

**Data for Children
Collaborative**
WITH UNICEF

Brazil

YOUNG PEOPLE ADVISORS

INSPIRE Case Study



Supported by



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

unicef
for every child

The Scottish
Government



OVERVIEW

In 2020, the Data for Children Collaborative with UNICEF (DCC) generously funded the End Violence Lab to coordinate a series of regional systematic reviews on INSPIRE strategies to end violence against children called: *Accelerating What Works to End Violence Against Children: A multi-country study*. As part of the post award process the DCC asked the End Violence Lab to read and respond to their Youth Engagement Workbook. It asked a provocative question: How will you meaningful engage young people?

We were INSPIRED!

In response, the EV Lab proposed a series of youth-centred activities to complement the review project supporting a growing trend to deliver meaningful research initiatives *with* children and young people. Notably, systematic reviews are too often completed with little or no inputs from the end-users to ensure that findings make sense. We addressed this working with a male/female team of young people from Brazil, China, Cote d'Ivoire, Colombia and Uganda. We subsequently launched the Young People Advisors (YPA) programme, a co-designed approach to discuss violence prevention, to map our progress addressing such a technically complex topic and to generate case studies with young people from all 5 countries.



PUBLICATION REVIEWED

Baker-Henningham, H., Scott, Y., Bowers, M., & Francis, T. (2019). Evaluation of a Violence-Prevention Programme with Jamaican Primary School Teachers: A Cluster Randomised Trial. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(15), 2797. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152797>.

YPA AUTHORS

JADE LOPES, AGE 24

Play Worker and Youth Leader at IPA Brasil São Paulo, Brazil

HUGO SABINO, AGE 24

Project Assistant and Youth Council Facilitator, Youth Build Brazil/CEDAPS Program Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Inputs also provided by **Carolina Coll, PhD**, Postgraduate Programme in Epidemiology, Human Development and Violence Research Centre (DOVE), University of Pelotas (UFPel - RS).



INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Jamaica is a Caribbean country located in the Americas, with Human Development Index HDI (0.688) and a population of nearly three million. Over one third of the population are children and young people under the age of 18 years¹. Kingston is the capital of Jamaica, located in the central region of the country, with just over 600,000 inhabitants and with considerable economic development. Kingston is also the site for this violence prevention intervention, with primary school teachers in fourteen schools.

UNICEF's 2018 report "Situational Analysis of Jamaican Children"² suggests that about 80% of children have experienced some form of violence for the purpose of discipline, 64.9% have experienced situations of violence at school and up to 79% have witnessed violence in their communities or in their homes. There is no legal prohibition on the use of physical, psychological or other violence against children in the country. However, the Jamaican government committed itself to the UN and member countries in signing the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, taking responsibility for the promotion of safety, health, education, care and full development, among other conditions, for Jamaican children.³ Many issues including chronic poverty, unemployment and widespread violence in the country impact the education sector in Jamaica. This results in deficits in academic performance coupled with a high rate of violence in the school environment. One measure adopted in 2015 by the government was the implementation of the SWPBIS (School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) which aims to address antisocial behavior and school violence through a process of positive reinforcement of fundamental values such as

¹ <http://digjamaica.com/m/blog/child-month-fact-how-much-of-jamaicas-population-is-under-18/>

² UNICEF (2018) [Situation Analysis of Jamaican Children – 2018](#)

³ *idem*



honesty, respect and responsibility. The intervention uses a team-based approach and includes the entire school.⁴

Several international research studies⁵ and also an official government report (April – June 2020) made available by the Jamaican Ministry of Education, shows that the first years of life are the most important for child development and directly impact subsequent years. More than half of Jamaican children aged 6 years are still unable to access primary education, severely affecting their performance in secondary school and leading to a 60% school dropout rate. From a gendered perspective, girls attend school more than boys, with boys more likely to fail and/or drop out of school.⁶

This panorama demonstrates the high rate of vulnerability that Jamaican children are susceptible to, and the urgency of working with teachers, managers, communities and families. Implementing improved measures to prevent and reduce violence against children to improve relationships in the school environment is critical, so too is reducing the rates of violence in childhood overall.

In previous years, a group of researchers developed an intervention to prevent violence against children in preschool through teacher training on behaviour management in the classroom and providing tools to promote socio-emotional skills in young children⁷. As a result of this study, the researchers developed the IRIE Classroom Toolbox, a teacher-training programme with children aged 3 to 6 years. In the study reviewed here, for the YPA

⁴ UNICEF (2018) [Situation Analysis of Jamaican Children – 2018](#)

⁵ DIG JAMAICAN (2015) [How much of jamaican population is under 18?](#)

⁶ MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND INFORMATION (2020) [First Quarter Performance Report April – June 2020](#)

⁷ Baker-Henningham, H.; Scott, S.; Jones, K.; Walker, S. [Reducing child conduct problems and promoting social skills in a middle income country: Cluster randomised controlled trial](#). Br. J. Psychiatry 2012, 201, 101–108.



case study, the researchers used the material adapted for implementation with teachers of even younger children in the first grade of primary education.

The IRIE Classroom Toolbox methodology is in line with the INSPIRE strategy 'Education and Life Skills' ⁸, which has as its main intervention increasing children's access to a more effective and equitable gender education, socio-emotional learning and life skills training, as well as ensuring that the school environment is safe and stimulating.

⁸ WORLD HEALTH EDUCATION (2016) [INSPIRE Seven strategies to end violence against children](#)



METHODS

The researchers conducted a randomized trial in 14 public schools located in central Kingston with a group of teachers receiving behavioural management training for prevention and reduction of violence in the classroom. Seven schools received the intervention, and another seven served as a control group. There were 28 teachers (100% female) and 220 children (50.5% boys and 49.5% girls) who were, on average, 7 years old.

The randomised trial was conducted with teachers and students from the early years of primary schools, and the participation of these children was defined through specific criteria such as attendance, authorisation of guardians and absence of obvious disabilities. All children in the classrooms received the intervention, and four children were randomly selected per class to answer an individual evaluation.

The study sought to verify whether teacher training in behaviour management and the promotion of socio-emotional skills among children would together reduce violence in the classroom. In addition, the intervention evaluated the level of professional well-being of the teacher and the academic, and emotional and pro-social support challenges in the classroom at the level of the children. The training took place through workshops and support sessions for a total of 20 hours, distributed over a period of eight months. The tools of the IRIE Classroom Toolbox included: strategies to reinforce positive behaviour for violence prevention, rules and teaching routines and the promotion of active participation of children in teaching and learning activities. The toolbox also contains activities designed to encourage creativity, including artistic materials (modelling clay, paper and crayons) for use by teachers and children at school. The key concepts introduced were teaching rules and routines, using praise in the classroom and paying attention to positive behaviour,



being proactive to prevent child behaviour problems, promoting children's social-emotional competence, interactive storybook reading and promoting children's active participation in teaching and learning activities.

The teachers and students were observed at the teacher/classroom level and at the individual level of the child. Observers recorded the teaching practice in the classroom, the number of times teachers used physical, verbal or other violence in the classroom and the use of violence in the classroom between both teacher and student and student on student. In addition, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers to verify the impact of the training programme and the results in the classroom from the teacher's perspective. At the individual level, researchers measured individual academic performance (via tests) for children and behaviour self-regulation (via an assessment). In addition, teachers prepared qualitative reports about children's behavior in the classroom. A multidisciplinary team accompanied the entire study, with specific evaluation training provided for the research team. Researchers were also trained in violence mediation and all data collection and analysis was approved by an Ethics Council.



RESULTS

Results demonstrated significant benefits at the teacher/classroom level for reducing teachers use of violence against children, but there was no significant reduction in violence in the classroom among children (child x child). Even with a significant reduction in the use of teachers' violence in school, the study showed that the use of corporal punishment by teachers continued to be used in the classroom. Even with the effects of behavioural changes in the classroom, in-depth interviews with teachers who participated in the training programme revealed that most teachers continued to see violence as a tool to be used for class management, because it has "immediate" effects and because they assume that their students are "accustomed" to these methods which are also used at home.

At the child level, results showed a positive improvement of the socio-emotional skills (use of oral language and self-regulation, for example) and in the quality of the classroom atmosphere as an emotional support environment. However, there was no individual benefit, in relation to the child's prosocial skills or academic performance. In this case, there was a greater impact at the individual level (recognition of feelings and exposing what you feel) however there was no observed improvement in academic performance (e.g. knowledge of algebra). There was also no improvements in the classroom environment, which was assessed by children's class-wide aggression.

Results from the semi-structured interviews with the teachers demonstrated improved strategies for class management. Teachers acknowledge increased success helping children self-regulate their emotions leading to improved behaviours. Teachers also remarked on their own improved ability to self-regulate their emotions, acknowledging the successful use of the IRIE tools as opposed to inflicting bodily harm. Overall, these results, according to teachers, have served to improve the teacher-student relationship. The study



shows that teacher training can lead to a reduction of violence even in a context where corporal punishment is widely disseminated and accepted.

The study was not without challenges. The results demonstrate that one of the logistic difficulties with the research process was that teachers were overloaded with both professional and personal responsibilities. Busy teachers reported when taking hospital leave, for example, that there are rarely replacements to take on their teaching responsibilities.

While the results were overall encouraging, the culture of violence persists in schools and is still used in some cases where these new strategies do not work quickly and efficiently, or where teachers deem the behaviors as severe and requiring violence as punishment.



REFLECTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

We note strengths as well as gaps in this intervention. The technical training for teachers to prevent violence using the practical tools found in the IRIE Classroom Toolbox is useful but it is equally important to update and improve teaching practice on a regular basis. It is possible that the research design did not allow for this, but it would be recommended if this intervention were implemented elsewhere. We appreciate the use of a truly multi-disciplinary team composed of teachers, mentors for teacher training, and research observers chosen to observe next to a group of researchers who evaluated the intervention, ensuring the transparency and security of the data obtained by the study.

Another positive aspect of the study was drawing on teachers' observations and asking them to record these lending very strong qualitative data and end-user perspectives. The study could be enhanced significantly if children were also allowed to write (or draw or illustrate) their perspectives on violence or its absence in the classroom. Engaging children in the research process is vital.

Relating to children, one of our criticisms is the non-inclusion of children with visible disabilities in the study. It would be worthwhile to include children with disabilities since they are more vulnerable and can be more prone to violence from their classmates in the classroom. Likewise, it appears that consent was gained from the parents but not the children. It is important that children are treated with the same ethical considerations as adults.

Reflecting on the intervention overall, and the larger context within Jamaica there are two observations. First, there is no policy in Jamaican law prohibiting the use of corporal



punishment in schools—it is important that interventions like the IRIE project occur but it is equally important to work on or change the larger policy context in which these interventions occur. Second, it is clear from the study that women tend to occupy positions as teachers and medical leave is common due to the all the pressures and emotional impacts of work. The situation of education is similar in our country of Brazil, where teaching positions are largely held by women where they are highly undervalued. This gender imbalance needs to be addressed as it is clearly linked to violence, developing a vicious cycle for both teachers and students. As teachers, women bear double duty responsible for their own household management in addition to school duties. Ultimately, they feel overloaded with responsibility, which can lead to increased violence in the classroom and/or poor health outcomes evidenced by high rates of medical leave. In this study, for example, two teachers who were often away from their classrooms due to illness. The result, also leads to poor outcomes for students who are more likely to drop out of school given the inadequate and unsafe school environment.

We believe that the prevention of violence against children should be an inter-sectoral project, where the accountability of the culture of violence is not just a problem between the students and teachers but viewed within the context of the whole school and extending to the entirety of society. Violence needs to be addressed by a large constellation of people including members of the family, other school professionals, residents of the neighborhood where the schools are located and ultimately by governments responsible for policy and enforcing good institutional practice. This approach provides a more responsive environment for uptake of interventions like the one reviewed here. As noted above, we also recommend the inclusion of children with disabilities, as they too exist in the school environment and may be more vulnerable to violence.



In the methodological model used for evaluation and data collection, we recommend greater follow-up and not only on two specific days, as was the case in this study. The observation of specific days does not guarantee fidelity to the analysis, since this may be an atypical day and/or teachers change their behavior due to the presence of the observer creating a bias in the results.

Regarding active participation of children in the intervention, students, as well as teachers, should have notebooks for reports. Students should be allowed to record their feelings about receiving corporal punishments. This would make children and young people feel valued and would provide needed knowledge on young persons' perspectives. Because children suffer from violence, they are likely to propose creative alternatives to improve collective behavior in the classroom. Finally, we recommend that the school community (staff, guardians, students and community) promote cultural events addressing non-violence/peace, interpersonal care and the prevention of different types of violence so that learning extends beyond school environment and that the benefits of good interventions also have impact in the home and community.

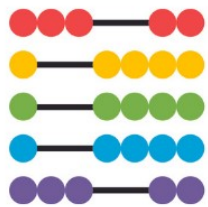


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Young People Advisors (YPAs) for the very rich exchange we had at these meetings, the staff at the End Violence Lab and University of Edinburgh, especially Jenessa and Kati, who accompanied us with great care and attention in our career as consultants, assisting us with everything when we had doubts about. We would also like to thank our translators Juliana Robilard and Maria Luiza Bonfim who ensured our active participation in the activities.

We thank researcher Carolina Coll, for the very rich exchanges in relation to scientific process and the interventions, which resulted in the expansion of our knowledge on the subject and allowed us to build a critical review.

Finally, we thank our organisations: IPA Brasil, Brazilian Association for the Right to Play and Culture and the YouthBuild Brazil/CEDAPS Program. Both of our organisations encouraged our participation in this exchange space, guaranteeing us the opportunity to apply our voices and represent the youth of our country.



**Data for Children
Collaborative**
WITH UNICEF



End Violence
Against Children



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Brazil

YOUNG PEOPLE ADVISORS

INSPIRE Case Study

CONTACT US:



@dataforchildren



Data for Children Collaborative



Hello@dataforchildren.ed.ac.uk

Supported by



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

unicef
for every child

