Introduction

We must bring our attention to bear on two of the most urgent issues that are wreaking havoc on our populations: the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the intolerable increase in the incidence of crime that has made personal security the overriding concern of all our peoples (Focus on Drugs 2002:1).

These powerful words from the Hon Said Musa, the prime minister of Belize, summarise the concerns expressed by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) heads of state at the 22nd CARICOM meeting in The Bahamas in 2001. Although more than five years have elapsed, these words act as a reminder to Caribbean countries of the sobering and serious challenges facing this region.

A popular African proverb states that it takes a village to raise a child. If Caribbean countries subscribe to this belief, and if children in this region develop into young people who exhibit anti-social and criminal behaviour, then we would have failed in our duty and will ultimately suffer the consequences of such failure.

The increased use of technology and global access to information combined with the changing nature of the traditional family structure have resulted in a large number of young people who, while technically smarter and more astute, lack the fundamental discipline and support most commonly seen in two-parent traditional families. Coupled with the new, materialistic images portrayed by the surrogate parents and role models from film, television and music, to which the youth (many of whom are ‘latchkey’ children) are exposed during their formative years, this climate has caused increased delinquency and criminal behaviour among the young people of The Bahamas, the Caribbean and the wider world.

This article seeks to address:

- the multiple causes that result in the high incidence of youth violence, and increasing youth criminal trends
• the dual role played by many young people as victims who are often forced to become perpetrators
• the ways in which the socio-economic effects of governmental decisions/non-decisions affect the future of young people, and the choices they make

In identifying the problems and the causes, the article further seeks to:

• offer positive suggestions for youth empowerment through urban renewal programmes, using strategic partnerships between government, private and church committees and councils to provide programmes and activities that provide productive options for young people and give them a voice in our communities
• create, reinforce or reinstate youth programmes that will give Caribbean youth a sense of inclusion in the decision-making process relating to youth policy
• provide proactive solutions to reducing criminal and anti-social behaviour among the young people of this region, focusing on rehabilitation and other solutions to change young people’s behaviour, rather than incarceration

The input of various government departments that focus on youth (sports, culture, youth) is addressed and the necessity for a policy of inclusion when dealing with matters concerning the youth is highlighted.

This article will also examine the School Policing Initiative, a strategy that was recently instituted by the government of The Bahamas to address the growing problem of violence within the school system. By extension, the initiative serves as a catalyst to direct young people in the areas in which they show special interests. In this way, it is anticipated that their paths can be redirected for them to become productive citizens of society.

This article is geared towards finding solutions to problems that have been left unresolved for too long. It will concentrate on very practical and feasible solutions that, with minor adjustments, can be adapted to suit other countries, especially those in the Caribbean region, since they share many aspects of culture and a common history. Finally, this article hopes to recreate the template for the ‘village’ that will raise the children.

Issues, causes and concerns
Many Caribbean nations face alarming rates of criminal activities. In some countries, violent crimes are steadily on the rise, while others are subject to ‘spikes’. These spikes are usually associated with drug trafficking and related activities. No matter the varying rates and types of crimes in the Caribbean, there is one consistent factor in these island nations: the face of crime is getting younger.
How did this come about? What are the contributing factors to this trend?

A variety of experts in the fields of child psychology, criminal psychology and criminal justice suggest a multiplicity of causes for anti-social and criminal behaviour in young people, ranging from social exposure to genetic predisposition. With these factors in mind, one must focus on a number of factors that are generally held to be predictors of violent, anti-social or criminal behaviour in young people today.

The first is the community context. Poor, high-crime neighbourhoods add an extra element of stress to the day-to-day lives of families trying to raise young children, and detract from parents’ ability to give time to their children. Further, they set standards for behaviour that encourage violent solutions to disagreements or interpersonal tension and they promote an attitude of suspicion about the motives and intentions of other people. As a result, young people learn to use violence pre-emptively.

The second factor is the family unit itself. Families influence violence in many ways, including some of the same ways as neighbourhoods. Many parents unintentionally ‘train’ their children to be confrontational and aggressive by paying attention to them only when they behave in these ways and by failing to respond positively when their children are socially appropriate and use non-confrontational behaviour to get what they want. In more extreme cases, serious abuse can leave some children so emotionally unstable that they react unpredictably to stress, particularly to events that make them fearful or angry.

There are important individual differences in young children, some of them genetically linked and some owing to early traumas, especially birth traumas. Impulsive and inattentive children are difficult to rear in the best of conditions. When family and neighbourhood circumstances add to the problem, these children are often unprepared emotionally, cognitively and socially for the development challenges ahead of them. This can place them on a pathway where their problems escalate and they become successively alienated from teachers, peers and even family, so that their only support is from other delinquency-prone youths. This happens in particular when they attend schools with a high density of children who are equally unprepared for school (Coie n.d.).

Law and policy makers in a number of countries are beginning to note a correlation between the breakdown of families and various social problems. While not always the case, a recent study by the US-based Heritage Foundation indicates that:

- Over the past 30 years, the rise in violent crime has paralleled the rise in families abandoned by fathers.
High-crime neighbourhoods are characterised by high concentrations of families abandoned by fathers.

State-by-state analysis by Heritage Foundation scholars indicates that a 10 per cent increase in the percentage of children living in single-parent homes leads typically to a 17 per cent increase in juvenile crime.

The rate of violent teenage crime corresponds with the number of families abandoned by fathers.

The type of aggression and hostility demonstrated by a future criminal is often foreshadowed in unusual aggressiveness as early as five or six years.

The future criminal tends to be an individual who is rejected by other children as early as the first grade, who goes on to form his or her own group of friends, often the future delinquent gang (Fagin 1995).

On the other hand, the study noted that:

- Neighbourhoods with a high degree of religious practice are not high-crime neighbourhoods.
- Even in high-crime inner-city neighbourhoods, well over 90 per cent of children from safe, stable homes do not become delinquents. By contrast, only 10 per cent of children from unsafe, unstable homes in these neighbourhoods avoid crime.
- Criminals who are capable of sustaining marriage gradually move away from a life of crime after they are married.
- The mother's strong affectionate attachment to her child is the child's best buffer against a life of crime.
- The father's authority and involvement in raising his child is also a great buffer against a life of crime (UN 2005).

Research conducted on crime trends and strategies indicates that the most significant changes over the next few decades will not be in the scope of crime, but in the nature of crime. Today's increased use of technology and e-commerce will create more technologically savvy criminals who will be more organised, creative and international in their approach to crime and criminal activities. The one variable that research indicates will have the most significant influence on the nature of crime is technology.

The computer, digital and cellular age will bring about changes in the face of crime and usher in a new generation of technologically astute young offenders. The assumption is that the largest offending demographic group will continue to be young males between 15 and 25 years. This at-risk group continues to grow because a strong, constant male presence is notably absent from the home and the only role models available to these disenfranchised youths are movie heroes and the stars of rap, reggae and rock.
A ‘catch-22’ situation is also prevalent in many countries that make perpetrators out of victims. Owing to the increased criminal activity and gang violence in school systems today, young people feel a need to seek the protection of others to keep them safe from the criminal element in their schools and neighbourhoods. As a result, the victims or potential victims become part of gangs (whether formal or informal) for protection. In many instances, they ultimately perpetrate crimes in order to fit in or participate in other anti-social behaviour, thus becoming a part of the very problem they sought to avoid.

The United Nations Secretary-General’s study on violence against children (UN 2005) identified the increased incidence of single-parent families, inadequate school staff, inappropriately trained school staff and an irresponsible media as contributing factors to an increase in school violence. Caribbean participants felt that the breakdown in the family structure is responsible for the anti-social, violent behaviours evident at schools. Further, many schools are understaffed, because insufficient trained school counsellors or social workers are assigned to them. In addition, teacher training is deemed inadequate and it is felt that teachers are generally poorly equipped to deal with or reduce school violence. Finally, the promotion of violence and the valorisation of violent young actors or characters in the media are regarded as the media’s input into increased school violence (UN 2005).

Domestic violence contributes to the state of affairs in many schools. Domestic violence adds to the plight of young people, because it exposes them to threats of violence and actual violence, often leaving them feeling unsafe and vulnerable, even at home. In addition, owing to the breakdown of the traditional family structure throughout the Caribbean, the extended family no longer exists. Young persons no longer have the benefit of being reared and exposed in a secure environment, and are often neglected and left to be raised by the television and the streets. This strains the social fabric to breaking point and fosters an environment that allows violence to grow and flourish. The unfortunate result is that this violence spills over into neighbourhoods, schools and the wider community.

Social and economic factors contribute to the problem of youth and crime. The information superhighway and advances in digital communication have removed traditional country borders and everyone with cable television or access to the Internet is exposed to the lifestyles of the rich and famous. The over-the-top lifestyles of famous movie stars, millionaires and music moguls provide young people with unrealistic views of how to dress and act to be somebody. Their need to be part of the ‘real crew’, dress in the right ‘rags’ and own the right ‘bling’ and ‘toys’ places a strain on young people who may already be economically disadvantaged. It has been determined that their desire to present the right image is also a driving factor in a number of criminal activities (shoplifting, petty theft, burglary and even armed robbery).
For many at-risk youth, the escape from this seemingly inevitable route to anti-social and criminal behaviour may be something as basic as being able to attend a private church or government school outside the area in which they live. However, many countries establish educational zones (for convenience), which ensure that young people have access to learning by placing them in schools in their district/community. This zoning can be a double-edged sword, as it can trap young people in a certain ‘area’ mentality, which makes it more difficult for them to resist peer pressure and often results in their falling prey to gang activity.

The cost of living in today’s society is high. The majority of mothers work to support the family and therefore are not home when children return from school. This means that young people are left unattended (without a nurturing or preventative adult influence) for a number of hours each day. The ‘village’ is charged with raising these children (many of the ‘villagers’ being barely older than the children they are to raise), but for the most part the villagers are struggling to raise themselves and are not accessible when young people need answers to questions. Hurts, concerns and even the excitement of something new learned during the day often have to wait until later because jobs/careers and just plain work interfere with family time. This results in numerous young people being raised by MTV, Jerry Springer, Will & Grace, South Park and other television programmes that may highlight or sensationalise dysfunctional behaviour and present anti-social behaviour as acceptable.

The incidence of rage among young people is extremely high. Forty per cent of school-going CARICOM students reported feelings of rage. High rates of sexual abuse and physical abuse among children probably play out in rage among young people, which can affect their school performance and lead to violence.

Youth unemployment is especially elevated in some Caribbean countries. According to world development indicators from 1996 to 1998, St Lucia had the highest youth unemployment rate in the Americas, followed by Jamaica. In the Caribbean, St Lucia, followed by Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica, has the highest youth unemployment rates. In contrast to the United States, which has high levels of youth violence, the proportion of Caribbean adolescent males who carry firearms is extremely high. Fully one-fifth of students had carried a weapon to school in the 30 days prior to the survey, and nearly as many had been involved in a fight using weapons.

Gang violence is also high in the Caribbean, with 20 per cent of male students and 12 per cent of female students having belonged to a gang at one point.

Although data on drug use is scanty, anecdotal evidence suggests widespread social acceptance of alcohol and marijuana in some Caribbean countries, among both
in-school and out-of-school youth. Out-of-school youth aged 13 to 19 are most at risk of substance abuse as well as drug dealing. Further complicating the situation, the Caribbean is a major trans-shipment point for drugs entering the United States and Europe.

The pressures brought to bear on young people by all of these factors – along with the challenges of an uncertain future in which they become more technologically astute at an earlier age, but less skilled at many of the social graces that allow for non-violent and diplomatic solutions to problems – place today’s youth in a very precarious position.

A recent World Bank study conducted on Youth in the Caribbean for the United Nations (World Bank 2003) stated:

Young people are the custodians of our society and the trustees of prosperity for future generations. Nowhere is this more apparent than the Caribbean region, where two-thirds of the population is under the age of 30. This youthful profile of the Caribbean nations presents both opportunities and challenges in the years ahead, as the important role that young people play in national and regional development becomes increasingly apparent.

Many young people who are the leaders of the future are consumed with anger and uncertainty about their role in society. They are easily influenced and led by prevailing negative environmental and social conditions. This important role, as noted by the World Bank Study, is jeopardised by the high incidents of crime and criminal activities among young people.

**A review of crime statistics in The Bahamas**

A review of criminal activities in The Bahamas reveals the current face of crime that is predominantly:

- Bahamian males
- between the ages of 16 and 35
- middle- to lower-class individuals
- of low educational attainment
- a marginalised member of society
- a repeat offender
- likely to reside or offend in a low-class densely populated area
- likely to possess a weapon (knife or firearm)
In matters before the courts in The Bahamas, the average age of young men appearing on serious criminal offences extended from 18 to 30 in cases ranging from possession of drugs and weapons to murder (see appendix A for overall crime statistics and breakdown of matters committed before the Supreme Court).

**Statistical overview of persons charged: juveniles and young offenders**
A total of 8,181 incidents were recorded in The Bahamas for 2005. During the first quarter of the year, 178 juveniles and young adults were charged with various offences as opposed to 124 for the same period in 2006, representing a 30 per cent decrease in the number of persons charged. The offences of note are murder, armed robbery, robbery, stealing, stealing from vehicles, stolen vehicles and housebreaking (see chart below and appendix A for additional charts by category).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Recorded crimes</th>
<th>Detected crimes</th>
<th>Juveniles or young men (percentage of total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed robbery</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen vehicle</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing from vehicle</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housebreaking</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1821</td>
<td>1587</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As criminal activities grow, the criminals get younger and younger. If this current trend continues unabated, there will be serious economic and social consequences in the future.

**Tackling the problem of youth crime and violence**
An essential component of any partnership affecting the youth must be the youth themselves. Many programmes have met with limited success precisely because they failed to recognise that the individuals to whom the initiative is directed must become key stakeholders; there must be direct dialogue/involvement/consultation with such persons, or there is no ‘buy-in’. 
Alternatives to these problems must lie in strategic partnerships between government, church, social and private organisations as well as the wider community to target the root causes of crime and dysfunction in young people through joint initiatives and programmes.

Research concludes that there is a correlation between current crime trends among youths and the following social ills:

- poverty
- truancy
- lack of positive activities
- unemployment
- social marginalisation and inequality
- the illegal drug trade
- corruption
- the trafficking of firearms
- the ineffectiveness of existing criminal justice systems in providing rehabilitative options for young people

A number of partnerships, youth enrichment programmes and urban renewal programmes have been undertaken in various countries. They seek to achieve a more concentrated approach to reducing criminal and gang activities and anti-social behaviour in schools, while creating a safer home and community environment to nurture the youth so that they may become productive citizens.

Two such initiatives undertaken in The Bahamas work at creating safe environments for young people to flourish both at home and away from home. The first of these is the Urban Renewal Programme, which seeks to root out criminal activity and anti-social behaviour at source (the community) and provide a safe, crime-free environment for young people where they can relax and allow their creative nature to be expressed. The second is the School Policing Initiative, which addresses the growing problem of violence within the school system.

**The Urban Renewal Programme (URP)**

In May 2002, the Progressive Liberal Party became the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. An immediate concern was to address social ills affecting the wider society, particularly in the ‘black belt’, over-the-hill areas. Accordingly, Prime Minister the Honourable Perry Gladstone Christie initiated an urban renewal scheme in the Farm Road Constituency. Given the overwhelming success of the scheme, the government is now duplicating it in other over-the-hill areas.
To date, there has been a renewed sense of loyalty and community spirit as social standards have improved. The communities have experienced reductions in crime, increased employment opportunities, improved housing and an environment that is becoming ‘clean, green and pristine’.

The Urban Renewal Project (URP) has captured international attention and won top awards including:

- The Motorola Community Policing Award of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP)
- The Community Policing Award of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)

The purpose of the URP is to:

- reduce the levels of crime and the fear of crime
- improve the physical environment of communities
- enhance housing provisions for residents
- foster relations between government and non-government agencies and the community
- encourage residents to create, participate in and maintain activities that seek to shape and develop their communities, especially those relating to the young and the old in the community

The overall objective is the development of improved systems of governance by delivering social services closer to the community. Two of the most powerful and successful undertakings in URP related to youth engagement are the Citizens on Patrol project and the revitalisation of youth marching bands.

Citizens on Patrol commenced in the Englerston Constituency in New Providence in 2004. This area was plagued by criminal activity and disturbances by delinquent youths and repeat offenders. The Royal Bahamas Police Force faced a significant challenge in seeking to provide regular patrols in this area. The idea of enabling the residents to become key stakeholders in protecting their own neighbourhood was conceptualised to address this challenge.

In a pilot study, young men, many of whom were considered marginalised members in society, were given the opportunity to serve their community as ‘district constables’. They received basic training in law enforcement and were placed on supervised patrols by urban renewal teams. This programme has met with resounding success.
Citizens on Patrol has received widespread support. Owing to the unyielding determination of these district constables, The Bahamas have seen a decline in the frequency of disturbances in the areas in which they patrol. This has enabled full-fledged mobile officers to deal with matters in other areas, leading to significant seizures of firearms, dangerous drugs and stolen property.

Citizens on Patrol constables have uncovered matters and addressed concerns in such a professional manner that the initiative has been copied in other areas; they have become the ‘eyes and ears’ of the community and nothing occurs within their borders without their knowledge. This initiative provides an excellent example of empowering the youth and enabling them to take responsibility for the communities in which they live.

URP also takes great pride in pioneering community marching bands. Many doubted whether it would be possible to take young persons who had been challenged in their lives or who had never played a musical instrument to form successful bands. URP has been able to take all the energies and talents of young persons and produce successful musical showcases. Today, all the bands are in demand to play at events.

The Farm Road Marching Band is an excellent example of this success. For the first time in Bahamian history, a marching band has gone on an international tour. It was indeed an achievement; many of the underprivileged youths had never travelled outside the boundaries of their constituency. Equally importantly, the Parents Association, which was formed to act as trustees of the band and their own children, travelled with the band and saw to their needs. Through this association, parents raised funds, provided instruments and other essentials, and once again became actively and meaningfully involved in the lives of their children.

These are only two of many successful undertakings by young people through URP who, given the opportunity, direction and support, can become productive and active citizens.

**The School Policing Initiative**

A special School Based Policing (SBP) unit was established in 2005 ‘to foster a partnership between all of the legal, social and educational entities involved in fostering a safe and crime free environment in the school system’ (Royal Bahamas Police Force 2005).

The underlying premise of SBP is that making schools safer requires a comprehensive strategy that includes the following elements:
opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to maintain a school environment in which conflict and differences can be addressed in a manner characterised by respect and civility
- intervention and support for those who are at risk of, or already engaged in, violent or antisocial behaviour contrary to Ministry of Education standards and in violation of the laws of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas
- a proactive approach in identifying and preventing where possible random or planned acts of violence in our schools
- an effective response to incidents when they occur – one that respects the rights of victims and witnesses, as well as those of the alleged perpetrators in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth

Schools are supposed to be safe places in which to grow and learn, so the effective partnership between education, government, private and law enforcement authorities in the form of a school-based policing initiative ensures that all areas of development necessary for young people to function, learn and grow, work together with one common goal: ensuring that schools are safe and focused on education. In addition to reducing criminal behaviour in youth, SBP is focused on identifying at-risk youths who may themselves be the victims of violence, abuse (physical and mental) and criminal/anti-social behaviour, then providing the necessary counselling to help them rise above the status of victim in their own homes and/or communities.

**Church/community participation**

A number of organisations (education and church-based) have focused on educating the youth to be able to resolve conflict in non-violent manners. They provide lectures, retreats and reference materials for school guidance counsellors and for individuals who may wish to learn to take the high road in matters of conflict. Several highly successful community outreach programmes are noted below.

**Youth Alive Ministries, in association with Youth Against Violence**

Two working church ministries consist of former troubled teens and gang members who now work with troubled and at-risk youths to empower and provide them with other options to criminal and anti-social activities. They provide:

- youth campaigns such as Peace on the Streets and Extreme Leadership, and workshops using drama, music and a variety of artistic avenues as a means of providing alternatives for today's youth
- professional youth workshops and seminars on topics such as extreme leadership, sex and dating, conflict resolution, parents and teens, and strategies for saving the next generation, which are geared towards teens, parents, youth workers,
pastors and young adults. These events involve drama, music and multimedia presentations

- two television programmes, talk 2 me and Effective Youth which are hosted by young people and directed at young people
- outreach programmes at schools, parks, streets, malls and in other countries
- a call-in radio show called The Ruffneck Myxx, which offers positive advice and a listening ear to young persons

Youth Empowerment and Skills Training Programme
Another model of rehabilitative empowerment that can be easily modelled from country to country is the Youth Empowerment and Skills Training (YEAST) Programme, which has been introduced into the Commonwealth of The Bahamas by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese.

YEAST focuses on young men between the ages of 17 and 25, providing them with skills and training to advance in the job market or to become entrepreneurs. The precept of the programme is that if young men are given tangible skills (masonry, carpentry, plumbing, etc) to earn a living, along with discipline, encouragement and basic educational skills, they will be empowered to reach their potential and contribute to their communities.

In the past, youth partnerships within a number of organisations have proven successful in engaging young people in activities that keep them focused on helping themselves while helping others. Organisation such as Kiwanis, Lions Clubs, Rotary, Toastmasters and the JayCeess have provided young people with social and practical skills, leadership and parliamentary training, empowering them to speak and act knowledgeably on matters concerning their country, world affairs and the needs and concerns of youth.

In some countries, however, many of these organisations have been challenged owing to lack of support (financial and public) and the many lessons they provided for young people have been curbed. By developing strategic partnerships with private and governmental agencies, such organisations will be able to make a difference in the lives of young people.

Many initiatives concentrate on young people with specific skills or who excel in some way, whether in the arts, sports or in school. While this must be encouraged, this group represents a small percentage of young persons and the average achiever is left by the wayside. There are no Hollywood movies, television shows or news articles about the average girl who helps her mother prepare her siblings for school, maintains a ‘C’ average, stays out of trouble and goes on to become a clerk. Likewise, no special media attention is given to the young man who keeps the house and family together while his mother struggles in the absence of a father to provide for her family. These young people
go about their everyday lives unnoticed, and in many cases underappreciated. The attention they crave is often given by gang members who satisfy their need to belong. To stem the rising tide of criminal activities among young people, many countries may need to take a two-pronged approach by establishing urban renewal programmes and national youth programmes.

Urban renewal programmes

Young people do not operate in a vacuum, but are nurtured by three separate, yet equally important environments daily (home, the community and school) so it would be useful to develop projects that help families and communities to supplement school-based programmes.

Urban renewal programmes provide a multi-pronged approach towards changing the environment in the school and at home while focusing on young people, not only as individuals, but also as part of the wider community. Urban renewal can revolutionise the face of policing in a country. It makes ‘the members of the community ‘partners’ with the law enforcement agencies, and allows them to ‘police’ the community by consent. This type of partnership increases the ability of government agencies to take services into the heart of desolate, crime-infested areas and transform them into communities’ (Royal Bahamas Police Force 2006).

Urban renewal takes a simplistic approach; it fosters a relationship between the community and the police and creates a bond of trust between officers assigned to areas targeted for urban renewal and the residents of these areas. This bond removes some of the suspicion that can exist when strangers enter a community and allows young people to develop a relationship of respect and trust with the officers. This relationship can be the difference that makes a young person reject anti-social behaviour or become involved in criminal activities.

Further, ‘in poor communities, the more successful people may migrate to higher status neighbourhoods, thereby depriving the young people in these neighbourhoods of conventional models of success and of authority figures’ (Harriott 2002). One of the goals of any successful urban renewal programme should be to provide mentoring or partnering with individuals who have been a part of the community and may have moved away as a result of their success. These individuals can serve as tangible role models for young people in these communities through this type of partnership.

Partnerships between government agencies and social partners can reduce or eliminate bureaucracy and red tape and can bring immediate relief in the areas of:

- poor and inadequate housing
- no bathroom facilities
unsanitary conditions
overcrowding
unemployment
lack of positive activities for the young and old
truancy
environmental and social decay
crime

In addition to the cosmetic or physical changes in the community, changes must be made in the activities and opportunities offered to youths in these areas. Educational and cultural programmes that focus on learning who we are as a people, and teaching young people the traditions and culture of our own nations will go a long way towards keeping young people involved in positive activities and away from destructive behaviours.

A tradition that has all but died out in many Caribbean nations is storytelling. Through this community activity many legends and tales were handed down from generation to generation. This self-same tradition made communities the ‘village’ in which to raise the child. The involvement of elders from the community is of vital importance in the role of urban renewal, as they carry the foundation and memory of the community within them.

**National youth programmes**
A structured and well-defined national youth programme will provide positive activities, education and training for young people, those at risk and those who may not be regarded as such. It can be used as a catalyst to involve young people in their own affairs, and give them a voice in deciding which direction their future will take. The programme should train young adults for positions of authority and directorship within the NYP itself, and let it be a model of youth moulding youth for leadership roles in the organisation and in society.

A Caribbean Youth Explosion was held in Grenada in 2000 to help young people explore issues pertaining to the implementation of regional and international agreements and integrating them into the youth empowerment agenda. The Youth Explosion incorporated a Youth Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians, and was a joint initiative of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

The resolution related to empowerment that was passed during the conference can be found in appendix B and provides a framework for cooperation and enhanced regional integration. This is an essential tool if Commonwealth countries are to have the kind of
continuous long-lasting impact to stem the incidence of crime among the youth. It is certainly a giant step in the right direction in the best interest of all nations.

Note
1 Keith Bell is superintendent, Royal Bahamas Police Force. He can be contacted at keithrbell@yahoo.com.

References
Appendix A Crime Statistics – The Bahamas

Persons Charged – All Bahamas

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<th>Category</th>
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<td>Armed Robbery</td>
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<td>Rape</td>
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<td>Burglary</td>
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<td>House/Shop breaking</td>
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<td>225</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possession of Unlicensed Firearm</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>238</td>
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<td>Drug Offences</td>
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<td>1431</td>
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Matters Committed To Supreme Court – 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Murder</th>
<th>Age</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>Murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>33 years</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Murder</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>Murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>Murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>Murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder, Armed Robbery</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>Murder, Armed Robbery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>31 years</td>
<td>Murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>35 years</td>
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### Armed Robbery

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Burglary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Armed Robbery (6 counts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Possession Of Firearm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Receiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Armed Robbery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>(7 counts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Receiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Armed Robbery (2 counts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Conspiracy to commit Armed Robbery, Armed Robbery, Kidnapping, Possession of Firearm, Making a false Report</td>
</tr>
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### Sexual Offences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Unlawful Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Unlawful Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Unlawful Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Unlawful Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Unlawful Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Unlawful Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Unlawful Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Incest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Rape, Detention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Unlawful Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Rape, Forcible Detention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Burglary, Indecent Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Incest</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Unlawful Sex</td>
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Appendix B Caribbean Youth Explosion, Grenada, 2000

Resolution 1: Empowerment

WHEREAS young people in Caribbean countries are not receiving information on policies and decisions agreed to at international fora in a timely manner;

AND WHEREAS governments are not accelerating and disseminating information and training to empower young people on structures and systems present nationally and regionally;

AND WHEREAS young people are not involved in the implementation of decision-making processes of policies, structures and systems;

AND WHEREAS existing structures need to be enhanced and strengthened so as to provide true and proper representation for youth throughout the region ensuring a united voice and equal opportunity for all.

BE IT RESOLVED that we the youth of the Caribbean Youth Explosion 2000 urge regional governments to proceed without delay in promoting and establishing simplified and transparent structures and implementing the dissemination of information for the achievement of youth empowerment.

The resolution above highlights the concern of Youth in the Caribbean, and indeed in the world, of not receiving information (particularly information relating to them and their future) in a timely and systematic manner. The success or failure of any initiative aimed at helping young people will be dependent on its presentation to the young people. The matter of information sharing, and inclusion is of vital importance to young people today, and as they become more and more exposed to communication and world politics, the need for them to be ‘in the know’ increases.

Any programme, be it governmental, church or private, conducted by youth for youth, or designed for youth as a learning and growing experience, must focus on the entire being of the person. It must be geared towards their (the youth) way of thinking, and their desire to have a sense of inclusion in all things concerning them. The input of young people must be a part of the formation of any programme for young people, and their participation must be visible and valuable.

If we are to ‘train up’ our children in the way they must go, then there is a need to let them have a feel for authority, yielding it and not just receiving it, a taste of leadership power, in times of crises and success, and the knowledge that there is a support base available to them at all times. The support of family, community, church and government, and the empowerment of young people to take the reins and be a part of pro-active thinking and solutions for the future will reduce the rate of crime and criminal activities among the youth, and thereby in the communities now and in the future. The village stands ready to raise our children, it is our duty to let them know we are there.