



EASTERN AND SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SERVICES (YES) PROJECT

As part of a larger goal of creating a safer, more prosperous Caribbean, the U.S. Agency for International Development Eastern and Southern Caribbean designed the Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Project to reduce youth involvement in crime and violence in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean.

The YES Project uses the public health model for youth crime and violence prevention to define the local youth crime and violence problem; target interventions to address risk and protective factors facing both communities and at-risk youth; and share results to foster evidence-based approaches to reduce youth crime and violence in the region. The project supports Pillar Three of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, focusing on efforts to promote social justice and support youth crime and violence prevention. Given USAID's thrust to support countries on a path to self-reliance, specific activities will focus on sustaining YES initiatives in partner countries after USAID's financial support concludes.

EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

The YES Project builds the capacity of regional bodies, national governments, and community stakeholders to analyze crime and violence data and use this information to develop policies and programs that reduce the risk factors that drive youth crime, violence, and victimization. The goal is for government and other stakeholders to use crime and violence data to better target youth crime and violence prevention policy and programming. USAID uses available data and evidence to engage youth and local stakeholders to define youth crime and violence problems, identify risk and protective factors connected to youth involvement in crime and violence, and maximize limited resources to target communities where crime and violence is at the highest levels. This evidence-based approach develops local solutions that address identified problems. To foster scale-up, USAID supports interagency and cross-country exchange of information, while documenting and sharing successful models to promote widespread adoption.

A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

An integral aspect of USAID's intervention is promoting a community-based approach, targeting communities with the highest level of crime and violence. The YES Project delivers a comprehensive program that matches youth with interventions based on their level of risk, while providing the requisite support for family members and the wider community. It requires a strong positive youth development approach that supports interventions to increase youth's protective factors or "resilience." Interventions range from after-school programs and building youth's readiness for employment to family counseling, psycho-social support, and mentoring for higher risk youth.

FOCUS ON HIGHEST RISK YOUTH

USAID works to shift the focus of the child justice system from punishment to rehabilitation as youth in conflict with the law present the highest risk. The YES Project: increases the number of youth in conflict with the law that successfully reintegrate into their communities; increases the use of diversion and alternative sentencing for youth in conflict with the law; ensures detention centers foster rehabilitation; and supports holistic efforts to reintegrate youth into their communities following release from detention. A critical aspect of this entails ensuring that young offenders are placed in child rehabilitation centers rather than in adult penal institutions.

The YES Project is implemented under three components:

- Strengthening Evidence-based Decision Making (CARISECURE). Implementing Partner: the United Nations Development Program (\$9.5 million);
- Community, Family and Youth Resilience. Implementing Partner: Creative Associates International (\$30.9 million); and
- Juvenile Justice Reform Project. Implementing Partner: Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (\$4.7 million)