

YOUTH AS RESEARCHERS

ON PEACE, CITIZEN SECURITY AND SAFETY

• FACTSHEET •



This factsheet is a knowledge product created through the UNESCO Youth as Researchers' pilot initiative on Peace and Citizen Security in the framework of the Amplifying Youth Voice and Action to address Citizen Security and Safety (AYVA) project coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme.

The Youth as Researchers (YAR) methodology was developed by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway and the UNESCO Chair in Community, Leadership, and Youth Development at the Pennsylvania State University, USA. The focus of the methodology is for young people to co-create knowledge production and enhance their capacities during the process. Youth are supported through training, mentoring and coordination. The focus of the methodology lies on acquiring important competencies including critical thinking and team building skills.

The findings presented are those of the Youth as Researchers participants. These are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Exploring the barriers and benefits of Civil Society Organizations across Jamaica – A youth perspective

Participants

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Project Description

Crime and violence are depleting forces that are impacting the daily lives of Jamaicans. Moreover, Jamaican youth are heavily affected in both the implementation and as victims of crime in this Caribbean country. Understanding ways to help support local Jamaican youth is essential to creating change in the cycle of crime. One such avenue for support is through civil society organizations (CSOs). These organizations consist of citizens organized at the local, national, and international level, who are geared towards engaging local populations on issues of substance. In case of this study, the CSOs explored work with youth populations as youth comprise a significant portion of the population of Jamaica presently and play a distinct role in the future of the island. More specifically, the CSOs explored engage with local youth and young adult populations in a direct manner to help reduce and prevent crime and violence amongst and by Jamaican young people.

Project Methodology

The research was conducted through youth-developed and implemented interview questions. After the research team developed key interview questions, they engaged in a series of focus groups discussions (FGD) with CSOs from Jamaica. The CSOs contacted were part of the UNDP Amplifying Youth Voices on Citizen Security micro-project initiative. In total there were four FGD conducted, all led by the research team and accompanying Youth as Researchers Jamaican youth partners. FGD were held via zoom over the course of a week in February 2022, with the primary limitation being time to conduct each session.

Results

Two of the key results coming from the collective FGD include the notion that CSOs are most effective when they are able to be a consistent presence within local communities.

When asked about the consequences of a CSO not being able to be consistent respondents shared “removing funding is like ripping a bandage from a gaping wound” resulting in youth working with the CSOs to feel like “another failed attempt at turning my life around” (CSO focus group 1). As suggested by these quotes, the removal of funding and support to existing CSOs has the potential of creating distinct damage to the youth populations being served.

A second key result is the way that CSOs act as a bridge between large intensive community organizations and the local population. Even if the CSOs work at the international level, their presence in Jamaican communities provides the opportunity for capacity development within the local population to create change at the local level. Furthermore, CSOs provide non-traditional avenues for youth to leave crime and violence behind. While academics and good grades are one pathway to a life out of wrongdoing, it is not the only path nor the path most accessible to all. Rather, CSOs demonstrate capacity development beyond academics with one organization

