programme Centres by Children's Mode of Fighting				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Mode of fighting	Absent	5	1	6
	Gun, Knife etc	1	1	2
	Sharpened Pencils, Board, Nail etc	0	9	9
	Fights with hands & legs	37	26	63
	Doesn't fight	17	23	40
Total		60	60	120

Most of these students live in well-known, violence-prone communities where gangs dictate turfs. 54% of the children have witnessed domestic violence in their community such as cursing and fighting with broken bottles, stones, cutlass etc; while 14% have witnessed someone in their family or in their community being murdered. (Fig.5).

Fig.5 Programme Centres by Children's Witness of Domestic Violence				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Have you seen murder or domestic violence?	Absent	10	2	12
	Yes-Murder among family	5	2	7
	Yes-Domestic Violence in home	3	5	8
	Yes - Domestic violence in community	22	36	58
	No	17	10	27
	Yes- Murder in community	3	5	8
Total		60	60	120

'Safety' is very important to the children. 10% across the Centres reported that they do not feel safe at home because of violence in their area (Fig.6). In addition, 12% of the children across the Centres admitted to being afraid at school because of gun shots, theft and bullying (Fig.7).



Fig.6 Programme Centres by Number of Children Feeling Safe at Home				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Children feeling safe at home	Absent	10	2	12
	Yes	43	54	97
	No: Violence in the area	7	4	11
Total		60	60	120

Fig.7 Programme Centres by Number of Children Feeling Safe at School				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Children feeling safe at school	Absent	10	2	12
	Yes	43	43	86
	No	0	2	2
	Sometimes - not when hearing gun shots	0	3	3
	No: Bullying & fighting	3	6	9
	No: Violence in the area	4	4	8
Total		60	60	120

Other risk factors include level of exposure to use of drugs and alcohol. Whereas most denied smoking and drinking, 48% admitted to family or community members smoking ganja and/or other drugs (Fig.8) and 32% admitted exposure to excessive use of alcohol (Fig.9).

Fig.8 Programme Centres by Children's Exposure to Smoking/Drugs				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Children's exposure to smoking/drugs	Absent	10	2	12
	No	16	11	27
	Yes- home cigarette	15	14	29
	Yes-home ganja & other drugs	14	9	23
	Yes-community ganja & other drugs	5	24	29
Total		60	60	120



Fig. 9 Programme Centre by Children's Exposure to Excessive Use of Alcohol				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Children's exposure to excessive use of alcohol	No	10	2	12
	Yes - home	34	39	73
	Yes - community	8	8	16
	Yes - community	8	11	19
Total		60	60	120

“One time before the Programme he was very aggressive and teacher used to call me but that’s not happening now. The Programme do a lot for him. He’s more obedient.” Parent

By the end of the year, with constant re-enforcement of the rules of the Programme (see below), counseling and participation in Programme activities, there was a 75% reduction in the frequency and intensity of conflicts including hitting, pushing, name-calling, threatening and bullying; a 65% increase in anger management; and a 70% improvement in resolving conflicts.



“We have fewer fights in the class with the Programme children. They are more interactive and there are fewer conflicts. I see where it has helped them in that aspect. One child who usually holds on to an issue is quicker to let it go. Two boys used to curse and fight but since they start coming to the Programme, they’ve changed. I don’t see any fighting. They’re now able to handle their anger and talk it over.” Teacher



“The constant reminder of the rules of the Programme is etched in their brains and reinforces pro-social behaviour and as a result, the children who would initially curse without remorse now do it less and if they slip, they are quick to apologise. I saw the effort.” Facilitator

“Before they would fight it out but now they will call an adult to intervene to deal with the situation.” Teacher

“He is a changed person. All the teachers can testify. Prior to this he was always aggressive. His name was called in fights and he was disrespectful to the teachers. Now, he’s not fighting anymore and he’s much calmer and everybody is commending him. He’s more respectful.”

Teacher

“My grades were going down because of conflict with someone at school and they are going up now because I’ve learned how to control my anger and deal with the person.” Child

Indicator (b): # of children who can identify someone who cares and to talk to for support

The baseline data captured the support system available to the students in light of their harsh environment. 64% of the children said they felt comfortable talking to their parents, guardians or teachers when they felt very sad, scared or felt like crying; while 19% said they had friends, cousins or siblings in whom they could confide (Fig.10).

Fig.10 Programme Centres by Number of Children Having Someone to Talk to for Support				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Number of children having someone to talk to for support	Absent	10	2	12
	Yes-parent/ caregiver/ teacher	33	36	69
	No	5	12	17
	Yes- God	1	0	1
	Yes- sibling/cousin/friend	11	10	21
Total		60	60	120



In reality, the main caregivers of these children are their mothers as **their biological fathers are often absent (including death, migration, incarceration or separation) and therefore not actively involved in the day-to-day parenting of their children** (Fig. 15). Baseline data shows only 24% of children living with both parents; and 59% living with their mother as a single parent (Fig. 11).

Fig.11 Programme Centre by Main Caregiver of Children				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Main caregiver of children	Absent	6	2	8
	Mother	27	39	66
	Father	4	3	7
	Both Parents	15	12	27
	Grand Parent or Parents	6	3	9
	Aunt and/or Uncle/ other relative	0	1	1
	Adopted Parents	2	0	2
Total		60	60	120

62% of children said one of their parents had either migrated, was incarcerated or lived elsewhere in Jamaica (Fig.15); while 63% of the children said they had a visiting or telephone relationship with their absent biological parent, most of whom were their biological fathers (Fig. 12).

Fig.12 Programme Centre by Level of Contact With Absent Parent				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Level of contact with absent parent	Absent	10	2	12
	Sees/ Talks to/visits Frequently	23	30	53
	Sees/ Talks to/ visits Sometimes	5	10	15
	No Contact	5	2	7
	Not Applicable	17	16	33
Total		60	60	120



The support system for the children is strongly affected by the high levels of dysfunction, aggression, poor anger management and conflict resolution skills of the parent/caregiver and child.

The intervention strategies of the ‘aunties’ and ‘uncles’ at the Programme included providing strong mentorship and positive role modelling for the children as an alternative positive attachment for the children; as well as platforms such as Circle Time to express their emotions. As a result, over 90% of children admitting they could identify someone who cared and to whom they could talk when feeling stressed. This included their caregivers, teachers, guidance counsellors and facilitators at the Child Resiliency Programme.

“The aunties and uncles are fun and they love to pray with us and they help us to be careful. They secure us. We feel safe and loved. They tell us not to idle on the road and to get home safely.” Child

“I tell mummy and daddy that I love them and talk to them more often. This Programme get me to learn how to speak more to my parents. I have less attitude with my mother and spend more time with her.” Child

Indicator (c): Children feel safe and supported to express their grief

According to the baseline data, 70% of the students admitted to feeling very sad for several reasons ranging from being frequently picked on by their classmates and parents quarrelling, to missing their absent parent or family member especially the ones who have died (Fig.13). 19% of those interviewed confessed to thoughts of suicide (Fig.14). Included in this emotional distress is the trauma of having a parent or family member murdered or incarcerated 8% (Fig.15).

Fig.13 Programme Centres by Number of Children Feeling Sad/Depressed				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Children feeling sad/depressed	Absent	10	2	12
	Feel sad sometimes	28	40	68
	Feel sad-Parent/caregiver shouts at or curses child/fight with each other	0	2	2
	Feel sad: loss of loved one (death/or other types of separation)	7	1	8
	No	15	15	30
Total		60	60	120

“There are slight improvements but they go back into their harsh environment and the stress weighs down on them, they may regress. One child’s mom is mentally unstable. He doesn’t focus in class. He needs sustained counselling. They are all nice children, but they act up because they are trying to cope with their harsh



environment. One child responds aggressively when teased about his dead father. Sometimes when their reality gets in the way, they don't know how to manage it.” Teacher

		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Children who thought of suicide	Absent	10	2	12
	Yes	4	16	20
	No	46	42	88
Total		60	60	120

		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Absent Parents	Absent	10	2	12
	Died - illness etc	1	1	2
	Migrated/ Overseas	1	6	7
	Separated/ lives elsewhere in Jamaica	28	35	63
	Not applicable	15	12	27
	Incarcerated	4	0	4
	Died - murdered	1	4	5
Total		60	60	120

95% of the children admitted to feeling more comfortable to talk to the ‘Aunties’ and ‘Uncles’ in the Programme or their guidance counsellors and parents when they were sad, distressed or grieving. This included being more confident in expressing their emotions.

“When I feel sad, I go to my grandfather and talk about the situation,” Child



Indicator (d): Children demonstrating an increase in resilient attributes and pro social behaviours: Can identify a goal in life, displaying an increase in self- esteem, sense of belonging and better relationship with peers, teachers and parents.

The referred children displayed inappropriate behaviours such as being disorderly, speaking out of turn and not showing respect for each other and their supervisors. The baseline data shows 45% of the students referred for ‘displaying inappropriate behaviour’ (Fig.16). This indicated the need for positive reinforcement of life skills training including self-discipline, teamwork and other social courtesies. Circle Time, Sports and Creative expression were the tools used.

		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Displays inappropriate behaviour	Absent	7	10	17
	Yes	26	20	46
	No	27	30	57
Total		60	60	120

In addition, the baseline data shows 28% of the referred children reported being involved in sporting activities at least three times per week (Fig.17); 15% involved in a club or the creative/ performing arts; and interestingly, 30% of students said they were not actively involved in any after school programme. This also indicated the need for constructive outlets for the children.

		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Number of children involved in after school programmes	Absent	10	2	12
	Yes-Sport	17	17	34
	Yes-Club	4	11	15
	Yes-Academic/Extra lessons	10	10	20
	Yes-Creative & Performing Arts	1	2	3
	No	18	18	36
Total		60	60	120



Circle Time for Life Skills Training

Circle time gave the children the opportunity to express themselves about personal matters and topical issues guided by weekly themes such as healthy sexuality, decision making, conflict resolution, anger management, peer friendships. Methods used to stimulate discussions included outdoor, indoor and box games; role play; crossword puzzles, writing, stories, group work, music, visual aids, art and craft, problem solving and presentations.

One facilitator observed that the gun violence in the community not only affected the children's attendance, but it also made them more agitated. This he said was addressed in Circle Time by encouraging the children to talk and act out their feelings.

In addition, Circle Time brought out effective group dynamics:

“We had a lot of interactive discussions around various topics: bullying, family etc. In one session about different types of families, one boy started closing up about his family and the others let on that his father was murdered because he was a ‘bad man’ and the boy started to cry. When asked to share, he told how losing both his dad and uncle in the same incident affected him. The group consoled him telling him not to give up and that they were there for him. It was marvellous seeing them giving him solid advice. The boy felt much better.” Facilitator

Proper articulation as an aid to self-expression was emphasised by a facilitator because “If police stop you on the road, you must be able to express yourself, especially with the boys. People tend to think you're not telling the truth if you can't express yourself properly.”

Another facilitator noted that one key to getting a child to cooperate is to find out what he/she likes. “MM wasn't responding to me at all – he would get upset and didn't want to stay in class. I found out that he liked dominoes when I used it as a teaching tool in Circle Time. From then, he became attached to me and we would talk.”



“Because of the creative activities in circle time, such as dominoes, bingo, and making portfolios, the children didn’t even want to go to swimming. These activities helped them to be calmer. When we found activities that they were interested in, it gave us an opportunity to rap with them. Their behaviour improved and they were less hostile to the other children. Because they wanted to participate in something that they liked, they became more responsible for their behaviour.”

Facilitator

“I used little competitions as motivators: the person finishing first got 2 stars; extra stars if they came early from swimming; I tried to having 3 main points per session as a take-away along with the craft items. The volunteers also helped. All the groups responded very well.” Facilitator

“In the beginning, the children didn’t want to share the resources even though there were enough to go around. One child would hold on to all the red markers for example and not want to share them. By the end of the term they were sharing, even offering to share and using a nice voice when offering.” Facilitator

“With a set of challenging boys, I asked them what they loved and was able to teach them through the games they chose and they worked so well together. They were sharing and coming up with different strategies on how to play the game. I realised that some of their mannerisms and terminologies were not anger but they were acting out what they saw in their communities. They became so nice even hugging me.” Facilitator

“When they see that you ‘get them’ and find what makes them tick, you get to bring out the resilience in them because it was there all along.” Facilitator

These activities helped strengthen self-discipline and pro-social behaviours: politeness, honesty and courtesy, saying ‘please’, ‘thank you’ and ‘I’m sorry’ etc. **This resulted in improved relationships (with classmates, teachers and parents), teamwork and anger management skills.**

Spiritual Development took place mainly in the first 15 minutes of each afternoon during devotions which was guided by the weekly theme. The children sang favourite choruses and read bible passages. Faith in God was seen as one of the survival tools when they felt angry or sad. Most of the **children volunteered to lead devotions which showed improvement in their sense of belonging and self-esteem.**

“I love that I learn things about God and the aunties and uncles teach us not to bully others.” Child



At the end of the year, over 95% of the children felt hopeful about the future and had a goal in life; and 90% displayed increased independence, use of initiative and decision making. Most wanted to be nurses, teachers, police officer, soldiers and doctors. There was a 95% improvement in children's self-esteem, sense of belonging, feeling safe and supported.



Sports to Reinforce Life Skills (football, boxing, karate, swimming)

Sports is recognized as 'all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport and games' *United Nations 2008*. Because sports is seen as 'the best school for life' it is intentionally implemented in the Programme as a **powerful tool for engaging at risk children in activities that promoted positive development as a diversionary approach to tackling crime, to inspire behaviour change and teach important life skills for example anger management, team building, building self-esteem, decision making and self-discipline. It promoted positive values including developing relationships and trust, taking on responsibility and learning how to resolve conflicts; enhanced physical and mental health and development; opportunities for leadership and achievement; promoting gender equity; and helping children recover from trauma. The role of the sports coach in engendering a positive 'socio-moral' environment was evident.**

The appeal of sport helped to attract the children at risk to the Programme and acted as a 'hook' for engagement. They enjoyed all sporting activities which generated a sense of excitement and belonging, similar to feelings experienced as part of a gang. The passion of sports encouraged them not to give up and instead, became a strong force in behaviour modification, emotional growth, pro-social practices; and an avenue for the children to shine where otherwise they would have been labelled as "no good".



The sporting activities had a great impact on the children not only as stress relief tools, but they instilled discipline; taught them to follow instructions; fostered a sense of belonging and cultivated good sportsmanship in learning how to win and lose gracefully.

Boxing

In Boxing the children learned that it was not about rage or trying to inflict punishment but about sportsmanship because when the fights were finished both participants shook hands and congratulated each other. It also helped improve their respect for self and others resulting in better relationships and improved self-confidence.

“One boy was always in his shell and after encouraging him to believe in himself and not to compare himself with others, I saw changes in him. He became one of the top students in boxing at the Programme.”

Facilitator



“As an individual contact sport, the children can easily become too proud and boastful if they win which can lead to conflict at times so I discouraged that attitude.” Facilitator

The boys in particular loved boxing so much that they have expressed interest in having the Boxing coach train them after leaving the Programme.

“A lot of them started out very timid but through the camaraderie and the different activities they came out of their shells and even with the boxing, there’s a boy who is a little isolated and in his own world at school, and the fact that he was chosen to be a part of the final showcasing at the graduation says a lot. I know that something good was really happening at the Programme.” Teacher



Football

All life skill lessons learned in Boxing were re-enforced in Football and Cricket. As a team sports, they encouraged teamwork and group dynamics in working together to achieve a common goal.



“The aggressiveness has subsided because they have become friends. The football and the cricket sort them out a lot. And they now understand that football is a team sport. They now understand that it’s not about them, it’s a team effort and they need to pass the ball so that in the end, it’s not any one person who wins but the entire team wins.” Facilitator

The girls preferred cricket to football but all played both sports and “the boys try to help the girls along the way. Football has helped to build their self-confidence.” Like Boxing, some boys have expressed interest in further football training,

“They are now taking part in activities at school especially the football. They want to be on the school’s football team to enter national competitions.” Teacher



Karate & Swimming

The children learned that Karate is not about fighting but discipline, strength and self-defence. Both girls and boys participated in simulated situations and how to resolve them. They also learned that verbal attacks are just as hurtful as the physical ones.





I give them hugs and 'high fives' and it told them that I believed in them."
Facilitator



"One boy had low self-esteem and couldn't even push off the wall and eventually with coaching and encouragement, he was able to do all the swim strokes after that." Facilitator

"The boys laughed at the girls with no swim gear and so they didn't want to swim. But with the right gear, their confidence level went up and they did very well." Facilitator



"I love swimming most in the Programme because I got a medal for swimming and when I show my family, they are proud of me. I text my father and show him the gold medal and he said 'what a wonderful girl' and then he said 'I hope you behave yourself at YMCA.'" Child



“I see improvement since he’s been coming to the Programme and he’s settled down and he’s more aware and telling me what is happening at school. He couldn’t swim and now he tells me he can swim and now he can’t wait to visit his grandfather in the country to swim in the river there.” Parent

Sports Day

Sports day, one of the big events for the year, saw a great turn out, excitement and full participation. Leading up to Sports Day were six-side football competitions and Boxing competitions.

“The sporting activities pick up interest so the six-a-side football competition and boxing competition attracted the interest and a full turn out which set the stage for the end of term sports day. There are plans to do more of this for the next school year such as having swimming competitions at the YMCA and generally more sporting competitions throughout the year to excite the children on an on-going basis.”

Programme Director



“Sports Day was not only competitive games but more importantly, it highlighted resilient attributes and values in the children: the obedience, showing respect, good sportsmanship etc.” Facilitator

“At sports day a lot of the persons who would not normally participate did, everybody wanted to participate even just to give their houses some points.” Facilitator



Child Resiliency Programme
Year Three Annual Evaluation
September 2016 – June 2017



Over 95% of the children demonstrated improvement in the Life Skills learned through sports. They encouraged greater self-control and improved communication skills which in turn translated into better behaviour in the classrooms.



Creative Expression to Reinforce Life Skills (art & craft, dance, drumming)

The main objective of Creative Expression is to help the children gain a positive, meaningful perspective of themselves; develop team work; leadership skills, relationship management, conflict resolution, anger management among other socially healthy behaviours.

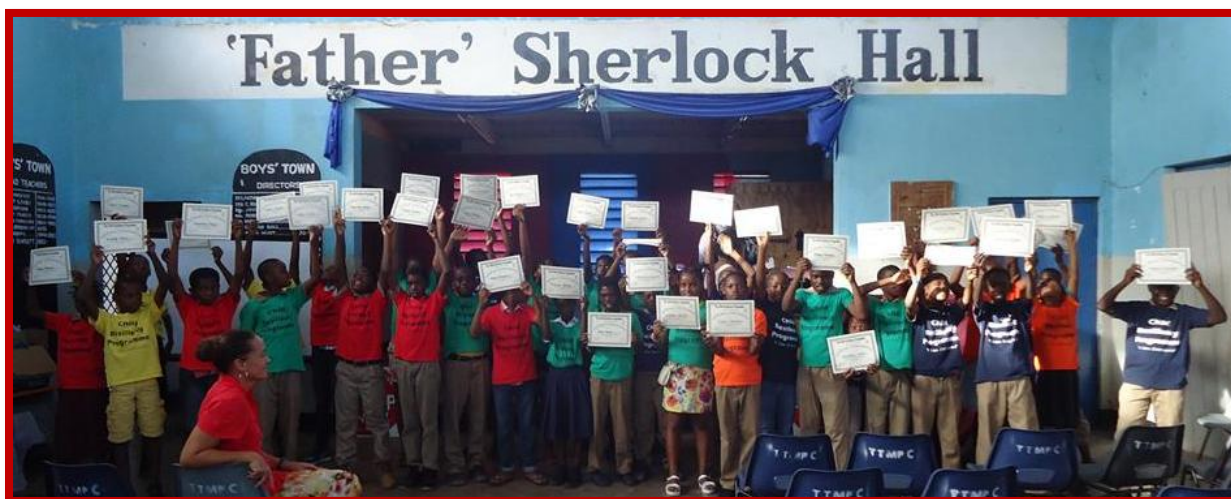
Dance and drumming for example provided the freedom to express themselves, but the children also learned that dance involved control or else there would be chaos. They learned to follow instructions and that even fun was more enjoyable with some amount of control.

“The Programme helps us to bounce back; it’s about learning how to behave properly; learning new things like how to do football and dance; be punctual; learning to walk away from trouble; not to kick girls; honouring your mother and father; being responsible with sex and sexuality; having faith in ourselves.” Children



They made fun and exciting things in Art & Craft: Mothers' and Fathers' Day cards; portfolios; etc. all of which were on display at the Award ceremonies.

The overall increase in participation in creative expression is 90%. All interviewees – teachers, team members and children – confirmed a 70% increase in after school activities; and 80% of the children confirmed that they were more motivated and excited to learn.



By the Programme Leaving Ceremony in June 2017, there was greater protection from violence, exploitation and abuse and noticeable improvement in the children's pro-social skills, anger management, and significant increase in their self-confidence. 75% of children demonstrated a decrease in the number of fights and fewer reports have been made to the principal or Guidance Counsellor for fighting in the classroom. Over 90% can identify someone to talk to for support. 70% demonstrated improvement in social skills.

"The Boys Town graduation exercise was an excellent showcase of the impact of the Programme on the children. I saw the enthusiasm of the children in the performances and that spoke volumes to their sense of belonging, growth of their confidence level and how they gelled together as students from different schools. They took ownership of the graduation performances." Facilitator

There was also a strong sense of bonding with facilitators in the Programme where the 'aunties' and 'uncles' at the Programme provided strong mentorship to and positive role models for the children which was an alternative positive attachment for the children in the absence of a positive parent or caregiver. This safe supportive environment reduced their risk for entering into a life of gangs and violence.

"If you don't understand something, the Aunties and Uncles teach you and you bounce back from all the mistakes you make." Child



“She has changed. She’s not as aggressive as before because she’s able to manage her anger better. She’s calmer now. She speaks more about her emotions than getting physical. Her self-confidence has improved. She has a better attitude at school and at home. And taken up speech and drama and she signed up by herself.” Parent

“They are looking for acceptance love. They respond to hugs and they give it as well. They hug me all the time.” Facilitator

“They are no longer so agitated. I’ve seen at the end of this year where they are more cooperative with each other, they can sit and listen. They are more appreciative of others beliefs and ideas. These are children that are easily lost in the system so I like that the Programme focuses on them because they get somewhere to really shine, to feel valued. Not everybody is academically inclined but that is how the school system is and the Programme facilitates them. There is a place for me and I just need to try. I’ve seen a huge growth in all the Programme children in my class. It has had a huge impact on them.” Teacher

“They are making the effort because they are quick to take correction. Now if they use a curse word, they will be quick to apologise, because they know it’s unacceptable. Some issues remain with hygiene with one or two children maybe because they don’t have the soap or deodorant to use.”

Teacher

“These children who were not on the front burner at their schools or in their communities, have a place to shine at the Programme and those who needed to be bolder have done so and those who needed to be calmer have done so and have received behavioural prizes as motivators. They are stars here at the Programme.”

Facilitator



“They came into their own, recognising what they liked and doing well in those areas.” Facilitator

“We learn how to work hard, how to protect each other. We like the fun.” They have joined Maths club, Brownies and Scout at their schools since coming to the Programme. Child

“The Programme help him behave himself a lot. Trust me. Him did ruder than that and the Programme help him to change for the better. Him hug mi a lot too.” Parent

“Another girl has grown also. She’s another one who is easily overlooked. Now she will volunteer answers in class which is sort of shocking because she tends to prefer to sit quietly at the back. I realise that if you praise them you will get them to move a little further the next day. They are more polite and courteous; more obedient; more helpful; more confident.” Teacher

“They’re not perfect but they are better. For example some boys were very, very challenging. Their language: gimmi this, gimmi that, mi want this mi want that. Curse badwords. Now they are saying ‘thanks’ when they get their meals.” Facilitator

“She wasn’t really visible at school before the Programme. Now, she wants to be a part of everything – volunteering for devotion, dance etc. The impact of the Programme with the children’s self-confidence is great.” Facilitator



Parent / Family Counselling and Training

A key objective of this arm is to promote positive parent/caregiver-child interaction, which includes the use of non-violent discipline and improved communication between the two; by building resiliency and a positive attitude towards violence prevention, anger management, conflict resolution, sexual & reproductive health and drug abuse prevention practices among the parents.

Indicator (e): # of parents trained and better able to communicate with their child

Getting parents/caregivers to attend monthly parent meetings and to support their children’s activities proved to be very challenging and tells why **parental neglect was a major contributing factor to the children’s behavioural challenges**. The feeder schools themselves had poor attendance at PTA meetings. There were on average, 10 – 15 parents attending each workshop. Great efforts to reach the parents included sending invitation letters home with the children and texts, but the latter was not as effective due to technical challenges with the network provider.

“One of the biggest challenges at the Programme is parents’ attendance – use of free text messages to announce parent workshops and parenting tips has not worked as well as it has in the past. This needs follow up with the network providers Flow and Digicel.” Programme Director



97% of the children said they felt loved and cared for by their mothers, while 80% felt cared for by their fathers (Figs. 18 and 19).

“She is a problematic child at home and school in her behaviour. I see a little improvement in her and I notice she has a lot of interest in coming to the Programme. So there must be something good here that really motivates her. And she always insists that I come to the parent meetings. She’s always telling me the importance of coming here and what takes place and that’s why I try to make the effort to be here to make her feel good.” Parent

Fig.18 Programme Centres by Number of Children Who Feel Cared For by Their Mothers

		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Children who feel cared for by their mothers	Absent	10	2	12
	Yes	48	57	105
	No	2	0	2
	Not Applicable	0	1	1
Total		60	60	120

“The home is where all the problem is. It’s like we are going around in a circle and coming back to the same point. The children are not getting a good breakfast (cheese trix and soda or popcicle) and there is no parental supervision of homework so every day the same set of children does their homework at school. Children are raising themselves. Most of them are at school till 6 then they walk home at night when someone is there.”

Teacher

Fig.19 Programme Centres by Number of Children Who Feel Cared For By Their Fathers

		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Children who feel cared for by their fathers	Absent	10	2	12
	Yes	39	47	86
	No	6	6	12
	Not Applicable	2	4	6
	Not sure	3	1	4
Total		60	60	120



“The parents never come to PTA and is not like they have things doing. I don’t know why. We have to see how best we can stimulate the parents to get them involved. So that whatever is being taught at the Programme is re-enforced at the school and at home even if it is not re-enforced in the community. But the family can influence the community. The parents we want to see, never come.” Teacher

Several topics were covered at the monthly parent workshops which included positive discipline; problem solving; effective communication with children; stress management; expressing love for your children, good hygiene; anger management. Guest speakers were also invited to address the parents. Charts and hand outs were used to make the workshops more interactive. The Coordinators of both centres also attended PTA meetings at the feeder schools to sensitise parents to the Programme.

“The average attendance at Boys Town was 10 parents whose children tended to behave better. You could see that they really put into practice with their children what they learned at the workshops. They and their children came consistently.” Facilitator

By the end of the reporting period, 70% of children and parents confessed to improvement in their communication with each other.

“I always come to the workshop. I learn how to deal with the children, not to be aggressive with them and talk to them, interact with them, and I have been doing it and I see it work. My relationship with my children has improved.” Parent

Indicator (f): # of parents trained and reporting an increased belief in the use of appropriate discipline (not corporal punishment)

“Some children’s caregivers train them to steal and if they don’t they are severely beaten. These learned values from 3 yrs are very hard to curb, so the change process is slow and sometimes the associated costs of intervention slows or stops the process because the parents can’t afford it. This is where the Programme is useful because cost does not prevent the children from registering. The teachers are left to play a major role in liaising between the needs of the child and their caregivers and the Guidance Counsellors have to spend a lot of time counselling the caregivers in how to handle the traumatised children especially when they are not their biological children (adoption/ grandparents etc).” Teacher



The parents who attended reported significant improvement in their own attitude as well as that towards their children; they also reported better control with their own anger and improvement in the use of appropriate discipline. They were more loving to their children; hugged them more; and listened to their children. They learned to be more patient with their children and to support them more (general supervision, supervising homework and attending PTAs).

“I always come to the Parent Meetings and I learned that instead of cursing dem just talk to dem and I’ve been doing that and it works. My relationship with my son improve. Things that he never show me him showing me now. And we are more loving to each other. First time when him get on ml nerves, I would cuss and gwan but since I learn that that not getting me anywhere, I’m calmer now. Now mi take away privilege from him.” Parent



The children and the parents who came also benefited tremendously from family counselling and at least two home visits at the YMCA centre. There were however, more telephone counselling than home visits and in some cases, parents opted to meet the Guidance Counsellor at the centre due to violence in their communities. At Boys Town, no home visits were done given the flair up of gun violence in the area for the better part of the year. Phone calls and texts were used instead.

Overall, 25% of the cohort of children underwent family counselling at both centres. There were successes in the majority of cases while about 9 cases needed further intervention and assessment.

“One set of children at the YMCA were particularly challenging and need further in depth counselling to better understand the cause of their behavioural challenges and offer supportive solutions. The Programme was barely able to scratch the surface of the problem in this handful of children. But that’s the minority. This is where more indepth individual /family counselling will have to come in.”

Programme Director



“I saw some overall improvement especially with a particular set of children who were very challenging. They were very calm and paid attention at graduation. The counselling intervention seemed to have an impact on them. I saw where they made deliberate attempts to cool things off. I know those boys have a number of issues and some of them are fatherless.” Facilitator

One child was diagnosed with severe ADHD during the reporting period. He completed the year in the Programme and benefitted greatly from the intervention as he had other challenges including physical abuse.

The parents admitted seeing a marked improvement in their children’s self-esteem, improved love for learning and reading; less fighting; improved spiritual development; more interest in art, and helping more at home.

“Parents showed resiliency to send their children out even under trying times with the gun violence. The parents trusted us that we were protecting them.” Facilitator

Academic Support to Increase Literacy

Outcome

Improved access to good quality, non-formal education and training by providing literacy training after school 3 days/week.

Low academic performance is a strong indicator of poor concentration due to a violent and abusive environment and **those who are unable to read effectively have shown to be more likely engaged in high risk behaviours** including increased fighting, aggressiveness, getting involved in gangs and displaying inappropriate behaviour. **This arm therefore aims to help the Programme children become functionally literate through small group teaching.**

Indicator (a): # of children taking part in reading/literacy activities after school

The baseline data shows 19% of the 120 children enrolled in the Programme, already taking part in literacy/extra lessons activities after school (Fig.17). This combined with the fact that 80% of students from the feeder schools were referred for *‘requires additional reading support’* (Fig.21), shows that there is a need for literacy training among the cohort.



Fig.21 Programme Centres by Number of Children Referred as Requiring Additional Reading Support

		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Number of students referred as requiring additional reading support	Absent	7	10	17
	Yes	45	37	82
	No	8	13	21
Total		60	60	120

“Reading is really a problem with some of these children. They slip through grades 1 and 2 with no foundation and it’s in grade 3 that we start to see the problem. It’s not that they are dunce it’s that they have not grasped the foundation.” Teacher

Creative ways were used to teach Literacy to break the routine of a regular classroom setting which included puzzles, connect the letters, hopscotch word games, bingo, school challenge quiz to name a few.

For the year under review, 100% of the children who attended the Programme took part in literacy activities.

Indicator (b): # of children showing an increase in literacy by one grade level

The baseline data captured the literacy levels of the students at entry into the Programme using graded sentences and a Pre-test. At Boys Town, 54 children were individually assessed for their reading using graded sentences. 20% of the children were found to be reading at Grade 2 level and below; 15% at Grade 3; 44% at Grade 4 level; and 20% at Grade 5 (Fig.22).

At the YMCA, 59 children were assessed for their reading using graded sentences. 27% read at Grade 2 level and below; 27% at Grade 3; 34% at Grade 4; and 12% at Grade 5 (Fig.22).

In summary, 35% of the students assessed entered the Programme reading below Grade 4 level at Boys Town; and 54% of students assessed entered reading below Grade 4 level at the YMCA (Fig. 23).

“I’ve seen improvement in her since coming to the Programme. She started to do her schoolwork and her percentage has gone up. She’s been better since she’s coming here.” Parent



Fig.22 Programme Centres by Entry Literacy Levels				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Child's Entry Literacy level	Absent	6	1	7
	Grade 1 Level	7	8	15
	Grade 2 Level	4	8	12
	Grade 3 Level	8	16	24
	Grade 4 Level	24	20	44
	Grade 5 Level	11	7	18
Total		60	60	120

The Pre-Test baseline data shows 11% of children scoring below 50% (Fig.23).

Fig.23 Programme Centres by Literacy Pre-Test Performance				
		Programme Centres		Total
		Boys' Town	Kingston YMCA	
Child's Literacy Pre-Test grades	Absent	3	11	14
	A:80-100%	23	22	45
	B: 65-79%	9	18	27
	C:50-64%	6	3	9
	D:36-49%	2	2	4
	U:0-35%	4	2	6
	Absent	13	2	15
Total		60	60	120

“His school work build up little even the teacher say him ah come on and him different from before the Programme. Him try to do him schoolwork now. Him keep telling me ‘Mummy I can read Psalm 27’. Mi and him have a good relationship now.” Parent





“We are improving in our schoolwork. When our school teacher asks us about adjectives in revision, everyone who comes to this Programme answered that question and got it correct.” Child

For the year under review, 75% of the children demonstrated an increase in literacy. A sample is shown in Fig. 24:

Fig. 24 Sample Showing Children’s Increase in Literacy Grade		
	Literacy Pre-Test	Literacy Post Test
D. F.	C:50-59%	C+: 60-64
J. B.	A:80-89%	A+:90-100%
O. D.	C:50-59%	A:80-89%
R. T.	B:65-79%	A:80-89%
S. S.	A:80-89%	A+:90-100%
S. R.	A:80-89%	A:90-100%
S. M.	A:80-89%	A+: 90-100%
A. P.	A:80-89%	A+:90-100%
D. E.	B:65-79%	A:80-89%
K. S.	D:36-49%	C+:60-64%
K. S.	C+: 60-64	B:65-79%
N. M.	B:65-79%	A:80-89%
T. T.	A:80-100%	A+:90-100%



The children at both centres, who were reading well below their grade level (grades 1-2) and needed to focus more, were pulled and one-on-one sessions were conducted with them using puzzles, word games, colouring, sound blends, listening and reading skills and spelling.

Some children with obvious learning disabilities were referred elsewhere to be assessed but continued with the Programme for intervention in other areas.

“One girl expresses herself more and she writes perfect sentences too. She’s developing in several areas at the same time. When she came to the Programme, she was shy and was not at grade 5 level either.”

Teacher

Indicator (c): Children demonstrating an increased love for learning and reading

Increased self-esteem triggers an improved attitude to life in general and a resultant increased love for learning and in most cases, love for reading. There was a 95% increase in love for learning and reading among this cohort which contributed to improved grades at school. This is exemplified by the two children at each centre who wrote and read their testimonials at the end of year Graduation Exercise in June 2017. Two of these testimonials can be seen at the end of this report.

“This Programme helped build my vocabulary.” Child

“A lot of changes have happened to him since he start going to the Programme. First, he has this thirst for learning; secondly he used to have a foul attitude but he’s just calm now; then his politeness improved and he wants to go out more.” Parent

Literacy was also delivered interactively through the computer at both centres which resulted in a 95% increase in computer literacy. The classes not only gave the children a basic to intermediary grasp of computer literacy, but computer games were used to help children in reading, comprehension, and how to research information on the internet. The latter came in handy for class projects. ‘Starfall.com’, ‘Learning Games for Kids’ and Microsoft applications were some of the main sites used.

“We learn how to read, how to search for things on the internet; how to write and spell.” Child





This year, the Literacy/IT classes at the Boys Town centre were affected by a lot of down time due to no internet connection. During these times the whiteboard was used to teach.

“Once we found a software that was manageable for them they become so engaged, they didn’t have time to be distracted and to distract others.’ This helped in calming them down and to cut down on levels of aggression in the class.” Facilitator



“They came with no confidence in their academic ability especially the boys but they were quick to learn from the computer. Their confidence level improved when they completed each word game. It gave them a boost. The girls learn much faster than the boys. They are learning without realising it because it’s fun.” Facilitator

“Di confidence increase inna Im mek im buckle down inna im bookwork. That little Programme really help him. I see an improvement in his grades because his reading used to be poor. His love for learning improve. There’s improvement in his aggression. It was really bad but him tone down. He wants to go to traditional high school so him buckle down now him realise him have to study hard if him want to go to those big schools like KC. Most of the boys around him didn’t do GSAT but he wants to do it. Him have the persistence to do it. Him is more loving so mi give him de loving. Our relationship has improved and he talk to mi about everything. He tell mi that him can swim now.” Parent

“I like the word games in computer class because I learn from it.” Child

“There’s been an improvement in his academics as well as his effort in his schoolwork. Also improvement in his interaction with students, he knows how to resolve conflicts now.” Teacher

“Being in the Programme is curbing their behaviour. They are trying to do their best. First time they would not know where their books were. Now they have their books intact. There’s also Improvement in their school work. They listen and obey the teachers.” Teacher

“His self-confidence has improved he’s a changed person. His attitude to learning and reading has improved and he has gotten himself involved in the quiz team. He should do well.” Teacher

“These children who were not on the front burner at their schools or in their communities, have a place at the Programme to shine and those who needed to be bolder are bolder and those who needed to be calmer are calmer and they have received behavioural prizes for this. They are stars here at the Programme.” Facilitator

“Those who are not so adept at Literacy want to hide it. They are sensitive about their academic abilities which contribute to them acting out the way they do. Even when they laugh at each other it seems as if they are acting because in no time, they are friends again. It is learned behaviour that they act out but underneath it all, they are just innocent, nice children.” Facilitator



"I felt so good to know that at this school, all the students in the top 4 final exams for this school year were a part of the Programme. This is marvellous news! A girl was 5th or 6th in the class and she jumped to 2nd place! I thought this was commendable. The Programme has contributed to a lot of her success. It's not just the improved grades it's the whole improved self-esteem. They realise that they have the potential."

Teacher

5. Nutritional Support

'Nutrition and resilience are co-dependent and mutually re-enforcing' FAO. Children cannot focus and be productive if they are hungry or mal-nourished. One objective of the Programme is to provide weekly nutritional meals; and to reinforce life skills during meal time including proper table etiquette.

The meals were a major 'pull' factor of the Programme which was in some cases, were the only meal for the day. They were served with water as a policy of the Programme to promote health, proper hydration and to balance sugar intake.

"I've seen growth in the children through the sharing of the meals. Initially, only a few of them would say 'thank you' on receiving a meal and by the end of the school year, most if not all were saying 'thank you'. This showed growth and that they have learned and adapted to the correct attitude and behaviour." Facilitator

"The food is fancy and delish." Child



Teacher Training & Feedback

The holistic approach of building resilience in children generally demands the strengthening of the Programme/teacher/child relationship. With children at risk, it becomes even more crucial because the burden of these children's educational welfare and its attendant issues are oftentimes borne by the school teachers.

Over the year of intervention, the existing bond between most of the guidance counsellors of the feeder schools and the Programme teams strengthened further and in some cases provided the 'push' factor to keep the children coming to the Programme each week.

Although no formal teacher training workshop was held during this period, the Coordinators kept close communication with the Guidance Counsellors on a weekly basis to keep them updated with the Programme activities, events and attendance.

All the teachers agreed that the Programme had a significant impact on the children and in most cases, their improved attitude to learning and reading was obvious in the classrooms. The teachers were convinced that the children's eagerness to go to the Programme was a clear indication that something good was happening.

The teachers were indeed hopeful for the future of this cohort of referred children:

"There is hope for these children. We cannot give up on them, If they've been instilled with determination they can make it. Some of them are going to surprise us." Teacher

"I'm very hopeful for these children because they are quick to take instructions and there are educational avenues like STATS and Pathway Programme that the government has implemented even for those who do not sit the GSAT." Teacher

"Those who come to school early tell those not in the Programme what they did the evening before. And now they are singing and practicing for the graduation as their way of telling the others I'm going to graduate." Teacher



"I've learned from the Programme that the children love to be rewarded and praised; that giving incentives motivates them; that they like competition." Teacher

“Honestly, at first, I didn’t see the need for the Programme. I actually saw it as a waste of time that it was too much about fun and I thought that wasn’t really important because they have extra lessons to catch up on in the evenings. But now I see where they have developed a positive attitude towards their schoolwork especially one child who stands out.” Teacher



Facilitation

Having worked together for the past two years, the teams at both centres were able to take on more administrative and operational responsibilities during this school year. This contributed greatly to the smooth running of the Programme.

The facilitators themselves have become more resilient and they too have their testimonies:

“I’m very hopeful for this cohort and their families because the Programme also affects the families. They tell their parents about the Programme and what they’ve learned. Some parents have come to the centre to find out what the Programme is all about and were impressed with what they saw so much so that even with the gunshots, their children were still coming up to the end of the year. All because the children tell their parents “ah learn this up a de Programme.” It’s a case of the children impacting their families and communities with some of the good things that they’re learning from the Programme.” Facilitator



“I think that this set of children definitely knows what resiliency means and that they have learned how to bounce back. They are not afraid to tackle anything head on now; they don’t feel as if they are misfits any more. Now they’ve learned to think things through, realise when they are wrong and apologise on their own.” Facilitator



“The teachers’ attitude towards the children is important; establishing structure and order; establishing consequences for not behaving eg losing stars; there has to be a disciplinarian to enforce consequences to maintain a balance; getting to know them; oftentimes they are testing the boundaries to see how firm we are, if we still love them.”

“Class preparation included mental preparation and being calm myself and not take thing personally. Having 5 lessons ahead of time. Don’t look at where they are now but look at what they can become. I pray for them.”
Facilitator

“At least 2-3 children at Boys Town Centre need intervention beyond the scope of the Programme with possible assessment and diagnosis. Sometimes the school refers these children to Mico but the process stops when the family has to find the money to pay.” Facilitator



“My takeaway from the Programme is humility. I learned to listen to the children because I realized that they have some good suggestions.”

The Programme also benefitted greatly from invaluable contributions from other stakeholders, church members, private organisations and clubs: Sun Island T-shirts, Grace Kennedy, The Japan Caribbean Ladies Association, JMMB, Moneygram, and Grace Kennedy and the Bible Study Christmas contributions and Alka Vida Water.



RECOMMENDATIONS &

LESSONS LEARNT

- Maintain regular presence in the feeder schools to strengthen relationships with the Programme.
This should stimulate on-going dialogue and encourage the 'push' factor by the feeder schools thereby ensuring consistent attendance of the referred children. The Management Team as well the Coordinators should make periodic visits to the school during the year; the Programme could consider conducting a creative activity during a guidance counselling session at the feeder schools; attend their concerts and ensure that they attend the CRPs events which should include the parents as well.
- CRP to host more events to which key stakeholders in the communities are invited. Additional events to the calendar can include more sporting competitions/ 'bashment' sessions to which parents, teachers, police etc are invited.
- More on-the-ground facilitation of the Programme in the referral process at the schools at the beginning of the school year. Provide on-the-ground assistance to the schools in ensuring the referred children meet the Programme's criteria and getting the necessary approvals to finalise the list of referred children.
- On-going training of facilitators. The staff/facilitators/volunteers/ selected drivers and caterers who interface with the children require on-going training in handling the 'at risk' Programme children.
- More family counselling sessions Including on-going dialog with the Child Guidance Clinics and the Child Development Agency. In-depth family counselling is required for more of the referred children which may include at least one additional counsellor for each centre; and more face-to-face meetings with the families either at the centres or in the homes.
- More Parents' buy-in/ on-going communication with parents: This should improve with more face-to-face meetings with the families; start a whatsapp or other group chats/ texts; explore other creative ways to attract the parents; find special people willing to go into high violent areas for home visits to build the caregivers' trust; Invite the parents to sports day and other key events and make it a 'bashment' which will appeal to the parents .
- On-going partnership with the Police. Have the Community Police Unit play a more active role at the centres: eg give talks and attend events.
- Replace HWT Primary to expand the Programme's reach to areas of need.
- Rowdy behaviour of one set of children discourages other children from coming to the programme. This has to be addressed as early and as best as possible.



CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Child Resiliency Programme impacts vulnerable communities by creating a sense of belonging and togetherness among its children who have learned to play together, grow together, win and lose together, and have become friends irrespective of political and other borders. They have demonstrated that resilience lies within them which can transcend to their families, their communities and hopefully, to the nation.

The Child resiliency Programme in planting the seeds of protection from violence and abuse; increased love for learning and reading; and significant improvement in the self-esteem and pro-social behaviours of vulnerable primary school children, has met its objective of long-term and far-reaching impact.

My experience at the Child Resiliency Programme has been very exciting. I have learnt to use the computer which I had no knowledge about. Literacy helped me a lot and I have seen improvement in my schoolwork. Karate will help me to defend myself if someone tries to attack me. I love to dance so this was the fun part where I got to express myself. Before the Programme, I had no idea how to float, do the starfish stroke and how to hold my breath, glide and kick...and the food was great!

Thanks to all of the Aunties and Uncles of the Child Resiliency Programme.

YMCA Child participant

The Child Resiliency Programme has taught me how to bounce back from the difficult things in my life. I love the Programme very much especially boxing with Uncle Camion. I am a very quiet person but boxing has helped me to get out of my shell.

To all the Aunties and Uncles, thank you for your kindness and helpfulness. To all my new friends I will miss you. To Aunty Sheena, thanks for choosing me to be a part of the Child Resiliency Programme.

I hope that this Programme continues so that children in the inner city can learn how to bounce back in life.

Boys Town Child Participant

