Residents of communities where there has been social and/or physical degradation hope to one day “step up and move out” or “quite commonly to restore and improve the area to which most have a sense of belonging and a commitment.” Environmental awareness may be one way to start this process of restoration.

The following documents the main themes emerging from a review of research reports and other articles. They represent the issues of concern to:
- urban inner-city residents including youth and children,
- the general population,
- youth 17-18 years

**Main issues which surfaced were:**
1. Crime & violence
2. Unemployment
3. Peer pressure
4. Disrespect: personal disrespect and community stigma
5. Low self esteem
6. Hopelessness
7. Frustration
8. Physical degradation in the community

**Social factors impacting on the violence**
- Poor parenting practices (teenaged parents, absent parents etc)
- Indiscipline
- Frustration (expressed in beatings by parents or male partners)
- No respect
- No role models

**The Issues Further Explored:**
- **Crime & violence**
As reported in studies conducted by the Centre for Population, Community and Social Change, UWI (1) and Don Anderson (7), crime and violence together are seen as the largest problem affecting the country today. It is thought by
community residents to be both the result and the cause of the other problems. While violence is linked to politics, tribal wars, gun running and area Dons, it is recognized by all as the outcome of unemployment and subsequently poverty and hunger. Poverty has led to conditions of economic and social depravity in which daily survival is a challenge and the men must maintain their manhood. The gun is seen as a viable option, and crime and violence results. (1)

- **Unemployment**
Don Anderson in his survey (7) pointed out that unemployment was thought by both the general population and the 17-18 year olds, in particular, to be a direct link to crime and violence, “not only is unemployment seen as the second most pressing problem the country faces, but it is also seen as one of the principal causes for the high levels of crime and violence in the society..” This is echoed in the UWI study (1) where unemployment is seen as leading to, among other things, idleness, low self esteem, frustration and eventually crime and violence. Here it was noted that “employment is seen as the much desired and badly needed road to survival and indeed self fulfillment…” (1).

“Without work, it is the general view that youths cannot be “strong”--- they have no hopes, they become idle, and idleness leads to badness to gang war and violence. Youth has less time and energy for crime and stealing when working. They also, they admit, have less need to steal; it is a means of survival but listed as the last resort…” (1)

**Hence:** “Great value is placed on work both from its benefits and more often – from the negative consequences of not having it…” (1)

While unemployment for males leads to crime and violence, among females it was said to lead to pregnancy and dependence on men, abuse or domestic violence. (1)

- **Peer pressure**
The literature also indicates that absence of guidance in parental or societal role models, leaves a gap which is soon filled by the peer group, particularly among men. Chevannes in his lecture 1999 Grace Kennedy Foundation lecture titled “What we sow and What we reap” notes that “It is the peer group that will put the final touches, so to speak, to the construction of his male identity…… the peer group virtually replaces mother and father as the controlling agents or, if not entirely a substitute, a countervailing force.”

In the UWI study (1) it is noted that “lack of work and peer pressure are thought by a youth club to lead to crime and violence.” Traditional role models become replaced by the gun and the consequent emergence of Dons and Robin Hoods.

- **Disrespect & Low self esteem**
Chevannes in *What We Sow and What We Reap* (8) notes that “the greatest social sin among young males today is a dis, that is to show disrespect “.
Countering this however is the gun which he notes is “the ultimate guarantor of respect.” With this in view the inner-city don becomes a role model “not only because of his ability to command and dispense largesse, but also because he is a living source of power – the power over life and death, the ultimate man.” (8) The UWI study notes that “respect is something they deeply desire”, and the police is said to be very guilty of disrespect to community residents (1).

Respect is ranked number 1 followed by peace by 5-11 year olds (1). This sense of being disrespected seems to be ever present and no doubt translates into the cries for justice which are so rampant today. Cries of injustice echo daily from the mouths of those who feel aggrieved for whatever reason. Watching the television news on Tuesday May 18, 1999, street cleaners employed to Western Parks & Markets were incensed about being treated without respect and cried: “…We want justice…” A rural community outside of Santa Cruz stages a protest over poor roads and cries “we want justice”. Justice seems eventually to be anything that will ensure treatment like a human being as the children chanted during the protest.

- **Hopelessness & Frustration**

Anderson in his survey notes that “very few (17-18 year olds) could actually point to a situation where their own personal living condition had improved for them over the past year…”(7). A 31 year old in the UWI survey reports that his ambition had been to “be somebody” as that was the only basis on which he could respect himself and command respect from others.” But now he had given up hope that the situation could improve…” (1)

Along with this sense of hopelessness and frustration is a growing alienation from the official system. Don Anderson’s survey (7) pointed to a “high level of disenchantment with the system of government and elected officials among persons under 35 who were not enumerated. Martin Henry in an article in the Daily Gleaner of Sept. 4, 1997 entitled Freedom and Violence (2) argued that “…crime and violence is being manifested by youth steeped in negativism and uncontrolled by moral impulses of virtue and are rebelling against a system from which they feel excluded and by which they think themselves oppressed, a system in which they have no strong stake.”

Even as they would like to participate in the political process Anderson notes that “equally strong is the sense of apprehension about the process itself and the system and belief that they may not be enumerated and given that chance…” (7)

- **Physical degradation**

In the UWI study, in respect of environmental degradation, residents focussed on housing, sanitation and telephones. The 1991 Peter Espeut Survey “Attitudes to the Environment in Jamaica 1991” (11) supports this tendency to “interpret the environment in domestic or public health terms.” However, as further noted in the UWI study, there is awareness by residents that: “the physical degradation in the
community impacts badly, not only in some instances on health, but also on morale, behaviour and community cohesion.” (1)

The 1997 Gender and Forestry Study conducted by Linnette Vassell for the Trees For Tomorrow Project (12) note that “women, because of their many responsibilities, more than men, expressed the immediacy of the concern with the supply and safety of water resources.

**Solutions as proposed by community residents in the UWI study (1)**
- Peace
- Community oriented police force
- Work
- Training centre
- Community organizations, youth clubs, sports clubs, NGOs etc.
- Addressing specific environmental problems such as gully cleaning, garbage depository/collection; provision of toilets.

“The building or rebuilding of community organizations and community spirit is perceived to be an essential ingredient of any real development of these areas. Sporting and cultural activities play a vital role in this regard and is manifest from the way community people are drawn to such activites and generally are united by them.” (1)
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