

# NEWS

[Back to Home](#) | [More News](#) | [Archives](#) | [Editorial](#) | [Commentary](#) | [Letters](#) | [Sports](#) | [People](#) | [Business Day](#) | [Classifieds Ads](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact](#)

Saturday 11th February 2006

## Violence against children on the rise

By CHARLEEN THOMAS

**VIOLENCE against children and adolescents is on the increase in the Caribbean, said Dr Julie Meeks-Gardner, head of the Caribbean Child Development Centre at the UWI, Mona, Jamaica.**

However, she said statistics were not reliable because of under-reporting of the incidents. She was speaking at yesterday's panel discussion on "Protecting Children and Adolescents against Violence in the Caribbean," at the fourth International Conference on Crime and Justice in the Caribbean at the Learning Resource Centre (LRC), UWI, St Augustine.

Meeks-Gardner said based on the findings of the Caribbean Desk Review for the UN Secretary General on Children and Violence, which was completed last year, there have been many achievements in terms of the legal framework. However, she said there was still the need to enforce the laws in the countries in which they exist. She pointed out that generally there were no specific provisions for child trafficking and child pornography. Jamaica, said Meeks-Gardner, was the only country where there existed legislation which made it compulsory for the reporting of child abused.

In terms of violence against children in the homes and by families, especially abuse and neglect, Meeks-Gardner said there were a "high prevalence but no hard figures because of significant under-reporting." She said victims feared reprisals and there were also the huge aspect of shame, lack of awareness of the meaning of child abuse and the cultural and social sanctioning of abuse.

Meeks-Gardner said the report showed that in Jamaica and Haiti, there was an increase of violent crimes and murders against children. Also in Jamaica, she said there were high incidences of stabbings/killings, bullying and theft against children at schools.

She said while programmes existed in Jamaica and other countries to deal with violence against children, the effectiveness was not well assessed.

Also speaking yesterday was Sam Mootaram, a 21-year-old from East Drive River, Port-of-Spain, who is part of Unicef's Xchange project in Trinidad.

He told the audience of his experiences "liming on the block" because of his disadvantaged background.

He said he and his three brothers were left to their own devices, but luckily, with the intervention of a friend, he was put on the right path. Mootaram proudly reported that for the last nine years he has been "keeping out of trouble." He said he has seen many of his friends killed because of the "bad-boy" lifestyle they chose. He advised youths to "guide one another," saying while he may not be a Machel Montano or member of the Soca Warriors, "I am somebody."

Montano and footballers Cyd Gray and Aurtis Whitley were also on the panel, and spoke of their experiences. They also advised youths to be careful of the friends they keep and to work hard to achieve successes.

Montano is the leader of the Xchange project. Wearing his other hat as entertainer, he and Benjai performed their recently released "Amnesty," which calls on youths to put down the guns. Montano said with numerous guns on the streets in TT, somebody had to know where they were coming from. He also pleaded with persons to "give the youths a chance and respect them."

Trinidad & Tobago's  
**NEWSDAY**  
The People's Newspaper