Violence a public-health crisis

Jamaica is confronting a major, and worsening, public-health crisis with seriously disruptive pathologies, even if it isn’t being formally labelled as such.

It’s called criminal violence. Should there be any doubt about the condition, or the problem that it wreaks, ask Drs Ann Jackson-Gibson and Elizabeth Ward, who last week testified before a joint parliamentary committee that is reviewing the latest laws with which the Government proposes to tackle crime. Much of what they had to say would not, for people who follow these things, have been entirely new. Except that they placed the data in a stark and frightening context.

But importantly, for a perceptive Government, they highlighted creative ways to help finance solution to the crisis, apart from having to find big bucks to pour into hardware. Or more precisely, it was about a more efficient and far less painful way of prioritising the allocation of resources – a matter over which Prime Minister

any other hospital in the English-speaking Caribbean. Dr Ward is an epidemiologist who has been researching the health and economic implications of violence in Jamaica for a long time.

At her hospital, which in 2016 admitted 1,059 patients with bullet wounds, Dr Jackson-Gibson told legislators that in under six months this year, it cost nearly J$80 million, or around J$400,000 a day, to treat gunshot victims.

RESOURCES SPENT ON EMERGENCIES

But it is not the economic cost of providing care for intentionally inflicted trauma that is at issue. There is, too, the displacement it causes to other patients, because, as Dr Jackson-Gibson puts it, “the resources are spent on emergencies”.

While the health-care costs for criminal violence are most acute at KPH, it is not limited to that institution. The problem is across Jamaica. Dr Ward, for instance, revealed that a study of the 2014 just accounting for inflation would mean a rise in these costs. But there has also been a spike in the cases. While murders, over 80 per cent of which are committed with guns, jumped 20 per cent to 1,350 in 2016, the number of patients with bullet wounds climbed 40 per cent to 916. Blunt object trauma patients rose by 10 per cent.

Dr Ward pointed out that there were requests for spending J$1.3 billion in the community “hotspots” to support violence-mitigation efforts, which, when that happened, translated to a halving of murders in some communities. But these allocations, to support the efforts of NGOs, have fallen.

Reduced violence reduces the burden on hospitals and lessons, or at least brings greater rationality to, the cost of delivering health care. Further, there are many studies which show that less crime, including a murder rate in low double digits – Jamaica’s is now around 60/100,000 – would lift economic output by around

Strengthening Communities using the Public Health Approach

Dr. Elizabeth Ward
Violence Prevention Alliance
Establish Rule of Law in guided by roll-out of National Bi-partisan Rule of Law Committee
Sustained Presence of JDF personnel
Use of Peace Management Initiative (PMI) methodology for community response and peace building
Use of Peace Management Initiative (PMI Kingston) methodology for community response and peace building

Therapeutic interventions for Youth and Communities at risk

PMI

St. James $83M
Westmoreland $50M
Impact of PMI Intervention on Homicides in Greater Brown's Town

MURDERS PER YEAR

PMI Intervention

Mediation Counselling Therapy Community begins

PMI, CSI

PMI, CSI, JSIF

JSIF CSJP, PMI, SDC

JSIF, SDC, PMI

2005 2006 2007 2008 2009

Residential Retreat, JSIF rehab park alternative livelihood

Community Development Committee (CDC) & Skills Bank created

Sporting and entrepreneurial activities established

Home work, Sporting Summer Camps
Impact of PMI Intervention on Homicides in Greater Brown's Town

**Sustained Results**
- CDC community leadership
- Community ownership of peace
- Partnerships
- **A violence interrupter** (*early warning signal)*
- External Support
Cost-Benefit of Social Interventions

COST $97 M
Spent for intervention

SAVINGS $1.3 B
Total money saved

$17.1 M Saved in direct medical costs + $1.3 B Saved in indirect costs

COST-BENEFIT 1:14 JM$ saved
Strengthening of Police initiatives guided by data eg: location of additional security checkpoints
Use of daily Hospital data for VRI’s

- Intervene
- Reduce retaliation
- Target communities for intervention

PROJECTED NO. OF INTENTIONAL INJURY VISITS/10,000 POPULATION TO GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS BY 2015

![Graph showing projected number of intentional injury visits/10,000 population with and without intervention from 1999 to 2015.](image)
Impact of community interventions in Kingston on Kingston Public Hospital (KPH) vs. no intervention in Montego Bay

Gunshot wounds per annum

45% reduction
Public education initiatives “Watch u Flex No Badda Vex” and “Tun up de Peace”, “Violence is Preventable, Stop Now” messages.
School based interventions therapeutic intervention aimed at increasing school attendance and decreasing expulsion and school drop outs.
Alternative livelihoods to “dry up the 600+ soljaz & top dawgz’, the unemployed idle youth
Project H.O.P.E.
Housing, Opportunity, Production and Employment

- Aims to provide educational and job opportunities for young persons, aged 19 to 24 years
- 15,000 high-risk youth identified who need work
Build resilience at the community level to allow communities to resist engagement in homicides and violence. NOW, Social interventions to be used to build community cohesion.
Operational research
Overall Cost of Social Interventions

5 HIGH-RISK PARISHES
$925M JMD

9 LOW-RISK PARISHES
$720M JMD

TOTAL COST PER ANNUM
$1.35B JMD*

* Excludes cost of project HOPE
Cost Savings for Direct costs

- Annual Direct Medical Cost of Violence-related injuries$ JMD 3.6 Billion

- Annual Cost of Interventions$ JMD 1.35 Billion

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* UHWI/VPA Cost of care project (2017)
**$2.7 JMD spent for medical costs for every 1 dollar intervention cost
**Excludes cost of Project HOPE
Critical Interventions that Work to Reduce Violence in Jamaica

1. Establish a National Public Safety and Justice Committee
2. Meaningful deployment of JDF
3. Use of Peace Management Initiative
4. Strengthened police initiatives guided by data
5. Use of daily Hospital data for Violence Prevention
6. Public education interventions
7. School based therapeutic interventions
8. Alternative livelihoods for unemployed youth
9. Build community resilience
10. Research and Evaluation

The most urgently needed interventions..
VPA WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA,
UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES & FOUNDATIONS

UNITED NATIONS - SDG 16.2
Global Partnership for
“Ending Violence Against
Children”
Jamaica is a Pathfinder Country

INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT
BANK
Caribbean Strategic Integration Agenda (SIA)
“Citizens Security Integrated Into Priority
Sectors – Tourism, Trade, Energy and
Transport”

VIOLENCE PREVENTION ALLIANCE
A THINK AND DO TANK

Ministry of National Security
• Data Mapping
• Identification of Crime
Hot Spots
• Evaluation of Best
Practices

Ministry of Education & Youth
• Learning Net Work (LNW) – Child Resiliency Programme (CRP)
• Behaviour Change Programmes
• Therapeutic Summer Camps
• School/Community Interventions
• Literacy Upgrading Through LNW
• Behaviour Modification – Art and
Music Therapy

Ministry of Health
• Parenting Programmes in
Clinics and Hospitals
(Child Guidance Clinics)
• Cost of Care Data
• Data Collection of VRP
• Evaluation of Best Practices

Ministry of Labour & Social Security
• Conditional Cash Transfer
• National Insurance
• Steps to Work
• Elimination of Child
Labour
• Early Stimulation
• Parenting

Ministry of Tourism
• Data Mapping to Support
Communities
• School Projects
• Community Asset Mapping
• Evaluation of Best Practices
CALL TO ACTION

• Accept that violence is preventable & social interventions work

• Provide long term support for social interventions

• Source and provide consistent funding for social interventions

• Reduce limits set by fiscal space

• Provide incentives to private sector to invest in social interventions

Peace Unity Love...Action